



STATEMENT
ON BEHALF OF

**The Group of Friends on
the Responsibility to Protect**

DELIVERED BY

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Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar
to the United Nations**

BEFORE

The Formal Debate of the United Nations General Assembly

ON

**The Responsivity to Protect and the Prevention of
Genocide War Crimes Ethnic Cleansing and Crimes
Against Humanity**

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Mr. President,

I have the honor of delivering this statement on behalf of the Group of Friends on the Responsibility to Protect, consisting of 50 Member States and the European Union, and co-chaired this year by Italy and the State of Qatar.

We would like to thank the President of the General Assembly and the Secretary-General for their statements and Australia and Ghana for their leadership in including the responsibility to protect on the agenda of this UNGA. We would like also to thank the Secretary-General for his report entitled "*The Responsibility to Protect: From Early Warning to Early Action*". We commend his prioritization of early warning and early action to prevent genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity and for recognizing that R2P is a key element of this important agenda. We welcome the report's recommendations and encourage Member States to implement them.

The commitment made by all UN Member States to R2P at the World Summit in 2005 was historic. The Group of Friends reaffirms its strong commitment to paragraph 138, 139 and 140 of the World Summit Outcome Document and the three pillars of R2P.

Today marks the first UN General Assembly formal debate on the Responsibility to Protect since 2009. The inclusion of R2P on the formal agenda of the General Assembly reflects the will of the wider UN membership to the prevention of genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing. We urge the UN membership to consider the merits of the permanent inclusion of this item on the UNGA formal agenda. Continued dialogue in the General Assembly will promote the building of consensus in relation to what the international community can do to prevent these heinous crimes.

Mr. President,

The acceptance of R2P through the World Summit Outcome Document remains a key commitment of the international community to protect populations that face the threat of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and ethnic cleansing. At this time, the Group

would like to reiterate its common understanding that the responsibility to protect reinforces, rather than undermines, State sovereignty. As the Secretary-General underlined in the presentation of his priorities to the General Assembly earlier this year, it is necessary to “overcome the false contradiction between human rights and national sovereignty. Human rights and national sovereignty go hand in hand. The achievement of human rights strengthens States and societies, thereby reinforcing sovereignty. States with effective, accountable institutions are among the best defenders of human rights.”

Since 2005, considerable progress has been made by the UN, Member States and other stakeholders, including civil society, in operationalizing our commitment to R2P at the national, regional and international levels. International and national actors have been successful in creating frameworks for identifying risks, developing early warning mechanisms, articulating inhibitors of atrocity crimes and creating new institutional mechanisms. Today's formal debate gives States an important opportunity to share national experiences and best practices and effective strategies for preventing atrocities.

Over the past decade, we have seen the creation and expansion of the Group of Friends on R2P in both New York and Geneva, the establishment and growth of the Global Network of R2P Focal Points, the inclusion of R2P in at least 69 Security Council Resolutions, including in the mandates of a number of UN Peace Operations, and in resolutions of the Human Rights Council. Important initiatives like the *Code of Conduct regarding Security Council action against genocide, crimes against humanity or war crimes*, the *Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes* and *Human Rights Up Front* have supported efforts to prevent atrocity crimes and continue to serve as important tools for mainstreaming atrocity prevention and strengthening prevention capacities.

The prevention of atrocities is at the core of each of the three pillars of R2P, and Member States should better utilize the entire UN system to effectively prevent and respond to their perpetration. As the 2018 report of the Secretary-General on the Responsibility to Protect suggests, we should make a concerted effort to continue to report on progress towards implementation of the responsibility to protect and bring situations of imminent risk of atrocity crimes to the attention of the General Assembly, Security Council, and Human

Rights Council, as needed. For example, the Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review is well placed to support preventive efforts, and we encourage Member States to better utilize the UPR processes as a preventive mechanism. This year we mark the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was created in response to violent conflict in order to prevent future violent conflicts. As well as embodying the international community's commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights for all individuals around the world, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the treaties that derive from it, are, in the words of the Secretary General, the "best prevention tool we have".

The General Assembly should also play a more active role in supporting States in their efforts to carry out their primary responsibility to protect their populations. The Security Council should consider situations where there is potential for mass atrocities at the earliest possible stage, including through utilizing working methods such as situational awareness briefings and Arria-Formula meetings.

We also strongly emphasize the role of women in the prevention of atrocity crimes, as they are crucial for early warning and peacebuilding, promoting cooperation, capacity building, and the creation of more cohesive and inclusive societies. We should take concrete steps to end all forms of discrimination on the basis of gender and to empower women as agents of atrocity prevention, including by ensuring that all girls have equal access to quality education.

As recognized in the Secretary General's report mobilization of all resources at our disposal is required and broadening the constituency of actors engaged in atrocity prevention is needed. In this respect we specifically welcome recent efforts by the General Assembly and Security Council to recognize and promote the participation of youth in conflict prevention and resolution.

Accountability for the perpetrators of atrocity crimes is among the most effective ways of preventing recurrence. States have the primary responsibility to investigate and prosecute international crimes committed within their jurisdiction and national accountability efforts

should be encouraged and supported, including through the strengthening of judicial cooperation between States.

We urge States to comply with their international legal obligations and thoroughly investigate and prosecute persons responsible for genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, or other serious violations of international law, as well as to strengthen judicial cooperation with other States for this purpose. International investigative mechanisms, including fact-finding missions and commissions of inquiry, can support efforts to promote accountability and bring situations of concern to the attention of States. Additionally, international courts and hybrid tribunals, including the International Criminal Court, provide complementary avenues in appropriate circumstances to enable accountability.

We take this opportunity to reaffirm our support for the United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect, and we encourage the Secretary-General to appoint a Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect. The Special Adviser and the Joint Office have a key role in assisting Member States in the operationalization of R2P.

We reiterate the significance of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide as an effective international instrument for the prevention and punishment of the crime of genocide. To mark the 70th anniversary of the adoption of the Genocide Convention on 9 December 2018, the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide has launched an appeal for its universal ratification, which is supported by the Secretary-General. We strongly encourage States that have not yet ratified or acceded to the Convention to consider doing so as a matter of high priority and to ensure its implementation at the national level. Ratifying and complying with the Convention is an affirmation of the commitment of "never again".

We recognize the important role national and international civil society can play in supporting the further advancement and implementation of R2P. In particular, we would like to thank the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect for their invaluable work as Secretariat of the Group of Friends, both in New York and Geneva.

Mr. President,

At a time when more than 68.5 million people are displaced as a result of armed conflict, atrocities and persecution worldwide, we hope that during this debate we can collectively identify implementable strategies that can effectively prevent atrocities and protect populations around the world from atrocities.

Thank you.