

**Mr. Faati** (Gambia): We thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this debate to discuss the report of the Secretary-General entitled “Implementing the responsibility to protect” (A/63/677).

My delegation fully associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the members of the Non-Aligned Movement. We would like to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for a very interesting and informative report, in particular with respect to the issues raised under the three pillars, in the section entitled “The way forward” and in the annex.

My delegation does not have problems with the concept of the responsibility to protect (R2P), as clearly outlined in paragraphs 138 and 139 of the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document (resolution 60/1). We consider the 2005 agreement to be an important historical milestone in our collective efforts to protect civilian populations from the four mass crimes to which this concept applies. My country’s record, from the creation of the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group in Banjul to our ongoing participation in numerous peace operations around the world, is ample testimony to our commitment to the protection of civilian populations.

We will continue to carefully study our next steps as we embark on the implementation phase of the 2005 agreement. In that regard, we intend to move cautiously and constructively until consensus is reached on all outstanding issues. We will work closely with interested delegations as we put together the building blocks that are necessary for a depoliticized R2P architecture. One of those building blocks would be the elaboration of strategies and mechanisms to bridge the deficit of trust currently existing among members of this house on the way forward.

It would be naive for us to think that we can set the parameters of this debate without referring to history. Any attempt to rush to conclusions that are not anchored in reality and informed by history would lead only to the setting up of a utopian paradise. Recent history — in fact, as recent as the January 2009 war in Gaza — informs us that genuine R2P situations will continue to be treated with the usual political bickering and dithering that have characterized United Nations action or inaction in the past. For that reason, we must anchor the implementation of R2P in rule-of-law-based approaches that will prevent its abuse or misuse by the international community, while allowing flexibility for genuine action. We must find a cure for our collective inertia.

In our deliberations, Africa has become the reference point as a continent that has led the way in fashioning the principle of R2P. Part of the reason for that is the paralysis of the international community and a deep mistrust in the United Nations system, owing to a proven history of inaction over the years with regard to African R2P situations. We believe in the Constitutive Act of the African Union, the regional and subregional arrangements across Africa and how effective they have been in dealing with certain R2P situations.

My delegation would therefore argue that pillar two activities should, first and foremost, take the regional approach into account by addressing capacity constraints. For now, the best lessons are at the regional level, and that is what we are comfortable with. We would like to see an evolving relationship between the United Nations and the African Union in that regard. However, we must not assume that R2P starts with the international community. It starts with States’ assuming their sovereign responsibility to protect.

Under pillar three, another important issue that keeps coming up is the notion of timely and decisive response as it relates to the precise roles of the Security Council and the General Assembly in determining what timely and decisive response should entail. We believe that the question of early warning is closely related to that of timely and decisive response. My delegation would like to propose that a mechanism be established in the form of a committee on the responsibility to protect. A committee of such a nature would be mandated to make non-binding recommendations to the General Assembly, the Security Council and regional organizations on R2P situations and on

accompanying measures necessary to address particular situations. In its recommendations, the committee could also indicate its views on the use or non-use of the veto in a particular situation.

Such a body would be made up of Member States. Their election could follow the pattern of the Human Rights Council, and there would be no veto-wielding power. The Secretary-General would collate the information on any R2P situation and present it to the committee for consideration. The committee could meet at regular intervals or at the request of its members or other Member States. The offices of the Special Advisers on Genocide and R2P could play an important role in that regard.

The principle of equitable geographical representation could be used to determine the composition of such a committee. I believe that, as a complement to such efforts, an early agreement on a comprehensive global strategy on implementing R2P would also serve to complement the work of the committee.

In putting forward those proposals, we are mindful of the provisions of the Charter with regard to the mandates of the organs of the United Nations. With negotiations on the democratic reform of the Security Council still moving at a snail's pace, and with the likelihood of abuse of the principle of R2P through politicization, we believe that a more neutral arbiter, such as the representative committee that we are proposing, could be a way out. An analogous example can be found in the way in which the General Committee works. However, we must not forget that, when our leaders adopted paragraphs 138 and 139 of the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document, they also adopted a plethora of institutional reforms, principal among which was reform of the Security Council.

Those are just some of the thoughts that we wished to share with the Assembly. We are ready to work with other delegations as we collectively consider our next steps. We are being told that the concept of R2P is narrow but deep, so our analysis of the report and its recommendations should be nothing less — it should be focused and deep.