



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Launch of New Global Centre Against Mass Atrocity Crimes

New York, February 14 2008: A new independent research and advocacy body dedicated to ensuring effective global responses to genocide, ethnic cleansing, crimes against humanity and war crimes was launched at the United Nations in New York today with a welcoming statement by Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon.

The Centre's mission is to consolidate international acceptance, and ensure the application in practice, of the groundbreaking Responsibility to Protect ('R2P') principle adopted unanimously at the 2005 World Summit. This is the idea that while sovereign states retain the primary responsibility to protect their own people from mass atrocity crimes, the broader international community has the responsibility to assist states in protecting their populations. When states prove unable or unwilling to protect their people, the international community must take action – with appropriate preventive, and as necessary, reactive strategies, including as an absolute last resort, if the Security Council agrees, military intervention.

“We have had too many Cambodias, Rwandas, Bosnias and Darfurs, and still they keep coming,” said Gareth Evans, co-chair (with Algeria's Mohamed Sahnoun) of the Centre's International Board, “We have to create a world in which we never again have to say ‘never again’.”

The Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect is an initiative of five major international NGOs: the International Crisis Group, Human Rights Watch, Oxfam International, Refugees International, and the Institute for Global Policy. It is supported financially by the governments of Australia, Belgium, Canada, the Netherlands, Norway, Rwanda and the UK, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Open Society Institute and Scott and Elena Lawlor.

The Centre will generate research, conduct high-level advocacy and support the work of both governments and NGOs around the world working to advance and implement the R2P principle. It will focus on clarifying the scope of the concept, helping create structures and processes capable of delivering effective prevention and reaction, and stimulating the political will to act when the next actual or potential mass atrocity situation arises. And it will offer assistance to the UN's Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide Francis Deng and Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect Edward Luck.

The Centre will have from the outset, in both its staffing and organizational structure, a strong North-South character, and will be supported by Associated Centres in Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America. It will be directed by W. Andrew Knight: born in Barbados, he has had a distinguished academic career, including currently as a professor of political science at the University of Alberta.

The Centre will be housed in the Ralph Bunche Institute for International Studies at The City University of New York Graduate Center, whose head, Thomas G. Weiss, will remain Interim Executive Director until Dr. Knight takes up his position full-time in July.

The Centre's inaugural Patrons are Kofi Annan, Lloyd Axworthy, Romeo Dallaire, Jan Eliasson, Joschka Fischer, David Hamburg, Lee Hamilton, Prince El Hassan bin Talal, Sadako Ogata, Fidel Valdez Ramos, Mary Robinson, and Desmond Tutu.

Further information about the Centre is at www.globalcenter2p.org.

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