

## Summary of the Seventh Informal Interactive Dialogue of the UN General Assembly on the Responsibility to Protect, 8 September 2015

### INTRODUCTION

The seventh Informal Interactive Dialogue on the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) was held in the UN General Assembly (UNGA) on 8 September 2015. One regional organization (the European Union, or EU) and sixty-nine member states delivered statements on behalf of eighty-nine countries regarding the report of the Secretary-General on *A vital and enduring commitment: implementing the responsibility to protect* (A/69/981-S/2015/500). For the second year in a row a statement was made on behalf of all 49 members of the cross-regional Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect.<sup>1</sup> Four civil society organizations, including the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, also delivered statements.

Member states used the dialogue to reflect upon the progress and challenges in advancing and implementing R2P in the ten years since its adoption at the 2005 UN World Summit. The statements delivered were overwhelmingly positive, with particular attention given to priorities to advance the norm in the future, noting especially the priority attached to mass atrocity prevention. Member states also expressed concern about the dire situation facing civilians around the world, including in Syria, Iraq, South Sudan and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

### BACKGROUND TO THE DIALOGUE

Since 2009 the Secretary-General has issued seven 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), *Fulfilling our collective responsibility: International assistance and the responsibility to protect* (2014) and this year's report.

While not on the formal agenda of the UNGA, in adopting paragraph 139 of the World Summit Outcome Document states committed to ongoing 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 seventh report of the UN Secretary-General on R2P takes stock of ten years of efforts to advance and implement the norm, assesses implementation efforts under each of the three pillars of R2P, surveys emerging threats and challenges, and highlights six core priorities for the next decade.

### PARTICIPATION OVERVIEW

This year's dialogue began with the Secretary-General's opening remarks on the tenth anniversary of the Responsibility to Protect, noting that the adoption of the norm was a "milestone in transforming international concern about people facing mortal danger into a meaningful response." Reflecting on crises where populations faced the risk of mass atrocity crimes, the Secretary-General made a strong appeal to member states for renewed commitment to R2P. "The challenges of atrocity crimes are enormous – and the human cost is staggering. That is not a reason to be overwhelmed – it is

a cause for urgent action. I count on your leadership in making sure R2P provides real protection for people in dire need,” the Secretary-General concluded.

For the first time, the Informal Interactive Dialogue did not commence with a panel of experts to provide remarks in advance of member state interventions. This decision was made to afford more time for member states to reflect upon the report and the occasion of R2P’s tenth anniversary. The Vice-President of the UNGA, Mr. Einar Gunnarsson, and the UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, Mr. Adama Dieng, who moderated the panel discussion, also made opening remarks.

These remarks were followed by interventions from the EU and 69 member states speaking on behalf of 89 states. The Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect delivered a statement to conclude the morning session. Three other civil society organizations, including the Asia-Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, the Canadian Centre for the Responsibility to Protect and the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect, delivered statements. The UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, Dr. Jennifer Welsh, provided concluding remarks.

The total number of individual member state interventions increased from 67 at last year’s dialogue. The statements delivered on behalf of the EU, the 49 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 also higher from 81 at last year’s dialogue.

Forty members of the Group of Friends of R2P also made statements in their national capacity. Three countries that have appointed national R2P Focal Points, but are not currently part of the Group of Friends, also made interventions in their national capacity: Albania, Croatia and Georgia. Five countries specifically mentioned the work of the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, including Botswana, Denmark, the Netherlands, Nigeria and the United Kingdom.

The dialogue saw increased participation from Asia and the Pacific, Africa and Europe. Cyprus, Poland and Vanuatu each spoke for the first time in an R2P dialogue, while one country – Croatia - spoke for the first time since the 2009 dialogue.

Twenty states have participated in all seven 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, Mexico, Netherlands, Republic of Korea, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States and Venezuela.<sup>2</sup>

### Member States Participating in the 2015 Dialogue

Americas	Brazil, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Cuba, Guatemala, Mexico, Panama, Peru, United States, Uruguay, Venezuela.
Asia and the Pacific	Australia, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Myanmar, New Zealand, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Thailand, Vanuatu.
Africa	Botswana, Ghana, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania.
Europe	Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia (on behalf of the “Baltic 3,” including Latvia and Lithuania), France, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, the Netherlands (on behalf of the Group of Friends of R2P and in its national capacity), Norway, Poland, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom.
MENA	Egypt, Iran, Israel, Morocco, Qatar, Syria, Turkey.
Regional Orgs.	European Union (on behalf of all 28 EU members, 2 Candidate Countries – Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia - as well as Liechtenstein, Georgia and Ukraine).

### KEY THEMES

The overwhelming majority of member states focused their statements on practical steps towards more effective implementation as opposed to debating R2P’s theoretical foundation.

The need to prioritize prevention and strengthen early warning mechanisms was reiterated in many state’s interventions. States also reaffirmed the need to work closely with regional organizations and strengthen partnerships for prevention and response. Assistance and capacity-building to strengthen national resilience were

also referenced in a significant number of statements. Member states also affirmed support for the six core priorities of the Secretary-General for the next decade.<sup>3</sup>

The need for accountability to prevent the recurrence of mass atrocity crimes, in particular through the International Criminal Court (ICC), was also raised. Member states made calls for the ratification of relevant legal treaties, such as the Rome Statute of the ICC and the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. The work of the UN Human Rights Council was also referenced by a number of member states. States consistently made reference to a wide range of tools in the normative framework of R2P that encompass much more than just the use of coercive measures.

### *Reaffirming Commitment to R2P*

The vast majority of member states reaffirmed their commitment to paragraphs 138 and 139 of the 2005 World Summit Outcome and the three-pillar approach. Many member states also called for renewed commitment to the principle on the occasion of its tenth anniversary.

Countries from Asia and the Pacific, including Japan, Republic of Korea, Indonesia and Philippines, spoke in broad support of the norm. This continued the trend of increasingly positive and constructive engagement from the Asia-Pacific region in the context of the annual Informal Interactive Dialogues. The representative from China reiterated his country's readiness to work together with the international community "to fully implement the objectives laid out in the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document."

Several African states delivered strong affirmations of support for R2P, including Botswana, Ghana and Sierra Leone. Noting the "commendable progress in the implementation of R2P through article 4(h) of the African Union Constitutive Act," Nigeria called for greater collaboration among regional and international actors. While echoing this sentiment, Tanzania also called on the commitment to R2P "to be reflected in national policies, laws and administrative actions."

Participation from Europe included strong statements of support delivered on behalf of the European Union and the "Baltic 3" (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) as well as a growing number of countries in their national capacity. Countries from Latin America and the Caribbean, such as

Chile, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Mexico and Uruguay, also demonstrated strong support. Brazil argued that R2P reinforces state sovereignty, while also emphasizing the importance of investing in prevention, and upholding a responsibility while protecting.

Participants from the Middle East and North African demonstrated constructive engagement from the region. In particular, Qatar used the opportunity of the dialogue to note that it joined the Group of Friends of R2P and has also appointed a national R2P Focal Point.

Participation by Region <sup>4</sup>						
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Americas	14	10	12	17	16	13
Asia and the Pacific	8	7	11	13	14	14
Africa	7	3	6	8	15	14
Europe	10	18	20	24	29	41
MENA	3	5	9	7	7	7
Regional Orgs.	2	3	1	1	1	1
Total	44	46	59	70	81	89

A small number of states expressed serious reservations in their interventions at the dialogue, including concerns over the use of force and references to the threat of "regime change." These included: Belarus, Cuba, India, Russia, Sudan, Syria and Venezuela.

In her concluding remarks, Dr. Jennifer Welsh elaborated on the "remarkable progress" since 2005 and the near-universal agreement on the underlying principles of the norm, stating, "we have turned a political commitment in the 2005 World Summit Outcome into a program for implementation."

### *Support for a UN General Assembly Resolution*

Many member states used the dialogue as an opportunity to encourage the passing of a UNGA resolution to reaffirm support to R2P and mark the tenth anniversary. Norway remarked that a resolution at the UNGA "which reaffirms and elaborates on the 2005 UN World Summit Outcome on R2P" would be an important step. In a powerful call, Australia also urged the UNGA to "formally take up its mandate" for moving the implementation of R2P forward.

Including the joint statements delivered by the cross-regional Group of Friends and the EU, a total of 58 countries voiced their support for a resolution at the UNGA in 2015. Fourteen states, including Guatemala, Norway and the Republic of Korea, also made specific calls for a UNGA resolution in their national statements.

The statements on behalf of the Group of Friends and the European Union also expressed support for the inclusion of R2P on the formal agenda of the UNGA. An additional 15 states spoke in favor of this in their national statements, including France, Rwanda and Uruguay.

### *Growing Support for Initiatives Regarding the Security Council*

There were numerous calls for the UNSC to act more effectively to prevent mass atrocity crimes and to respond in a more timely and decisive manner. Particular attention was given to initiatives regarding the responsibility of the UNSC in mass atrocity situations, namely the initiative of the governments of France and Mexico and of the 25-member Accountability, Coherence and Transparency Group (ACT).

France, a permanent member of the UNSC, emphasized its ongoing efforts to forge agreement amongst the permanent members to exercise restraint on the use of the veto. Liechtenstein also took the opportunity of its statement to expand on the ACT Group's *Code of conduct regarding Security Council action against genocide, crimes against humanity or war crimes*.<sup>5</sup> Japan called for ongoing discussion of both initiatives "as part of efforts by the international community to implement the Responsibility to Protect."

The United Kingdom remarked that it "would never vote against a credible draft resolution to prevent or respond to genocide, crimes against humanity or war crimes." The representative of the United Kingdom called on all UNSC members to echo this commitment, noting that it "would be a fitting way to mark this important anniversary and to recommit to the responsibility to protect doctrine."

In total, 36 states referenced the need for permanent members of the Council to refrain from using the veto in mass atrocity situations. This was a significant increase from eight references during 2013 and fifteen during the 2014 dialogue. The 2015 dialogue brought the number of countries that have expressed support for the efforts to restrain the veto in mass atrocity situations to 73

countries.<sup>6</sup> The initiatives of France and Mexico and of the ACT group both received 20 references of support.

### *The Global Network of R2P Focal Points*

A significant number of member states emphasized the importance of appointing a national R2P Focal Point, a senior government official tasked with coordinating mass atrocity prevention efforts. The Secretary-General's report explicitly endorsed the expansion of atrocity prevention networks and he used his statement at the dialogue to recommend the appointment of Focal Points.

The EU, Japan, Qatar and Rwanda announced their recent appointment of an R2P Focal Point at the dialogue. Many member states noted in their interventions that the Global Network of R2P Focal Points now consists of over one quarter of UN membership, and called for all countries to join this growing community of commitment. As the representative of Botswana stated, "it is my Government's considered view that with more countries appointing Focal Points, both national and international capacity to prevent mass atrocities would be strengthened."

The co-hosts of the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Global Network of R2P Focal Points, Spain and Chile, both mentioned the recently held meeting in their statements. The Republic of Korea took the opportunity to announce that it will host the 6th Annual Meeting of the Global Network of R2P Focal Points in Seoul in 2016.

A total of 29 statements, delivered on behalf of 61 countries, referenced national R2P Focal Points. This was a significant increase from nine references at the 2014 dialogue, indicating the importance member states attach to the Global Network of R2P Focal Points as the world's largest governmental network dedicated to the prevention of mass atrocity crimes.

### *Links with Major Reviews and Cross-Cutting Agenda Items*

Delegations remarked on the three major reviews initiated by the UN Secretary-General in 2015 on UN Peace Operations, the Peacebuilding Architecture, and on Women, Peace and Security. Each of the reviews were mentioned in over 15 statements, including those by the Group of Friends of R2P and the EU.

Member states reaffirmed the strong links between these cross-cutting agenda items. Finland recalled that the reviews presented the UN with a “special opportunity to renew and further strengthen our commitment” to R2P. Echoing this, Ghana recalled, “it goes without saying that the important work being done on issues relating to the protection of civilians, women and children as well as prevention of sexual violence and mass atrocity crimes in situations of armed conflict, all lead to sustaining the principle of responsibility to protect.”

Regarding UN peace operations, many member states noted that ten out of sixteen operations currently have Protection of Civilian mandates, and carry out functions relating to R2P. Specific calls were also made to ensure peacekeepers were adequately trained to prevent mass atrocity crimes, including via integrating the UN’s *Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes*.

#### *Statement by the Group of Friends of R2P*

The Netherlands, a co-chair of the Group of Friends of R2P, delivered a statement on behalf of all 49 members. The statement reaffirmed the Group’s commitment to paragraphs 138 and 139 of the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document. The statement also reiterated the intent of the Group’s members to strengthen their political commitment to R2P’s objectives, to invest in prevention and to ensure more timely and decisive response to early warning signs, consistent with the priorities identified in the Secretary-General’s report.

The 49 members of the Group of Friends reaffirmed their support for the Special Advisers on the Prevention of Genocide and on the Responsibility to Protect. The Group also noted that the recently-published *Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes* serves “as an important tool for mainstreaming atrocity prevention in the UN as well as assisting Member States to strengthen their own capacities and strategies.”

The Group’s statement concluded with a pledge to take “determined action” to meet the Secretary-General’s priorities, a call for the “full and effective implementation of all three pillars of R2P,” and a recommitment to the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity on the occasion of the norm’s tenth anniversary.

#### *The Need to Protect Vulnerable Populations*

Noting the significant number of situations where civilians face the risk of mass atrocity crimes, many member states recalled the urgent need for the international community to uphold its Responsibility to Protect.

Nineteen states mentioned the ongoing crisis in Syria, which has claimed the lives of over 240,000 people and has witnessed four double vetoes by China and Russia at the UNSC since 2011. The situations in Burma/Myanmar, Central African Republic, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Iraq, Libya, Nigeria, South Sudan, Sudan and Yemen were also mentioned.<sup>7</sup>

Particular attention was also paid to the role of non-state armed groups, which were addressed in the Secretary-General’s report as a new challenge in R2P implementation. The Netherlands encouraged the international community to assist states in countering these groups, while Australia also called for a greater recognition of the links between atrocity prevention and countering violent extremism.

Reflecting on the need to move from principle to practice, many member states expressed strong support for the six priorities highlighted in the Secretary-General’s latest report for the next decade of R2P. The statements by the Group of Friends, EU and Baltic-3, as well as by 15 states speaking in their national capacity, reiterated support for the Secretary-General’s “Human Rights Up Front” initiative.<sup>8</sup> States also looked forward to the publication of the “Compendium of Practice” by the UN Office on Genocide Prevention and R2P.<sup>9</sup>

Speaking for the first time at an interactive dialogue on R2P, Poland stated, “we are very glad with the progress made in implementing the responsibility to protect since the 2005 World Summit when R2P became the integral part of the UN agenda. In particular, it is satisfying that despite all challenges, we moved from a conceptual discussion into practical application of this concept in many critical situations.” Croatia, speaking for the first time since 2009, stated that “it is imperative for us to continue to tirelessly build on the R2P framework so as to ensure the protection each and every civilian deserves.”

## CONCLUSION

The 2015 UN General Assembly's Informal Interactive Dialogue on the Responsibility to Protect reaffirmed the considerable and undeniable progress in advancing and institutionalizing the norm since the 2005 UN World Summit. This included support for the full and effective implementation of all three pillars and the work of the Special Advisers and the Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect.

Member states made clear that despite ongoing debates about implementation in specific cases, R2P remains the most effective tool to prevent mass atrocity crimes. There were determined calls for a renewed commitment to the principle in the face of ongoing crises where populations

are threatened by genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. The 2015 dialogue made clear that the success of the Responsibility to Protect depends upon the ongoing commitment and leadership of those charged with its implementation.

In this regard, the dialogue established clear support for action on the six priorities of the Secretary-General for the next decade of R2P. A clear signal of support was also sent regarding the need for a resolution reaffirming the norm at the UN General Assembly. The complementary initiatives of France and Mexico and the ACT Group also received strong endorsement. Success on all of these fronts would be an appropriate way of marking the tenth anniversary of the Responsibility to Protect and the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations.

---

<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, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Botswana, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Czech Republic, Denmark, European Union, Finland, France, Germany, Ghana, Guatemala, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Mali, Mexico, Morocco, Mozambique, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Panama, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Sudan, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tanzania, United Kingdom, United States and Uruguay.

<sup>2</sup> Please see our Resource Page for the full list of statements delivered at the 2015 Informal Interactive Dialogue on R2P: <http://www.globalr2p.org/resources/797>.

<sup>3</sup> The six priorities are: (1) signaling political commitment at the national, regional and global levels to protect populations from atrocity crimes, (2) elevating prevention as a core aspect of the responsibility to protect, (3) clarifying and expanding options for timely and decisive response, (4) addressing the risk of recurrence, (5) enhancing regional action to prevent and respond to atrocity crimes, and (6) strengthening international networks dedicated to genocide prevention and the responsibility to protect.

<sup>4</sup> Cumulative numbers for 2014 and 2015 include 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. For 2015 this includes two members of the "Baltic 3" – Latvia and Lithuania – nine states spoken for by the EU – Austria, Bulgaria, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Greece, Ireland, Malta, Montenegro Portugal and

Ukraine - as well as nine members of the Group of Friends of R2P – Argentina, Bangladesh, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Mali, Mozambique, Senegal and South Sudan.

<sup>5</sup> Please see "General Assembly Informal Interactive Dialogue on the Responsibility to Protect – Statement by Mr. Stefan Barriga," available at:

<http://www.globalr2p.org/media/files/liechtenstein-3.pdf>; and

"Explanatory Note on a Code of Conduct regarding Security Council action against genocide, crimes against humanity or war crimes," available at:

[http://www.regierung.li/files/medienarchiv/unoallgemein/2015-09-01\\_SC\\_Code\\_of\\_Conduct\\_Atrocity.pdf?t=635777965302301559](http://www.regierung.li/files/medienarchiv/unoallgemein/2015-09-01_SC_Code_of_Conduct_Atrocity.pdf?t=635777965302301559).

<sup>6</sup> Ghana, Japan, Nigeria, Panama, Thailand and Turkey discussed the issue of the veto for the first time during the dialogue. For the full list of countries, please see: [http://www.globalr2p.org/our\\_work/un\\_security\\_council\\_veto\\_restraint](http://www.globalr2p.org/our_work/un_security_council_veto_restraint) and: <http://www.restrainthetveto.com>.

<sup>7</sup> Burma/Myanmar also "categorically rejected" the analysis featured in the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect's R2P Monitor concerning the risk of mass atrocity crimes facing the country's persecuted Rohingya minority.

<sup>8</sup> For more information on the "Human Rights Up Front" Initiative of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, please see: <http://www.un.org/sg/rightsupfront/>.

<sup>9</sup> For more information on the forthcoming "Compendium of Practice," please see:

<http://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/adviser/implementation.shtml>.