



ARMENIA

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GENERAL ASSEMBLY INFORMAL INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE ON THE REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT: MOBILISING COLLECTIVE ACTION: THE NEXT DECADE OF THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT.

STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR ZHRAB MNATSAKANYAN, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ARMENIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

Mr Chairperson,

We express our appreciation of the initiative of the President of the General Assembly to convene this interactive dialogue on such pertinent topic and thank the distinguished panellists for their thoughtful presentations. We also thank the Secretary General for his report and for sharing his vision for a collective action.

The Secretary General's report once again reminds us of the present more challenging context, in which the frequency and scale of atrocity crimes has increased. It is a worrying call for reflection and action for the international community, who back in 2005 agreed to strengthen their collective capacity to protect populations from atrocity crimes and formulated the principle of responsibility to protect.

Our reflections on the principle of responsibility to protect extend to both its conceptual strength and to the effectiveness of its practical implementation. On the first account, we believe the general consensus on the concept remains a work in progress. It is very important to admit this, as scepticism towards the principle, varying interpretations of its core substance and ensuing political divisions undermine the solid foundation on which the implementation should rest. Of course, much has been done to this end, and we commend the Special Advisers of the Secretary General on the Prevention of Genocide and the Responsibility to Protect for the considerable contribution in developing and advancing the concept. The present report of the Secretary General represents a new building block in the evolution of the principle. We encourage the Secretary General and the Office of the Special Advisers to continue the patient, yet resolute engagement with the membership in addressing the concerns and disagreements.

We believe a degree of consensus is duly captured in the respective Human Rights Council resolutions on the prevention of genocide, wherein member states recognise the responsibility to protect as an important tool for the prevention of genocide. We will continue to build upon this consensus and sustain focus on the vulnerable target groups, as defined by the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, whose protection needs should be covered by the concept. Viewed from such angle, the application of the concept of protection should

firmly rest on a rights based approach. The protection of the individual rights of members of target groups, and of their rights as a group is at the heart of the preventive pillar of the responsibility to protect.

While the primary responsibility to protect firmly rests with nations, and while we collectively admit that sovereignty entails responsibility, perpetration of atrocities by terrorists groups, such as, in the present reality, the ISIL, Boko Haram and Al-Shabaab, poses a qualitatively different challenge to the international community. The atrocities, perpetrated by those terrorist formations, particularly against ethnic and religious groups are premeditated and grave identity based crimes of a massive scale. The suffering of Yazidis, Christians and other ethnic and religious minorities and groups in Syria and Iraq must not remain unaddressed. Of course, we also recognise and appreciate efforts aimed at protecting ethnic and religious groups in Syria and Iraq.

Mr Chairperson,

The second point concerns capacity to accept, absorb and act upon early warning signs. The primary responsibility of states in this respect deserves to be restated. Collective early response, on the other hand, points in the direction of political will, constructive engagement and early and effective application of all available peaceful tools in order to deter the measures of last resort. There are ample initiatives and proposals both from the Secretary General and the membership to advance such strategic approach. They are before us. They continue to shape the content of our debates. However, the responsibility to prevent is a call of conscience before populations at risk. We cannot delay progress in developing our capacities.

The human rights and preventive machinery within the UN system has over years generated considerable capacity to detect risk situations, to gather and analyse early warning signs and to deliver it to the membership. Such signs in equal measure concern risks of recurrence. The Secretary General makes a salient point in his report in that rhetorical support for prevention alone will not protect populations from atrocity crimes. Indeed, capacity to act on such information is the challenge before us. The objective is twofold. First, it concerns the capacity of the Organisation to detect and address consistent violations of human rights in a given situation through the prism of potential spiralling and deterioration to the point of massive crimes. There are sufficient tools for that. The Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes is one such outstanding example. Its integration into existing human rights and conflict analysis methodologies is a valuable effort, which deserves support.

Armenia has been staunchly promoting the meaning of early response exactly in the context of prevention. Our record on this issue is known. The resolutions adopted within the Human Rights Council serve the purpose of gradual elaboration of preventive strategies against the crime of genocide. This work will continue. The proclamation of 9 December as International Day to commemorate the victims of genocide and to prevent this crime is, amongst other things, a manifestation of an important consensus within the international community to prevent the recurrence of atrocity crimes through remembrance and reconciliation.

In conclusion, Mr Chairman, we extend our appreciation to the outgoing Special Adviser Ms Jennifer Welsh for her hard work and extend our support and good wishes to her successor, Mr Ivan Simonovic. We also reiterate our continued support to Mr Adama Dieng, Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide. Finally, we will strongly encourage the next Secretary General to continue to attach priority to prevention of atrocity crimes, including the crime of genocide, and to the Joint Office of the Special Advisers.

Thank you.