

# Summary of the Sixth Informal Interactive Dialogue of the UN General Assembly on the Responsibility to Protect, held on 8 September 2014

## INTRODUCTION

The sixth Informal Interactive Dialogue on the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) was held in the UN General Assembly (UNGA) on 8 September 2014. Sixty-seven member states delivered statements on behalf of eighty-one states regarding the report of the Secretary-General on “Fulfilling our collective responsibility: International assistance and the Responsibility to Protect” (S/2014/449). One regional organization and four civil society organizations also delivered statements.

During the dialogue states reflected upon the implementation of the Pillar II agenda, namely providing assistance to states to help them uphold their primary responsibility to protect. While most states used the dialogue to reflect upon building partnerships for prevention and protection, many also raised concerns regarding specific crisis situations, calling upon the international community to enhance its efforts to prevent atrocities and protect populations. For the first time a statement was also delivered on behalf of all 45 members of the cross-regional Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect.<sup>1</sup>

## BACKGROUND TO THE DIALOGUE

Since 2009 the Secretary-General has issued six annual reports on R2P: “Implementing the Responsibility to Protect” (2009), “Early warning, assessment and the Responsibility to Protect” (2010), “The role of regional and sub-regional arrangements in implementing the

Responsibility to Protect” (2011), “Timely and decisive response” (2012), “State responsibility and prevention” (2013) and this year’s report, “Fulfilling our collective responsibility: International assistance and the Responsibility to Protect.”

While not on the UNGA’s formal agenda, in adopting paragraph 139 of the World Summit Outcome Document states committed to continued consideration of R2P within the UNGA. An interactive dialogue has been held following the release of the Secretary-General’s annual report every year since 2009.

The Secretary-General’s sixth report outlines the ways in which national, regional and international actors can assist states in fulfilling their responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. Before the Secretary-General finalized the report, the UN Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect undertook an extensive consultative process with member states and civil society, which included holding regional consultation meetings and compiling written submissions to a questionnaire.

## PARTICIPATION OVERVIEW

This year’s dialogue began with the Secretary-General noting that R2P is primarily a preventive doctrine and as such it seeks not to simply “protect populations at the eleventh hour.” The Secretary-General argued that to build national resilience to mass atrocities, states must translate “obligations and standards set out in international law into policies, programmes, laws and

institutions that protect and empower their people.” He noted that this includes strengthening the rule of law and accountability mechanisms, as well as improving early warning and education.

Following the Secretary-General’s remarks, a panel of experts commented upon this year’s report. The panel featured important reflections on Pillar II by H.E. Dr. Surin Pitsuwan, former Secretary-General of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, H.E. Mr. Jean Ping, former Chairperson of the African Union Commission, and Dr. Jennifer Welsh, the UN Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect. UN Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson, an important force behind the original global endorsement of R2P at the 2005 World Summit, stated that, “the time has come for a stronger global partnership to implement our collective responsibility to protect.” UNGA President John Ashe and the UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, Mr. Adama Dieng, who moderated the panel discussion, also made remarks.

The panel discussion was followed by interventions from 67 member states (on behalf of 81 states), 1 regional organization (the European Union) and 4 civil society organizations, including the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect, the Asia-Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect and the World Federalist Movement.

While the total number of individual member state and regional organization interventions were fewer in 2014 than in the previous dialogue (67 by comparison to 70), the joint statements delivered on behalf of the 45 members of the Group of Friends of R2P and the “Baltic 3” (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) meant that the overall number of viewpoints represented was substantially higher.

Thirty-two members of the Group of Friends of R2P also made individual statements in their national capacity. Five countries that have appointed National R2P Focal Points, but are not currently part of the Group of Friends, also made interventions: Albania, Georgia, Lithuania, Montenegro and Spain. Albania, Namibia and Ukraine each spoke for their first time in an R2P dialogue, while five other countries - Azerbaijan, Malaysia, Philippines, Romania and Sierra Leone - spoke for the first time since the 2009 dialogue.

Twenty-two states have participated in all six UNGA discussions of the Secretary-General’s reports on R2P: Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Costa Rica,

Cuba, Czech Republic, France, Georgia, Germany, Guatemala, Iran, Italy, Mexico, Netherlands, Pakistan, Republic of Korea, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States and Venezuela.

Member States Participating in the 2014 Dialogue	
Americas	Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, United States, Uruguay, Venezuela
Asia and the Pacific	Australia, China, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, New Zealand, Pakistan, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Thailand
Africa	Botswana, Burundi, Côte d’Ivoire, Nigeria, Namibia, Rwanda (on behalf of the Group of Friends of R2P), Sierra Leone
Europe	Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia (on behalf of Latvia and Lithuania), Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, <sup>2</sup> Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, Ukraine, United Kingdom
MENA	Egypt, Iran, Israel, Morocco, Qatar, Syria, Turkey
Regional Orgs.	European Union

## KEY THEMES

This year’s dialogue consolidated the global consensus on the Responsibility to Protect, with the overwhelming majority of member states continuing to focus on the operationalization of R2P as opposed to debating its theoretical foundation. Most speakers shared practical examples of building partnerships to effectively uphold Pillar II responsibilities. A large number of states reiterated the importance of developing national capacity, as well as the principle of “do no harm” in the provision of support to states.

States reflected on additional themes, including assistance to strengthen human rights mechanisms and judicial systems as well as investing in development

assistance that addresses horizontal inequality and fosters inclusive governance.

Many states also discussed the provision of humanitarian and protection assistance to states, including through peacekeeping missions and stabilization operations. The work of the UN Peacebuilding Commission and the UN Human Rights Council, as well as that of the International Criminal Court, were also referenced by member states.

### *Consensus on R2P's Pillar II*

The vast majority of member states reaffirmed their commitment to R2P and the trend of less strident opposition from “R2P skeptics” continued in 2014.

Countries from Asia and the Pacific, including Indonesia, Philippines, Republic of Korea and Thailand, spoke in broad support of the norm. Indonesia stressed in its intervention that R2P “is one of the United Nations’ most important initiatives.”

Several African states delivered strong affirmations of support for R2P, including Botswana, Côte d’Ivoire and Sierra Leone. Nigeria urged for “more support to assist regional and sub-regional organizations such as the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States, respectively, as well as member states, to implement R2P.”

Overall participation from the Middle East and North Africa was unchanged, but the tone of interventions was far more constructive. For example, the Islamic Republic of Iran expressed its agreement with the Secretary-General’s argument that R2P is intended to reinforce, not undermine, state sovereignty.

The trend of increasing participation from Europe continued at this year’s dialogue, driven largely by countries from Central and Eastern Europe. The “Baltic 3” – Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania - delivered a strong joint statement, noting that Pillar II is “significant in supporting States to succeed in meeting their Pillar I responsibility to protect their populations from atrocity crimes and reinforcing the efforts already undertaken by these states.”

Latin American participation included strong statements of support from Argentina, Chile, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Mexico and Uruguay. The region is also noted for having some of the most vocal critics of R2P, but this year’s dialogue was marked by more constructive contributions by countries such as Bolivia

and Ecuador. Venezuela, meanwhile, emphasized that “member states, as well as the UN System, have a role to play in preventing those crimes that shock humanity.”

A small number of states expressed serious reservations about controversial aspects of R2P, such as the threat of “regime change.” These included: Cuba, Egypt, Malaysia and Syria. Russia and Syria were the only two countries to state that protection responsibilities were exclusive to the state.

Regional Participation <sup>3</sup>					
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Americas	14	10	12	17	16
Asia and the Pacific	8	7	11	13	14
Africa	7	3	6	8	15
Europe	10	18	20	24	29
MENA	3	5	9	7	7
Regional Orgs.	2	3	1	1	1
Total	44	46	59	70	81

### *States Cite Concern with Ongoing Crises and Need for More Effective Implementation*

Many member states raised concerns with the increasing number of situations where civilians face mass atrocities and the urgent need for the international community to respond more effectively in upholding its protective responsibilities. The ongoing situations in Iraq, Syria, Central African Republic and South Sudan were cited. Many member states emphasized the need for the international community to match words with deeds when prioritizing prevention and the protection of civilians from atrocities.

The current crisis in Iraq was mentioned by seventeen states, with a number of countries noting that humanitarian, military and political assistance to the Iraqi authorities to protect civilians at risk from atrocities committed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, or ISIL, is wholly consistent with Pillar II of R2P.

Seventeen states also mentioned the ongoing crisis in Syria, which has claimed the lives of over 190,000 people and has witnessed four double vetoes by China and Russia at the Security Council since 2011. Turkey stated in its intervention that “the international community cannot and should not remain idle when every hour costs innocent lives.”

Namibia, a first-time participant at an R2P dialogue, noted that despite the commitment to the norm, “the ongoing commission of atrocity crimes in several areas across the world illustrates the challenges in universally implementing the Responsibility to Protect.” This point was echoed by many other member states.

#### *States Welcome “Rights Up Front” Action Plan*

The Secretary-General’s “Rights Up Front” action plan, a UN-wide initiative to raise the standing of human rights and improve prevention and early action, was included in this year’s report on R2P. Acknowledging that a breakdown of human rights is a critical risk factor of mass atrocities, the European Union and twelve states - Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Botswana, Côte d’Ivoire, Finland, Italy, Netherlands, Russia, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland - addressed the link between R2P and the “Rights up Front” action plan.

Welcoming “Rights Up Front,” Slovenia called for “more effective system-wide consultations to embed atrocity prevention and R2P into the core operations of the UN.” Australia encouraged member states to support the initiative, and welcomed efforts by the UN Secretariat “to draw to the Security Council’s attention issues of concern that the Council needs to take action on.”

Russia was the only state to express serious reservations regarding the Rights Up Front action plan.

#### *First Statement from 45-Member Group of Friends of R2P*

Rwanda, a co-chair of the Group of Friends of R2P, delivered a strong statement on behalf of all 45 members of the Group. The statement reaffirmed their commitment to paragraphs 138 and 139 and the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document.

The Group of Friends’ statement made clear that all three pillars “are not sequential and are of equal importance.” This interpretation is consistent with the Secretary-General’s preference for “early and flexible response that takes into consideration all the tools available under Chapters VI, VII and VIII” to situations where mass atrocities are threatened or occurring.

Along with recommitting to the fight against impunity, the Group of Friends welcomed the recommendations of the report with respect to the upcoming 10th anniversary of the 2005 World Summit, particularly regarding the inclusion of R2P on the formal agenda of the UNGA.

#### *National R2P Focal Points*

Nine states emphasized the importance of appointing a National R2P Focal Point, a senior government official tasked with coordinating mass atrocity prevention efforts, as a means of upholding both Pillar I and II responsibilities. The Republic of Korea stated the Global Network of R2P Focal Points can be used “to share impact assessments and best practices,” and expressed hope that more member states would join the network.

Botswana reflected upon the Fourth Meeting of the Global Network of R2P Focal Points, which it co-hosted with the Netherlands in June 2014. Noting the level of participation at the meeting and the highly interactive dialogue, Botswana affirmed in its intervention that “whilst each state has the primary responsibility to protect its citizens, cooperation and collaboration with the international community is vital.”

The nine states who mentioned National R2P Focal Points were: Albania, Belgium, Botswana, Costa Rica, Côte d’Ivoire, Denmark, Republic of Korea, Slovenia and Spain.

#### *More Vocal Support for Voluntary Restraint on the Use of the Veto*

As with previous years, member states continued to call for restraint on the use of the veto by the Permanent Members of the Security Council in mass atrocity situations. Fifteen member states referenced veto restraint at this year’s dialogue: Albania, Côte d’Ivoire, Denmark, France, Georgia, Germany, Liechtenstein, Mexico, Montenegro, Netherlands, Peru, Philippines, Sierra Leone, Slovenia and Spain. This was a marked increase from eight references during the 2013 dialogue.

France, a permanent member of the Security Council, emphasized its efforts to forge agreement amongst the permanent members to exercise voluntary collective restraint on the use of the veto. France noted that it would convene a Ministerial event with Mexico on its veto initiative during the Opening of the 69<sup>th</sup> session of the UNGA.

Peru stated in its intervention that “R2P would lose its leverage” if real reform of the UN Security Council was not undertaken, with particular reference to the use of the veto. Denmark urged the Security Council “to be consistently guided by R2P and for its permanent members to refrain from blocking Council action that aims to prevent or stop relevant atrocity crimes.”

## *The 10th Anniversary of the World Summit and Placing R2P on the Formal Agenda of the UN*

The Secretary-General's report proposed recommendations for member states to advance R2P in light of the upcoming 10th anniversary of the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document. These included undertaking a stock-taking exercise for the next report of the Secretary-General, as well as considering moving R2P onto the formal agenda of the UNGA.

The European Union and 15 states expressed support for the inclusion of R2P on the formal agenda of the UNGA: Chile, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Guatemala, Hungary, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Peru, Republic of Korea, Rwanda (on behalf of the Group of Friends of R2P), Slovenia and Uruguay.

Guatemala, which was instrumental in the adoption of the procedural resolution on R2P in 2009, called for the holding of a formal debate with the adoption of an outcome during the current 69<sup>th</sup> session of the UNGA. Côte d'Ivoire and Slovenia also mentioned that a resolution on R2P should be passed by the UNGA and the Security Council to mark the 10th anniversary of the World Summit Outcome Document.

A number of states also made powerful statements regarding the 10th anniversary of R2P. Côte d'Ivoire said the anniversary marked an opportunity for the world to "strongly reaffirm its commitment to this norm that is above all a morally indisputable imperative facing the commission of barbaric mass atrocities."

## **CONCLUSION**

The 2014 dialogue on the Responsibility to Protect displayed the growing global consensus on the norm. A clear majority of states see R2P as an effective tool to address the complex set of challenges all states, regional organizations and international actors have in assisting states to uphold their primary protection responsibilities. The discussion advanced the debate on practical operationalization of R2P by enabling member states to share best practices from their own experiences.

The focus over the coming year must be on translating this consensus into ongoing action to prevent atrocities and protect vulnerable populations. UN member states should also craft an ambitious agenda for the next decade of R2P to mark the 10th anniversary of the norm

in 2015, as well as the 15th anniversary of the genocide in Srebrenica and the 70th anniversary of the United Nations.

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<sup>1</sup> The Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect is a cross-regional group co-chaired by the Netherlands and the Republic of Rwanda. Its members include: Argentina, Australia, Bangladesh, Belgium, Botswana, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Czech Republic, Denmark, European Union, Finland, France, Germany, Ghana, Guatemala, Hungary, Italy, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Mali, Mexico, Morocco, Mozambique, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Panama, Republic of Korea, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, Tanzania, United Kingdom, United States and Uruguay.

<sup>2</sup> The government of Slovakia distributed their official written statement during the event, but did not deliver an oral statement. The written statement is available on the Global Centre for R2P's webpage for the 2014 Dialogue: <http://www.globalr2p.org/resources/643>.

<sup>3</sup> Cumulative numbers for 2014 include Slovakia and those countries who agreed to joint statements delivered on their behalf, but who did not also contribute to the dialogue through their own individual statement. This includes two members of the "Baltic 3" – Latvia and Lithuania – as well as twelve members of the Group of Friends of R2P - Bangladesh, Ghana, Liberia, Mali, Mozambique, Panama, Senegal, Singapore, South Sudan, Sweden and Tanzania.