

UK

Draft Statement for UNGA debate on RtoP

Mr President,

I would like to align the UK with the statement delivered by the Swedish Permanent Representative on behalf of the EU.

I am particularly pleased to be delivering the UK statement at this debate on implementing the Responsibility to Protect.

The endorsement of RtoP by the largest ever assembly of world leaders was, for me, one of the most important elements of the World Summit Outcome. As an achievement, it was nothing short of groundbreaking and one of which we should be rightly proud. And we should give thanks to our African colleagues, for showing us the way with their own commitment to the principle of non-indifference as enshrined in the AU Constitutive Act.

The term "never again" resonates with us all. Our shared memories of Rwanda and Srebrenica ensure that it is a commitment that every UN Member State can support. The question has always been, how to put this into practice? The Responsibility to Protect is a concept which allows us to do just this. And now four years after we agreed the principle, the UK welcomes this debate on how to take forward implementation within the UN. The Secretary-General has provided us with recommendations, a framework, if you like, for action. But we must play our parts and seize this opportunity to continue consideration of how to make real progress on operationalisation.

The UK finds the report well-balanced and true to the 2005 agreement. It is clear about what RtoP is and also, in the face of many misconceptions, what it is not. More importantly, the report is also practical. The three-pillared approach of State responsibility, assistance and response aids conceptual clarity, as does the emphasis on the need for an early and flexible response. Every situation is different and we must guard against an overly-prescriptive, and I would say, overly-simplistic “checklist” approach to action. RtoP activity encompasses a wide range of possible actions designed to help States protect their populations – all, as the Secretary-General makes clear, in accordance with the UN Charter. Collective action should be determined by an assessment of the situation on the ground and of the best tool suited to address that.

In this context, I should take a moment to highlight the importance of two issues: the first being the key role to be played by regional organisations. If we are to implement RtoP effectively, it is right that they should take or share the lead in reacting to crisis situations in their regions. And secondly, the value to be found in improving and better co-ordinating our early warning efforts, our use of and receptivity to information - a more cohesive UN approach to this can only enhance our collective prevention efforts.

The Secretary-General’s explanation of RtoP as a “narrow but deep” concept is also helpful in terms of implementation. While the concept applies to the four crimes only, there are many ways and means by

which States can put it into practice. In the UK's view, RtoP should be a governing principle of all Member States' work across the conflict spectrum, as well as on human rights and development. Building good governance, the rule of law, and effective judicial and security sectors all goes towards building a preventive environment in which RtoP crimes would be less likely to take place.

I will conclude by saying a little about what I think we should be trying to achieve here, that is an RtoP-culture, a culture of prevention that is as much about responsible sovereignty as it is international assistance. A culture that in the long-term will help us to prevent mass atrocities and reduce conflict and the cost of conflict. A culture that will help us to build an international system which is better equipped and more effective at preventing and responding to conflict. A culture which fosters our ability to reach consensus on timely and decisive action. I don't think anyone here would disagree with those goals. And I very much hope that none would seek to delay implementation through procedural or administrative means. This is too important to us all – we made a commitment in 2005, a commitment to practical action. We must now live up to that.

Thank you Mr President