

Statement by the Permanent Representative of Portugal, H. E. Ambassador José Filipe Moraes Cabral, at the UN Informal Meeting on the “Responsibility while protecting” (New York, 02.21.2012)



2011 showed that R2P is more than an interesting concept: it is a useful, real tool to deal with real challenges.

Events last year increased the “intensity” of the debate over R2P and protection of civilians. Rarely had we seen the international community uniting in such a clear and prompt way, through the SC, in an exercise of collective responsibility to protect.

Rightly or wrongly, Libya served as “the” case study for both supporters and critics of the concept.

Criticism: over insufficient accountability and transparency in exercising a responsibility (outsourced); in feeding confusion on the notion of R2P and that of the protection of civilians. Some even predicted out loud that R2P, as a tool of the international community, was prematurely dead or had no future in the coming years, a prediction that we do not share at all, quite on the contrary.

Hence, your proposal, (announced during an open debate on protection of civilians during the Portuguese presidency of the SC last November) could not be more helpful and timely.

1. Helpful, to center and move forward again the debate we need on R2P in the right track.

Helpful in “clearing the waters”: The proposal of “responsibility while protecting” relates to R2P: We are all talking about R2P which relates to the 2005 consensus, to the most serious crimes identified (and only those) with its components of prevention and protection, very well reflected in its solid structure of all 3 pillars.

The way we see it, the Brazilian proposal does not change, or intends to change, the very concept of R2P over which the consensus must be preserved. It does not intend to change it, but it is challenging.

Challenging, because it reflects concerns that are real and shared by many.

Challenging, because we know that we have to address them if we want to strengthen the concept, its universal acceptance and ensure its efficacy.

It is a debate that we must encourage in pursuit of an enhanced implementation of R2P. More “responsibility” in the R2P implementation, in all its pillars, means indeed more efficacy, thus better results.

As we see it, it is after all a debate on strengthening the 2005 R2P consensus, by focusing on improving its implementation.

2. But your proposal is also timely.

Next July we’ll have a good occasion to further discuss these issues, on the next report by the SG, through his representative Ed Luck, on R2P, in particular the aspects related to the 3rd pillar.

It is also a good occasion to start responding to the challenge the SG himself put to all of us, as part of his programme for the UN, “to carve out a “new dimension” for the emerging doctrine of the responsibility to protect”.

Mr. Minister, the contribution you brought to this debate is undeniably useful to achieve this goal, and we thank you for that and we look forward to the follow up of this informal meeting.