

**Statement delivered by the Delegation of Venezuela to the United Nations, at the United Nations General Assembly Thematic Panel Discussion "From commitment to implementation: Ten years of the Responsibility to Protect," convened by the President of the General Assembly [Unofficial Transcription]**

25 February 2016

In 2012, the SG, in his address to the Stanley Foundation Conference on the Responsibility to Protect, said: "In 2011, history took a turn for better. The Responsibility to Protect came of age, the principle was tested as never before. We gave hope to the people long oppressed. In Libya, by our words and actions we demonstrated that human protection is a defining purpose of the United Nations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century".

Now we know that the Security Council authorized intervention in Libya did not put an end to violence and had the unintended effect of exacerbating tensions on the ground and causing more harm than good to the very same civilians it was supposed to protect. It soon became clear that the intervention's goal was not the protection of civilians but regime change. Furthermore, large quantities of weapons and ammunition from the conflict, including anti-aircraft artillery, surface-to-air missiles and man portable air defense systems, found their way to neighboring countries, exacerbating insecurity and terrorism in the region to this very day.

Now, rather than questioning whether military intervention may do more harm than good, many Responsibility to Protect proponents continue to argue that the real risk comes from too few military interventions. Now, this rather casual approach to military intervention, to the use of force ignores the potential for escalating violence, civilian casualties, damage to infrastructure and many potential negative effects of the use of military force.

The centrality of military intervention in Responsibility to Protect is obvious when one considers that many of the non-military elements of the concept are already present in other instruments of the UN. There is a significant overlap between Responsibility to Protect's prevention agenda and the toolbox of traditional preventative and peacebuilding practices that have been part of this organization long before the concept ever emerged.

Furthermore, when we focus so much on military intervention, even as a last resort, it tends to inhibit meaningful reflection on prevention. In a concept where the coercive option that is widely funded and functional it becomes, maybe by defect the only functional option. For example, tens of billions of dollars were spent on bombing Libya to oblivion, but we know the peacebuilding fund faces serious challenges just to raise 100 million.

In order to achieve real progress to prevent conflict, in all its forms, we have to put military intervention on the side. And, in this regard, we wish to welcome the ongoing consultations on the importance of peacebuilding before the emergency, during and after the conflict. We understand that not everyone shares this view, but we see that we're pitting one internationally agreed principle, non-intervention, against another principle, the protection of human rights. And, when we focus so much on building this last resort option for when all else fails, we devote the attention to the wrong place.

We should devote our attention and our energy to insuring that the system never fails to begin with. Now this message is not as attractive as military intervention and it's much harder to achieve, but it is also, we believe, much more likely to succeed in building a lasting, sustainable peaceful world.