

Meeting of National Focal Points on R2P convened by Costa Rica, Denmark and Ghana, New York, 17 and 18 May 2011

Introduction

The first meeting of focal points jointly convened by the foreign ministries of Costa Rica, Denmark and Ghana, in association with the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, took place on 17 and 18 May 2011. The meeting had the purpose of being the springboard for setting up a functional R2P focal points network for the prevention and halting of mass atrocities. Thirty-one countries participated, nineteen of which sent a designated senior-level official along with twelve representatives from missions at the United Nations. Countries represented by officials from their capitals included: Australia, Belgium, Benin, Botswana, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Ghana, Guatemala, Mexico, Mozambique, the Netherlands, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Uruguay, and the United States. The second group included Argentina, Bangladesh, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Costa Rica, Côte D'Ivoire, Indonesia, New Zealand, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Rwanda, South Africa, and the United Kingdom. Twelve panelists from the world of academia and diplomacy participated in the conversation. From civil society, four nongovernmental organizations attended as observers.

Panelists and participants welcomed the session as the first meeting of the national focal points. While highlighting the value of this meeting as the first step in an iterative process, the participants viewed the dialogue through the lens of a network creation stage. As a result, they framed the discussion as an opportunity to set the agenda for the national focal points for R2P through prioritizing their roles and responsibilities, and building sustainability for continued interactions. Participants had the opportunity to discuss what needs to be done on the national, sub-regional, regional, and global levels. The two days of discussion also led to an exchange of ideas regarding what mechanisms could be created to make the R2P norm and the network of national focal points sustainable, and whether and how those mechanisms should be institutionalized.

The Mission

Drawing on the existing consensus around R2P, the three co-conveners encouraged participants to give special attention to what states can do domestically to promote and institutionalize R2P and to engage in collective prevention. Costa Rica, Denmark and Ghana exhorted participants to identify relevant national, regional, and international capacities and to consider ways to further the role of sub-regional and regional arrangements in strategizing and concretizing R2P.

The need to pay attention to the three pillar structure¹ outlined in the Secretary-General's report *Implementing the Responsibility to Protect*—including root causes but also those situations in which the state may be failing or proving unwilling—was raised by a number of participants. This consideration is based upon a simple fact: not only are perpetrators too often in denial, but so too may be the international actors expected to assist and/or intervene.

As the support structure of the R2P edifice, the three pillars are not only co-equal, but are organically related to each other. Furthermore, the third pillar cannot be reduced to military action, as it involves a broad spectrum of options that spans chapters VI, VII, and VIII of the UN Charter.

National focal points and the envisaged network of focal units are particularly well placed to engage in creative thinking on all three pillars. Many agreed that decisions and choices taken within the remit of the second and third pillar are likely to have ramifications through the third pillar. Failure to address the risks under pillars one and two will eventually force focal points to address pillar three issues. There are powerful reasons and incentives to anticipate such scenarios, and manifest failure is not a discussion that member states can afford to postpone until mass atrocities are already underway. Indeed, all

¹ As stated in the Secretary-General's Report *Implementing the Responsibility to Protect*, "Pillar one: The protection responsibilities of the State; Pillar two: International assistance and capacity-building; Pillar three: Timely and decisive response." See, *Implementing the Responsibility to Protect, Report of the Secretary-General*, (General Assembly document A/63/677), 12 January 2009

these connections are important and will require the attention and active involvement of international, regional, and sub-regional actors as well as national authorities.

The view that states can be genocidal, proto-genocidal, non-genocidal, or anti-genocidal was echoed by many participants. In many instances, the occurrence of mass atrocity crimes is the result of individual and collective choices. A state does not become suddenly and spontaneously genocidal or anti-genocidal. These are political choices consistently taken over time.

The recent debates on R2P and the prevention of genocide have made clear the readiness of the great majority of states to more openly embrace a mass atrocity prevention culture. This involves a major moral and political transformation; a movement from states' willful neglect to a national and international anti-mass atrocity preparedness. The role of the General Assembly interactive dialogues on the Responsibility to Protect in socializing, contriving a "conversational space," and promoting this transformation was recognized by many. In the view of some participants, these sessions had already fostered R2P capacity within UN missions in New York. But in terms of the focal point initiative, the issue is not just to have a focal point, but to have states fully committed to this culture of preparedness. By establishing national focal points, and creating an institutional basis for a particular and distinct responsibility, participating states can offer a valuable example for others in the policymaking process.

One speaker after another reminded both the conveners and the country participants that they were in the early days of "a system creation phase." As a transformative process, the creation of a network of focal points is bound to take time and dedication—"it will need to be iterative." While some called attention to the risk of cooptation (by one of the parties to the violence), many agreed that by establishing the foundations for a dozen or so truly effective national focal points across regions, in the medium and long term this initiative can make a real difference.

During the meeting, panelists gave presentations on broad conceptual topics related to R2P and the role of the national focal points. Topics included the role of the UN in the network of focal points; coordinating national, regional, and global roles and responsibilities; national experiences; the role of national human rights institutions; as well as efforts at strengthening regional and international capacities to prevent and halt mass atrocities. After each presentation attendees participated in an open discussion contributing their own perspectives on their roles and responsibilities within their home states, at the regional level, and in connection with UN institutions. Several themes emerged from these open dialogues reflecting participants' opinions and queries. Common topics included the location of the focal point within the national system; the roles and functions national focal points will serve as they relate to the three pillars of R2P; the role of civil society; the national experiences of states that have gone through mass atrocity situations; the challenges that national focal points will encounter in building capacity for R2P; and the priorities for members of the national focal points network as they go forward from this first meeting.

A recurrent theme through the discussion concerned the need to provide the network of national focal points with mechanisms that can guarantee its sustainability over time. Many pointed to the key role that the three co-conveners and the Global Centre have played, but with a sense that the challenge against mass atrocities is a long-term project, most participants agreed on the need to find a way to sustain the development and consolidation of the network.

Roles and Responsibilities

The need to clarify the scope of action and responsibilities of the national focal points received considerable attention. The main responsibilities and roles envisaged for the national focal points were both domestic and external in nature. On the domestic side, these included the development and implementation of a national R2P plan, the monitoring and gathering of information about domestic situations, and the coordination of national preventive and protection responses.

Externally the national focal point is expected to reach out and network at the sub-regional, regional, and global levels. The main functions considered for the external role of a national focal point were grouped together under the notion of a network entrusted with a variety of functions: from normative promotion, to socialization, facilitation, communication, and coordination for preventive and protection purposes.

Whether domestically or in its external mode, early in the discussion participants agreed that it would be unrealistic to expect a national focal point to perform all R2P related jobs. The operational logic of a national focal point was clearly understood in terms of its catalyst power along three main dimensions: preventive and protective action, coordination, and

burden sharing. Yet, as countries work together to address and improve their individual and collective capacities, they will create powerful incentives to avoid crisis in the first place and build the necessary political will as circumstances may require.

I. National Focal Points

a) Location

The placement of a focal point for R2P within national institutions quickly emerged as a prevalent topic as attendees compared their own position within their home state to that of other participants. The inclusiveness of R2P was highlighted in this discussion as the assembled group brought together individuals responsible for addressing R2P issues from a wide array of institutions including from, among others, capital offices and UN missions, from foreign ministries and ministries of justice, from posts as civil servants and as presidential appointees. While sharing concerns regarding these differences, the dialogue addressed how the location of the focal point may be decided to accommodate various roles in different country situations.

What is the most appropriate location for placing an R2P focal point such that it has the ability to effectively fulfill its responsibilities? Participants raised many questions in this regard. Should it be a political position, or one that fits in a specific institution or place within institutional structures? Would a national focal point be more effective as an individual devoted to this single issue, or as a convening office bringing together individuals who work on R2P related issues from various national institutions?

The pros and cons of entrusting an individual with the responsibility were also addressed. Some argued that the more senior-level a person's position is within their government system the more diverse their responsibilities become. Others pointed to the risk of discontinuity associated with political appointees, who are vulnerable to changing electoral and political cycles. Some suggested a dual system supported with a civil servant base. Many agreed on the need to creatively institutionalize the national focal points so as to guarantee: a) its permanence and sustainability over time and the emergence of R2P standard operating procedures; b) its political relevance and authority; and c) its capacity to reach out across ministries and departments. Most participants agreed that the challenge will be to maintain R2P's priority level. The example of the development across regions and countries of national offices responsible for disaster preparedness was a case in point. Regardless of whether the national focal point takes a more political or bureaucratic form, it is clear is that the focal point will need to be resourced and properly staffed.

Attendees agreed that this position is not of the one size fits all variety, that there should not be a political-ideological litmus-test for its design, and that it needs to be tailored to the particular situation of each member state. Even with this assessment, however, some common qualities were expressed as priorities by several participants. These included the necessity of establishing a focal point with sufficient influence and access within their own national system to be able to promote R2P broadly, and to mobilize mechanisms for preventing and halting mass atrocities when those situations emerge.

The next section discusses the responsibilities that members of the network anticipate national focal points can fulfill. The many different functions that focal points are expected to serve at the national, sub-regional, regional, and global level demonstrates why proper placement within the national system is key to fulfilling those roles.

b) Roles and Responsibilities of National Focal Points

One of the main purposes for convening this first meeting of the national focal points was to map the potential roles that these actors will play in implementing R2P within their country, sub-region, and region, and how those roles will link up to the UN and global level. The development of a network of focal points positioned at the national level gives individuals serving in this role the noted advantage of being able to think and interact globally while acting locally. This naturally lends itself to national focal points and the greater network performing functions divided along the three dimensions of R2P.

Participants emphasized two aspects that apply to all levels of R2P implementation while addressing the roles and responsibilities of national focal points. First, as focal points go forward in their national and regional settings, they should remain aware of the existing mechanisms in the human rights and R2P toolboxes, and be careful not to

duplicate those tools while instituting new procedures. Second, actions taken at all levels should be directed toward the development of national capacities and political will.

Within their home states, national focal points have roles to play across the entire prevention-protection spectrum. The main domestic tasks identified for a national focal point include: a) advocacy and socialization; b) institutionalization; c) mass atrocity strategic planning and advice; and d) early warning and response coordination. Thus under pillar one, the office of the focal point should oversee national planning, bottom-up norm development, and institutional reform for R2P. As several state and regional representatives suggested, a primary responsibility of the focal points is to promote the concept of R2P within their own societies.

Implementing national human rights, particularly physical integrity rights, and R2P education rose to prominence as a key role for the focal points to serve. Several participants noted that primary education on respect for human rights should be instituted nationally within all levels of schools, from introductory civic education programs for children to faculty tailored programs in higher education.

Human rights education and training, as they relate to various vocations, should also be given priority among individuals serving in the public and private security sector and the judiciary, among other places. Additionally, while contributing observations on the global reaction to actions taken in Libya, participants noted a general lack of civilian-level, and in some cases government-level, understanding of the R2P norm and its principles. These observations led to several recommendations for focal points to organize R2P training and education sessions for individuals in all levels of government and for leaders within civil society.

National planning through influencing the reform of domestic institutions emerged from the assessment of national experiences as an additional pillar one responsibility for the focal points, with important implications and ramifications for pillar two. Just as lawyers, police, and military personnel need education in human rights, the institutions within which they operate need further reforms in order to operate with adequate respect for human rights and R2P norms. The frequency of R2P cases in which security forces and police have been coopted was highlighted, as was the propensity for impunity and lack of judicial accountability. The potential role that focal points can play in promoting strategic institutional reforms in the security sector and the judiciary across regions was underlined. Targeted reforms for the prevention of mass atrocity include enforcement of rule of law, policy reform, security sector reform, and effective judicial review. In those instances in which social and economic issues are accompanied by clear signs of exclusion and discrimination, focal points can also play a key role. The same applies to hotly contested elections where instability and violent mobilization may heighten the risk of these crimes. Reforms that should be undertaken when an atrocity has occurred include: transitional justice to address crimes committed, demilitarization, demobilization, and reintegration, and economic and social development.

Many concurred that a national focal point could additionally serve as a venue for gathering and analyzing information about problems related to R2P that may exist within the country. Drawing on the recent experiences of national human rights institutions in crisis management, including in India and South Africa, many agreed that a focus on early warning—monitoring domestic situations and helping identify early relevant signs—is a task that national focal points should not elude. Indeed one of the top initial priorities identified for focal points is to establish an early warning system within their office for receiving and disseminating information about emergent situations in both their respective countries and neighborhoods.

II. A Network of National Focal Points: Roles and Responsibilities

As the discussion moved to the external and collective roles that national focal points are envisaged to play, the profile for the coalesced network of national focal points came together. And as tasks were identified for their domestic roles, a number of functions were considered for the network. In terms of advocacy and socialization, many called attention to the need to regionally promote the R2P culture and to reinforce the policy commitment among governments in the region. Some pointed to the need to connect with regional institutions and initiatives, including regional peacekeeping centers and security networks. Most participants concurred about the need to anchor and institutionalize the principle in regional and sub-regional arrangements. As the discussion moved to implementation, the roles identified for the network ranged from specialized service provision—mapping capacities, building data on experiences and best practices, identifying experts and analysts, and providing authoritative translation of instances of hate speech—to facilitating trans-governmental and trans-regional synergies and promoting relevant capacity building. In a more proactive mode, the network was seen by many as a

unique resource for four main purposes: 1) regional monitoring, peer-reviewing, conditionality and early warning specifically tailored for mass atrocity prevention; 2) effective mobilization of coalitions of support, dialogue, and preventive action at the regional and global levels; 3) fostering strong partnerships between the UN and regional and sub-regional initiatives; and 4) developing a sense of obligation to cooperate, a “code of conduct,” to prevent mass atrocities crimes and protect people from them.

While addressing pillars two and three, special emphasis was placed on the neighborhood, with particular attention given to regional organizations. The neighborhood effect can result in the spread of conflict through a region as ethnic and social crises spill across borders, but the neighborhood can also serve as a venue for early warning and post-atrocity support if states have the will to utilize the tools available in regional arrangements. The neighborhood can be a venue for peer reviews and is thus ideally situated to identify the early symptoms of states under stress.

A network of national focal points can play a role in influencing these neighborhood effects by serving as the connective tissue tying countries in a region together—even in the absence of strong regional organizations—with each new connection strengthening the regional arrangement as well as the overall network of focal points. This connective tissue can be the first point of contact for exchanging information on arising situations. One suggestion for pushing these information-sharing relationships forward was the establishment of South-South and North-South pairings among the members of the focal points network.

While focal points can individually act to strengthen mechanisms for R2P nationally and establish regional connections for pillars two and three, collectively they can also reinforce connections between the regional and global levels. The network develops ties not only among the national focal points but between the national focal points and the UN system, and the Joint Office for the Prevention of Genocide and the Responsibility to Protect in particular. As an interconnected network the focal points can then harness these linkages in order to mobilize global responses under pillar three when situations of mass atrocity arise in other states.

The analysis of regional experiences and practices highlighted a number of relevant lessons. Four deserve special consideration.

- First, the importance of accession policies and conditionality was highlighted with reference both to the European experience and to MERCOSUR in the Southern Cone. While the lock-in power of EU conditionality is not present in other latitudes, participants recognized the potential reputational impact of decisions bearing on regional membership.
- Second, the need to build on existing systems and practices that are already in the business of regionally implementing global principles and norms, including those related to R2P, was noted. The notion that human rights, fundamental freedoms, and democratic practices are the legitimate concern of the international community is already embodied in practices developed by the OSCE in Europe, Inter-American institutions, and ECOWAS.² While the AU policy of non-indifference received praise as a model for how a neighborhood should develop the will to support one another, the OAS-appointed Inter-American Commission on Human Rights—due to its mandate, size, nimbleness, independence, and four decades of practice—was highlighted as a model group for a cluster of nodal R2P groups.
- Third, the need to crystallize the message of the focal points into a formula that can be taken up at the highest level was emphasized. Once at that level there is potential for a far higher impact. This is particularly important given the lingering pull of the “intervention-by-invitation-only” tradition in all three regions.
- Fourth, the consistent implementation of R2P is bound to be a long-term process demanding perseverance and patience. Although in the medium and long term R2P’s implementation will remain unequal, the determined and patient efforts of the network could help close the consistency gap.

² More specifically, the presentations referred to the OSCE 1991 Moscow document and its standards and methods to uphold the rights and responsibilities of citizens and regulate the domestic behavior of states; the democratic norms and the jurisprudence on crimes against humanity developed by Inter-American institutions, as well as the path-breaking 1999 Protocol of ECOWAS on conflict prevention, resolution, and management and its supplementary protocol on democracy and good governance.

III. The Role of Civil Society

During the meeting participants discussed the pillar one and pillar two roles that civil society can play in many contexts. Civil society actors can be especially effective in applying the principles of “think globally, act locally,” since they are most intimately connected to the local level and can best observe ground truths. This gives them a unique advantage to contribute to promoting R2P, providing observations for early warning, and ultimately preventing crimes. The connections that civil society groups have among each other and with local communities can aid focal points in information gathering and in efforts at educating the population on R2P principles. Panelists discussing national and regional experiences highlighted the ways in which civil society groups have already participated in the development and application of early warning tools. ECOWAS, for example, allows civil society groups to review and contribute to surveys on political conditions within countries.

Given its connections to the community level, civil society was viewed as a tool that can be utilized to further the understanding and acceptance of the normative principles of R2P at the local level. One of the noted deficiencies of R2P at the local level was insufficient societal knowledge of the principle, which for many states remains a term understood only by individuals engaged with the UN system. As a couple of participants observed, in some countries civil society supports the main principles behind the norm without familiarity with the R2P label. Many believe that if awareness of R2P can be enhanced within civil society groups then they may prove a very effective mechanism for spreading knowledge of the norm across communities.

IV. National Experiences

Individuals shared their national and regional experiences with mass atrocity situations throughout the meeting, giving participants the opportunity to exchange lessons learned from both best practices and inadequacies in facing these situations. Representatives from four countries—Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cote d’Ivoire, Guatemala, and Rwanda—gave formal presentations on the political and societal conditions that existed pre-atrocity, and the mechanisms they have implemented for reparations and institutional restructuring post-atrocity. Experts and practitioners from regional organizations in Africa, Europe, and Latin America also formally discussed their experiences in developing and implementing regional tools for responding to pre-atrocity and post-atrocity situations. The shared experiences from the four countries helped the participants to establish a list of priorities to address in developing the roles and responsibilities of the focal points.

One common thread tying all of the presentations together was the necessity of addressing the political and societal issues that initially led to the conflict arising, as a first step toward prevention of future outbursts of violence. Each presentation demonstrated that the crisis occurred following the ignition of divisions that already existed within society, and that remedies to prevent future atrocities needed to address those issues. Remedying these deficiencies was one reason why building mechanisms for accountability, reforming the security sector, and developing human rights education programs were highlighted as key functions that focal points could fulfill.

The ambassador from Bosnia and Herzegovina highlighted the value of strengthening international attention to conflicts. He discussed the impact the international media had in generating attention on the genocide in the early 1990s, and emphasized that, by giving the world a firsthand view of civilians struggling, the media made it untenable for the international community to fail to react. The presentation also discussed the imposition of a no-fly zone during the crisis in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Libya now, and relayed that while tools such as this do not prevent catastrophes, they may mitigate the number of casualties experienced. The experience of Bosnia and Herzegovina made this country particularly sympathetic to the UN’s views on institution building as part of the peace-building process. Bosnia and Herzegovina’s experience showed that reconciliation and building judicial institutions to immediately address mass atrocity crimes must occur swiftly if a country is going to adequately recover and move forward. The presentation closed by commending the UN’s accomplishments in developing instruments for dealing with these situations in the aftermath of atrocities in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Rwanda.

The ambassador from Cote d’Ivoire discussed the recent electoral crisis in his country. He emphasized that many of the divisions in society that were ignited already existed prior to the election. Among the problems that Cote d’Ivoire experienced were xenophobia against immigrants from other parts of Western Africa, impunity throughout the country, and a democratic deficit that lent itself to a culture—and eventual crisis—of contestation. The culture of impunity was particularly critical since crimes committed during previous crises and civil wars went unpunished, which meant that the security sector acted as though any crimes committed now would go unpunished again. The ambassador noted the role that the

international community played in halting mass atrocities, and emphasized that the new government intends to utilize other international and regional mechanisms to swiftly prosecute anyone involved in a mass atrocity crime.

The representative from Guatemala assessed the country's reconciliation and education process following the civil war and the 200,000 civilians killed in the last century. The rebuilding process in Guatemala focused on a few key areas such as justice, education, and reparation. The justice approach included punishing crimes committed during the war, establishing laws to prevent future crimes in other conflicts, and laying the foundations for an adequate judicial system. The International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) established in 2007 under the auspices of the UN received special attention as a hybrid initiative embodying the spirit of R2P. Reparation included sensitizing the population to human rights, committing the government to avoiding new violations, and retraining the military while also downsizing the security sector. Education, highlighted in the presentation, was a most valuable tool for emphasizing respect for other people and for constructing a culture of peace. All of these processes included a memory element for teaching society about what occurred during the war, and providing access to the truth commission reports.

The representative from Rwanda gave a brief history of the genocide that took place in 1994 and provided an assessment of the national and regional tools that have been developed since. As with the presentation by the ambassador from Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Rwandan presentation emphasized that justice and punishment of crimes must occur swiftly if society is going to recover at an effective pace. The presenter highlighted that the Rwandan genocide generated lessons on the national and regional levels. On the domestic level, Rwanda learned that government needs to be completely inclusive and that all ethnicities need to be evenly represented in government office and in the security sector. Regionally, the African continent developed several instruments for prevention, including a continental early warning system, an African Standby Force, and a Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance.

These presentations not only illustrated best practices and deficits in action in specific cases, they also helped shape the priorities of focal points individually and for the network as a whole. In addition, all of the presentations highlighted the value of persistent international and regional attention to mass atrocity crimes, and the consequences of not generating enough attention when early warning mechanisms show that a conflict is imminent.

V. Challenges Ahead

Throughout the meeting speakers tempered their optimism about the way forward by remaining vigilant to the many challenges ahead for states in fulfilling their responsibility to protect. A prominent issue among the challenges addressed relates to defining the scope of R2P cases. Participants discussed whether the R2P label should be exclusively applied to cases with a sudden burst of conflict activity, or to chronic cases as well. The view that mass atrocities require planning and preparation, and that a sudden and unexpected explosion is most often the anomalous case, clearly prevailed. As a result many concurred about the need for focal points to prepare and mobilize in both scenarios. The dialogue also addressed how focal points may prove a decisive factor in determining whether to act in ambiguous cases. An additional, related operational challenge addressed the variation in the role of the focal point when coping with a pre-atrocity situation as compared to post-atrocity conditions.

Speakers addressing the national and regional experiences regarded improvements in early warning mechanisms as a praiseworthy development and as a setting for many of the challenges for R2P. Multiple conversations commended improvements in domestic and regional early warning tools since the Balkan and Rwandan conflicts of the early 1990s. Continued deficiencies in responding to these improved signals, however, have highlighted the gap between identifying an emergent situation and taking decisive early action. Developing the means to bridge this gap and to influence rapid early action within their national governments was discussed as a key goal for the national focal points.

Discussions of the variety of different R2P cases addressed the frequency with which sudden R2P related crises occur in coincidence with elections. A couple of speakers noted the relationship between disregard for human rights and domestic democratic deficits. Individuals who fail to respect democratic principles and violently promote their own priorities over the will of the people are likely to commit atrocities in order to ensure victory. In order to avoid falling into repeated conflicts surrounding elections, states need to ensure that human rights education coincides with education about the electoral process and democratic principles.

The dialogue on challenges also drew attention to obstacles specific to developing an effective space within which the national focal point can operate. The risk of cooptation of the focal point during a conflict was raised by several participants

as a real concern, particularly in countries with significant societal divisions, or in situations in which the government is a perpetrator of atrocity crimes. This observation weighed heavily in discussions of whether to make the focal point a group rather than an individual so as to neutralize any potential for cooptation, as well as in dialogues on the necessity of having a focal point for R2P at the regional level who could mobilize regional mechanisms when national ones fail.

VI. The Way Forward

At the conclusion of the meeting, the co-hosts announced their intention to organize a second session of the national focal points in the beginning of 2012. Participants left this first meeting with a set of priorities to address in the interim period. As an immediate point of departure, focal points were encouraged to contribute their own concerns and suggestions to the Joint Office for the Prevention of Genocide and the Responsibility to Protect, so that their voices can be reflected in the work of this office, including the drafting of the Secretary-General's report on the role of regional and sub-regional organizations in implementing R2P. Other immediate priorities for the members of the focal points network included actions to take within their home states and collectively with other members of the network. In their respective states, focal points should follow-up on and develop alert mechanisms for conflicts in their own country, especially in states with chronic divisions; develop a domestic network for early warning that covers as many regions within the country as possible; and hold training activities on R2P to spread understanding of the basic concepts behind the norm. Within the network, focal points should establish and maintain a communication system with other network members and share information with members of the network when situations of mass atrocity may arise.