

## General Assembly Informal Interactive Dialogue on the Responsibility to Protect

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On behalf of the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect

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Mr. President, Mr. Secretary-General, Excellencies, Esteemed Panelists, Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. I wish to express my gratitude to you Mr. President for the opportunity to speak at this year's interactive dialogue, and thank Special Adviser for the Prevention of Genocide, Mr. Adama Dieng, for moderating this meeting and the panel of experts for their constructive and insightful remarks.

2. My name is William Pace, Executive Director of WFM-Institute for Global Policy, based in New York, and I have the pleasure to take the floor on behalf of the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect (ICRtoP), for which my organization is a founding Steering Committee Member. The ICRtoP is a growing network of national, regional and international civil society organizations from various sectors dedicated to advancing the Responsibility to Protect, and to building the capacities to prevent and halt RtoP crimes.

3. The ICRtoP welcomes the Secretary-General's Report and the convening of this interactive dialogue on the third pillar of the Responsibility to Protect, timely and decisive response. This meeting is an important opportunity for Member States, regional and sub-regional organizations and civil society to discuss the norm's implementation and assess best practices from past crisis situations.

4. Since RtoP's historic endorsement by world leaders in 2005, it has become apparent that the conceptual foundation of the norm has been widely supported and is not open for renegotiation. The norm has generated great attention as a potentially powerful tool to promote global peace and has played a key role in influencing the international community's response to the protection of civilians from RtoP crimes in several country situations.

5. The ICRtoP believes that the Responsibility to Protect is founded on the need to prevent genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing. The risk and occurrence of these crimes are in their very nature threats to international peace and security and, as such, there are never situations in which states do not have a responsibility to protect their populations. Therefore, the question is not whether RtoP applies to a situation, but rather how best to operationalize the norm.

6. The Secretary-General's past Reports have provided guidance in this respect, particularly in the establishment of the three pillar framework for RtoP. The initial articulation of the three pillar framework did not call for the chronological sequencing of the pillars, but rather established them together as representative of the full range of measures necessary to protect populations from RtoP crimes. The Secretary-General's latest Report on timely and decisive response further articulates the interactive and mutually supportive relationship between the three pillars.

7. Today as we discuss the third pillar of timely and decisive response, it is important to recall that this must not be misunderstood as solely comprising the authorization of military force. Pillar three of the Responsibility to Protect provides a range of political, economic, humanitarian and, if necessary, military response measures that

can be implemented by actors at all levels for the protection of populations. As noted in the Secretary-General's Report, such tools include preventive diplomacy, fact-finding missions, economic sanctions and embargoes, and military operations, when authorized by the UN Security Council when peaceful measures have proven inadequate.

8. Too often third pillar measures are associated only with the Security Council, but as the Secretary-General's Report notes, these tools can be implemented by a broad range of actors within and outside of the UN system. In addition to its ongoing consideration of RtoP through informal dialogues, the General Assembly has contributed to the operationalization of the norm, for example by calling for the appointment of a Special Envoy in Syria to assist in reaching a political solution to the country's crisis. The Human Rights Council and the High Commissioner for Human Rights can also implement measures under the third pillar, including by authorizing fact-finding mechanisms to document cases of RtoP violations. Regional and sub-regional organizations have taken rapid and robust action to protect populations, as seen in recent cases such as the mediation facilitated by the African Union in Kenya to respond to election-related violence, sanctions endorsed by the Economic Community of West African States in Côte d'Ivoire, the European Union's adoption of travel bans and the freezing of financial assets in response to the threat of atrocities in Libya, and ongoing efforts by the League of Arab States to resolve the Syrian conflict.

9. Recent events only underscore the importance of continued engagement and dialogue on the third pillar of RtoP. In the case of Libya, Member States did not question whether to act to protect civilians from mass atrocities; rather, they considered how to best protect the Libyan population, reflecting a historic embrace of the Responsibility to Protect. Concerns about the way the mandate in Security Council Resolution 1973 was implemented and the tactics used by governments in enforcing a no-fly zone over Libya led to misconceptions that RtoP was synonymous with military intervention or could be used as a vehicle for regime change. We must ensure that concerns about the implementation of the norm are held separate from international consensus on the principles of RtoP. It is also crucial that these challenges in implementation, and tactical concerns with response measures in past cases not hinder timely and decisive action in present or future situations when populations are threatened by RtoP crimes. Every crisis situation is unique and requires a flexible response, according to the threat of violence and needs of the population, but there can never be silence in the face of mass atrocity crimes.

10. Mr. President, I would like to now reflect on the crucial role of civil society in advancing the Responsibility to Protect. Civil society works to galvanize the political will to prevent and halt RtoP crimes and plays a critical role in monitoring the implementation of the norm by national, regional, and international actors. Organizations sound alarm bells when a crisis begins, investigate the commission of RtoP crimes, publish reports detailing gross human rights violations and threats to populations, and contribute to humanitarian service delivery. Civil society is committed to practical engagement with actors at all levels, commends the support for and partnership with international and regional institutions and governments, and recommends that accessibility and mechanisms for cooperation be enhanced.

11. We hope to participate in further dialogues on the Responsibility to Protect and encourage continued collaborative efforts amongst governments, sub-regional and regional organizations, UN bodies, and civil society organizations, to more fully establish and deepen their mutual commitment to protect populations from RtoP crimes.