



9 October 2012

The Opening of the 67th United Nations General Assembly and the Responsibility to Protect

The opening of the 67th session of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly on 18 September 2012 provided an opportunity for states to affirm their commitment to the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) and discuss strategies for its implementation.

R2P highlights from the opening included:

R2P Ministerial Meeting

On Friday, 28 September, the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, together with the governments of Denmark, Brazil, the Netherlands and Botswana, co-hosted the 5th annual Ministerial Meeting on the Responsibility to Protect. The meeting, focusing on “Deepening Our Commitment to Mass Atrocity Prevention,” brought together an unprecedented number of states representing all regions of the world. The Prime Minister of Slovenia, H.E. Mr. Janez Janša, participated in the meeting along with 14 Ministers from the United Kingdom, Egypt, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Uruguay and elsewhere. The UN Deputy Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Jan Eliasson, and the UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, Mr. Adama Dieng, also attended. An additional 10 states were present as observers. For more information please see the [joint statement](#) released by the co-host governments.

R2P Focal Points Meeting

The Ministerial Meeting was followed by the 2nd meeting of National R2P Focal Points on Saturday, 29 September. The R2P Focal Points initiative, led by the governments of Ghana, Denmark, Costa Rica and Australia in association with the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, calls upon states to appoint a senior-level government official to facilitate the creation of national mechanisms for mass atrocity prevention and to promote international cooperation via a global network of R2P Focal Points. Representatives from 40 countries participated in the meeting, including Germany, Nigeria, Tanzania and Morocco. Slovenia and Côte d’Ivoire stated their intention to appoint R2P Focal Points, joining the 17 countries who have already done so: Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Costa Rica, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Ghana, Guatemala, Italy, Ireland, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United States and Uruguay. For more information please see the [joint statement](#) released by the co-host governments.

UN General Assembly Opening Debate

The opening debate of the UN General Assembly saw 24 countries raise the Responsibility to Protect directly in their statements. Of those, 17 states affirmed their strong support for R2P and called for its implementation. Denmark and Costa Rica called upon states to appoint R2P Focal Points. Only Sudan, Zimbabwe, Belarus, Russia and Syria raised concerns about the implementation of R2P. In response to the ongoing crisis in Syria, 117 countries expressed concern for the plight of civilians facing mass atrocities. The vast majority called upon the UN Security Council and international community to do more to help prevent further mass atrocity crimes and protect populations at risk.

For a full summary of references related to R2P, as well as the crises in Syria, Sudan, the DRC, Myanmar/Burma and other related issues, please see our “[Compilation of R2P Related Quotes](#)” produced from our monitoring of the UNGA opening.

High-level UN General Assembly event on "Freedom of religion or belief: An individual's choice"

Dr. Simon Adams, Executive Director of the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, delivered a short statement at a high-level event on "Freedom of Religion or Belief" co-hosted by the Foreign Ministers of the Netherlands, Canada and Senegal. Dr. Adams noted that far too often "religious intolerance is utilized to incite hatred and can lead to atrocities." As such, states should take steps to implement their Responsibility to Protect, including through upholding universal principles enshrined in Article 18 of the UN Declaration of Human Rights regarding freedom of religion.

The Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect welcomed the opening of the 67th session of the UN General Assembly and will continue to work with member states over the following year to advance efforts to prevent and protect vulnerable populations from mass atrocity crimes wherever they may occur in the world.