

**Statement by the Group of Friends<sup>1</sup> of the Responsibility to Protect in Geneva at the Interactive Dialogue with UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, 10 March 2016**

I have the honour of delivering this statement on behalf of the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect, which is co-chaired by the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the Republic of Rwanda.

The Group of Friends welcomes the convening of this Interactive Dialogue with the High Commissioner and would like to take this opportunity to thank the High Commissioner for his commitment to the promotion and protection of all human rights, and for the tireless work of his Office

The Group of Friends in Geneva was formally established in November 2015 on the occasion of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 2005 World Summit, recognizing the crucial role that Geneva-based organizations play in highlighting the importance of preventing mass atrocity crimes through capacity building and early warning. The Membership of the Group of Friends includes over fifty delegations from every region of the world.

The adoption of the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document, which recognized the Responsibility to Protect, reflected a historic commitment by the United Nations and its Member States regarding the protection of populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

Widespread and systematic abuses or violations of human rights or violations of international humanitarian law often serve as early warning signs of potential genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and/or crimes against humanity.

We therefore note with appreciation the Secretary General's intent to develop a preventive approach that would focus on averting large scale violations and abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law, which could amount to genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and/or crimes against humanity. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights plays a key role in this regard by alerting the United Nations system and the international community to human rights violations and abuses and violations of international humanitarian law. Furthermore, the work of the Office contributes to effective and timely action aimed at preventing the commission of such acts: in institution building, technical assistance, early warning capacity building, best practice advice and persistent attention to warning signs.

The Responsibility to Protect can significantly contribute to the preventive work of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, other relevant Geneva-based institutions and mechanisms, as well as non-governmental organizations.

The Group of Friends takes this opportunity to express its full support to the work of Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Mr High Commissioner, we are encouraged by your personal support and broad experience in the field of prevention and we wish to deepen our engagement with you and your Office with the objective of strengthening our individual and collective capacity to prevent genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. We would welcome your views on how to further implement RtoP within the UN system.

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<sup>1</sup> Netherlands, Rwanda, Botswana, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Liberia, Mali, Morocco, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Tanzania, Bangladesh, Japan, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Argentina, Chile, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Mexico, Panama, Uruguay, Belgium, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Czech Republic, Denmark, European Union, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Norway, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, United States