

New Zealand statement: Informal Interactive Dialogue on the Responsibility to Protect

06 Sep 2016

Statement delivered by Nicole Roberton, New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 6 September 2016.

Thank you Mr President,

New Zealand aligns itself with the statement of the Group of Friends, delivered by the Netherlands.

Mr President,

New Zealand would like at the outset to reaffirm our commitment to the responsibility to protect. R2P has travelled a difficult path, but the concept is now more critical than ever. I will steal Ed Luck's words here; R2P is needed most when it is difficult to apply.

Mr President, we have read the Secretary General's report closely, and take away several essential points. Firstly, despite progress in cementing norms and developing the concepts of R2P, implementation remains poor in practice. Two, the protection of international law has little meaning in many contexts. Three, we are struggling to make progress on structural prevention, and fourthly, as we know first-hand as a Security Council member, there is a continued unwillingness, including amongst some permanent members of the Security Council to act despite overwhelming evidence.

New Zealand supports the recommendations in the SG's report to address these complex factors, and in the interests of time we will limit ourselves today to four remarks concerning the Security Council, drawing on our current experiences.

First, the UN and the Security Council must utilise the full range of preventative diplomacy tools at its disposal. As the Deputy Secretary General noted, the window is much wider at this point. In our view, there is a particular need to work closely with regional organisations and neighbours at an early stage to build trust, identify risk, share analysis and to find workable and depoliticised joint responses based on the needs of civilians. A shared approach to prevention is much more likely to be successful and would, we hope, also reduce fears of unwarranted political interventionism.

Secondly, the UN Security Council needs to open all its working methods so it can respond to early signs of crisis. For our part, New Zealand has in the face of much resistance, advocated for practical improvements. These include monthly mechanisms, to discuss in a frank manner, an informal regular

briefing by the Secretary General to the Council, to increase our situational awareness. Early briefings by the special advisors for the prevention of genocide and R2P are also critical.

Third, in situation where we are unable to solve the political aspects of crisis, the Council needs to be prepared to use its authority, whether it's political pressure, sanctions or other measures, to ensure humanitarian access for civilians and to try to mitigate criminal atrocities. Again, as noted by Professor Luck, where the Security Council fails there needs to be alternative routes for the wider membership, indeed the international community, to keep moving, despite problematic geopolitical interests and blockages.

Fourthly and finally, the veto must not be used when there is a clear responsibility to protect. We remain particularly concerned by the creeping veto, the tendency to allow the veto to dominate decision making, even in cases where under the Charter the veto is specifically excluded. We continue to encourage permanent members to exercise restraint in their use of the veto.

We would like to end by thanking the UN, including the Deputy Secretary General and the panel, for your continued leadership and your courage. Your messages are at times difficult for member states to hear, but they are very necessary.

I thank you.