

Informal Interactive Dialogue on the Responsibility to Protect

Trusteeship Council, 10am, 6 September 2016

**Opening remarks by H.E. Mr Mogens Lykketoft,
President of the 70th session of the General Assembly**

Excellencies, Mr. Deputy Secretary-General, distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning.

It is a great pleasure to welcome you to this year's informal interactive dialogue on the responsibility to protect.

At the 2005 World Summit, all Heads of State and Government affirmed the responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

They also stressed the need for the General Assembly to continue consideration of the responsibility to protect.

The General Assembly has fulfilled this role by organizing annual informal interactive dialogues. Each of these dialogues has been informed by a report of the Secretary-General.

In his first report, in 2009, the Secretary-General proposed a strategy for the implementation of the responsibility to protect based on three equal, non-sequential, and mutually reinforcing pillars. Pillar I focuses on the protection responsibilities of the State; Pillar II on international assistance and capacity-building; and Pillar III on timely and decisive response.

A number of the subsequent reports and informal interactive dialogues focused on developing elements of this strategy for implementation.

Last year, the General Assembly's informal interactive dialogue on the responsibility to protect focused on an assessment of progress in the first decade of the principle. On the basis of the insights provided by the Secretary-General's report, States reflected on conceptual and political progress and highlighted positive lessons learnt in the implementation of the principle. The dialogue also provided an opportunity for discussion on aspects of implementation where the record is mixed.

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We know that there is a growing consensus on the key elements of the responsibility to protect, including that its scope is limited to the protection of populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity; that the primary responsibility to protect populations lies with national authorities, that prevention must remain a priority for all States and the international community, and that implementation must take place in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and other established principles of international law. We also know that there are areas on which there is a need for further discussion, including the relationship among the three pillars and the basis for undertaking collective action in those situations when States are manifestly failing to protect their populations.

This year's dialogue is informed by a report of the Secretary-General that invites us to focus on the obstacles to mobilizing collective action to prevent and respond to genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, and suggests how such barriers might be overcome.

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The report starts with the candid assessment that, in spite of the growing consensus that exists on the principle, the international community has fallen short of its aspiration to prevent and respond to the crimes and violations associated to the responsibility to protect. The report encourages discussion on aspects where further debate is required, while taking a practical look at ways to overcome the obstacles that continue limiting our collective capacity to prevent and to respond to these crimes. The task of strengthening preventive strategies, providing timely and decisive response, preventing recurrence and renewing the institutional capacity to prevent and respond, is of the highest ambition. The plight of suffering populations and vulnerable communities requires no less.

I am delighted that our panel today includes the two former Special Advisers on the Responsibility to Protect, Edward Luck and Jennifer Welsh. I look forward to hearing their views as to the challenges and opportunities they encountered in their efforts to advance the principle over the years in which they served.

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I invite all Member States to participate constructively by reflecting on the issues raised in this year's Secretary-General's report.

I trust that our discussions today will contribute to strengthen our capacity to mobilize collective action and to advance the General Assembly's consideration of this principle.

I wish you every success in your deliberations.