

Statement by the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect in Geneva at the HRC 33 General Debate Item 10 – Technical assistance and capacity-building

Mr. President,

I have the honour of delivering this statement on behalf of the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect¹.

Widespread and systematic abuses or violations of human rights often serve as early warning signs of potential genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and/or crimes against humanity. As the High Commissioner recently stressed, *“Failure to prevent human rights violations weighs unbearably on victims, and is profoundly destabilizing for States”*.

The responsibility of states to take action to prevent atrocity crimes, consistent with international law, is well established. The toolbox for such action is wide-ranging and includes encouragement and assistance by the Human Rights Council.

That is why today we wish to stress the key role of the Human Rights Council to support technical assistance and capacity-building work in the prevention of atrocity crimes. The prevention of atrocity crimes requires, inter alia but not limited to, *“sustained efforts to build the resilience of societies (...) by ensuring that the rule of law is respected and that all human rights are protected, without discrimination; by establishing legitimate and accountable national institutions; by eliminating corruption; by managing diversity, constructively; and by supporting a strong and diverse civil society and a pluralistic media”*².

Putting an end to serious violations of human rights and atrocity crimes should be seen as the beginning of a period of social renewal and institutional capacity-building, aimed at making future re-lapse into

¹ 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

² Analysis Framework.

violence less likely. The second pillar of the Responsibility to Protect highlights that *“The international community has a responsibility to encourage and assist States in fulfilling this responsibility”*.

In this regard, the importance of capacity-building, early warning, and accountable and inclusive national institutions cannot be overlooked. We wish to underline the importance of technical cooperation, aimed at assisting States, upon their request, in building and strengthening national capacities that have a direct impact on the observance and enjoyment of human rights.

In this respect, we commend the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights for the early and flexible responses tailored to specific situations in the context of its capacity building and technical assistance work. The activities undertaken through its field presences can contribute to assisting States to take appropriate legislative, administrative and other measures, to prevent human rights violations and their potential escalation into atrocity crimes or conflict. These activities can contribute to creating enabling environments for strong domestic systems of promotion and protection of human rights.

The integration of a human rights perspective into the work of United Nations Country Teams and United Nations peacekeeping missions is another positive development that can contribute to the prevention of gross violations of human rights that can potentially lead to atrocity crimes.

Today, more work is required to increase the support which can be provided on the ground. We urge the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to strengthen its preventative capacity, including through further elaboration of its prevention toolkit and we encourage states to fully cooperate with the Council, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and Special Procedure mandate holders.

I thank you.