



STATEMENT/MEDIA RELEASE

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“The Tide of History is with Us”

UN Sec Gen Ban Ki-moon at Ministerial Roundtable on Responsibility to Protect (R2P)

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon spoke passionately this morning in support of R2P at a Ministerial Roundtable co-hosted by the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect (GCR2P) and the governments of the Netherlands and Guatemala. Twenty-five governments from around the world listened as the Secretary-General described how the principle of R2P *“has gone from crawling to walking to running”* in just a few short years.

“By now it should be clear to all that the Responsibility to Protect has arrived. This can be seen not only in our collective actions in Cote d’Ivoire and Libya, but also in our diplomacy,” said the UN Secretary-General.

While some ministers shared concerns about the need for the consistent application of R2P, the UN Secretary-General said he *“would far prefer the growing pains of an idea whose time has come to sterile debates about principles that are never put into practice”*.

Dr Simon Adams, Executive Director of the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, described the UN Secretary-General’s comments as *“a sharp and timely intervention in the ongoing debate about how best to operationalize R2P.”*

“From Syria to Sudan and Yemen, the Responsibility to Protect presses upon our conscience and should guide our response. R2P is proof that ideas can save lives,” said Dr Adams.

In a free and frank discussion, foreign ministers and other high-ranking officials discussed the Responsibility to Protect – an international norm that aims at protecting populations from genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing. Participants focused upon the lessons learnt this past year in preventing and stopping mass atrocity crimes in Libya, Cote d’Ivoire and elsewhere. With high-level representatives from Brazil, Botswana, Qatar, Egypt as well as from the United States, and various European and Latin American countries, the discussion was lively and good spirited.

In relation to ongoing conflicts in the world, Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon said that; *“We far prefer early engagement to late intervention.”* In his concluding remarks, the Secretary-General said that the annual Ministerial Roundtable co-hosted by the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect helps to *“chart the way forward”* and that *“The tide of history is with us”*.

Dr Adams described the challenge of the next year as being one of *“ensuring that R2P continues to be operationalized. Libya was a challenge to us all, but R2P is still our best chance of turning the broken promise of ‘Never Again’ into a practical reality. To echo the Secretary-General’s sentiment, the tide of history is indeed with us.”*

The Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect was created in February 2008 to catalyze action to move the 2005 World Summit agreement on the responsibility to protect populations from genocide, ethnic cleansing, war crimes and crimes against humanity from principle into practice. See website: www.globalr2p.org/

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