

Mr. Tašovski (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia): At the outset, I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this meeting on the responsibility to protect (R2P). I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for presenting his report on implementing the responsibility to protect (A/63/677) and to welcome this timely debate as a first step in commencing a dialogue on that topic in the General Assembly.

My country aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Sweden on behalf of the European Union.

The unanimous endorsement of the responsibility to protect was hailed as one of the most important achievements of the 2005 World Summit. In order to address the most serious crimes, the international community made a reinforced commitment to prevent or halt genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing. In that regard, I take this opportunity to reaffirm the support for the concept reflected in paragraphs 138 and 139 of the World Summit Outcome Document (resolution 60/1).

Over the past three years, a number of actions have been taken by Governments, the United Nations and international, regional and non-governmental organizations in support of the responsibility to protect. Yet much remains to be done. In that regard, I would like to commend the first report of the Secretary-General on implementing the responsibility to protect (A/63/677), which outlines the conceptual framework for and a three-pillar approach to implementing R2P, comprising the protection responsibilities of the State, international assistance and capacity-building, and timely and decisive response. My Government considers the report to be balanced and pragmatic and therefore supports the three-pillar approach as outlined. We agree that the focus should now be on its operationalization and the implementation of its recommendations.

My Government is ready to contribute to the efforts that lie ahead. We are prepared to implement national capacities and policies critical to the implementation of R2P, which applies specifically to genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. At the same time, we recognize that R2P is derived from the positive notion of “sovereignty as responsibility”, which enhances sovereignty by acknowledging that we, as Governments, have humanitarian, human rights and other obligations under international law to protect populations from grave crimes.

Furthermore, we consider prevention to be a critical component of R2P. In that regard, capacity-building should be a key element. However, in cases in which prevention efforts fail, the international community should ensure an early and flexible response, not through graduated measures, but through collective action to be taken by the Security Council in accordance with Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter.

We believe that the General Assembly should continue to make important contributions in order to make further progress in the pursuit of international peace and security. Looking forward,

we must strengthen the international machinery and our own national will to ensure that the failures to protect in recent decades will not be repeated.

By adopting the right to protect, all of us have accepted a new tool for peace. It is time to put that tool to use and to attain the first objectives set out in the Preamble of the United Nations Charter.