



THE PRESIDENT
OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

22 August 2016

Excellency,

I have the honour to invite you to an informal interactive dialogue of the General Assembly on the Responsibility to Protect, which I will convene on Tuesday, 6 September 2016, from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. and from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., in the Trusteeship Council Chamber, United Nations Headquarters.

The event will provide a forum for Member States to assess the obstacles to mobilizing collective action to prevent and respond to genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. Also, it will constitute an opportunity to exchange views and perspectives on how such barriers might be overcome. In addition, the dialogue will help signal to the next Secretary-General the importance that Member States place on upholding the responsibility to protect, and will suggest next steps to accelerate implementation of the principle. Finally, the dialogue will help underscore the need for a renewed faith in collective action and an improved capacity to coordinate early responses.

Delegations, wishing to speak, are kindly requested to inscribe to the list of speakers. Please consult the journal for details.

Please find enclosed, for your kind information, the concept note and the programme outline of the meeting.

I look forward to your participation in this important meeting.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurance of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Mogens Lykketoft', written in a cursive style.

Mogens Lykketoft

To all Permanent Representatives
and Permanent Observers to the United Nations
New York

**General Assembly informal interactive dialogue on the Report of the
Secretary-General on the Responsibility to Protect
Mobilizing Collective Action: The Next Decade of the Responsibility to Protect**

**United Nations Headquarters, Trusteeship Council Chamber
6 September 2016 – New York**

Information Note and Provisional Programme

Background

At the 2005 World Summit¹, Member States expressed a commitment to the responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity (“atrocity crimes”). The General Assembly further reaffirmed this role during its sixty-third session². In keeping with these decisions, and building on previous meetings over the past decade, the General Assembly will hold its annual informal interactive dialogue on the responsibility to protect on 6 September 2015.

Since 2009, the Secretary-General has prepared eight annual reports on different aspects of the responsibility to protect. In 2009, the Secretary-General presented a comprehensive strategy to operationalise the principle, including a three pillar strategy for its implementation, in his report on “Implementing the responsibility to protect” (A/63/677). Subsequent reports focused on early warning and assessment, in 2010 (A/64/864), the role of regional and sub-regional arrangements, in 2011 (A/65/877), timely and decisive response, in 2012 (A/66/874), State responsibility and prevention, in 2013 (A/67/929), international assistance and the responsibility to protect, in 2014 (A/68/947), and – on the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the principle, in 2015 – the vital and enduring commitment to the responsibility to protect (A/69/981). Each of these reports has been discussed by the General Assembly during an informal interactive dialogue. The dialogues have featured broad participation by Member States, representatives of regional organizations and civil society.

The case for strengthening the commitment to the responsibility to protect cannot be stronger. Acts that may constitute genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity are currently occurring in far too many crises. The world has also witnessed the alarming rise of non-State armed groups that seek to spread violent extremist ideologies and are brazenly perpetrating atrocity crimes. These situations have created protection challenges of a staggering scale and produced widespread humanitarian crises, including a global migration and refugee crisis.

¹ A/RES/60/1, paragraphs 138 and 139.

² A/RES/63/308

These challenges have also stretched the ability of the international community to generate timely and decisive collective responses.

This year, the General Assembly will consider the eighth - and final - report of the current Secretary-General on the responsibility to protect. The report, entitled “Mobilizing collective action: the next decade of the responsibility to protect” builds on the 2015 report of the Secretary-General, which took stock of the achievements of the first ten years of the responsibility to protect.

The 2016 report emphasizes the critical importance of mobilizing collective action to protect populations from atrocity crimes. Despite advances made over the last ten years, the gap between the aspiration to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity and the reality experienced by populations globally remains a serious challenge. Some State and non-State actors are deliberately disregarding their legal obligations and protection responsibilities. In some cases, the international community still fails to act until it sees casualties mounting. While political divisions extend beyond the realm of any single international body, lack of unity at the Security Council – especially at the early stage of a crisis – can have a particularly negative impact. The report reflects on these challenges and offers suggestions for more effective prevention and response measures.

The report defines collective action to protect populations from atrocity crimes as coordinated and sustained action towards a common objective based on shared norms. Indeed, while States’ primary responsibility to prevent genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity is a central component of the 2005 commitment to the responsibility to protect, Member States have consistently acknowledged that this collective responsibility requires partnership at the local, national, regional and international levels.

The report calls for greater consensus among Member States on a common vision for collective action. This vision should encompass strategies for effective, coordinated preventive action, timely and decisive response, prevention of recurrence, and renewed capacities of regional and international institutions. In parallel, the report recognizes that there are aspects of the responsibility to protect that are the subject of continued discussion, including the relationship among the three pillars of the framework for implementation, and the basis for undertaking collective action in response to situations where States are manifestly failing to protect populations, especially the basis for considering the use of force. The report also observes that there are a number of barriers to mobilizing collective action and proposes ways to overcome them, including failure to invest in structural prevention; lack of compliance with international law; the role played by external actors in enabling the perpetration of atrocity crimes; and lack of unity in the Security Council on action to prevent and halt the commission of atrocity crimes.

In his report, the Secretary-General outlines the high stakes of failing to address the mismatch between our promises and our record of action, which can result in prolonged crises, massive loss of life and displacement, increased regional instability, a weakening of sovereign authority in areas threatened by non-State armed groups and erosion of the credibility of institutions such as the United Nations and regional organizations.

Purpose

The 6 September 2016 dialogue has several purposes. First, it will provide a forum for Member States to assess the obstacles to mobilizing collective action to prevent and respond to genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. Second, it will constitute an opportunity to exchange views and perspectives on how such barriers might be overcome and make specific proposals to address this challenge. Third, the dialogue will help signal to the next Secretary General the importance that Member States place on upholding the responsibility to protect, and will suggest next steps to accelerate implementation of the principle. Fourth, the dialogue will help underscore the need for a renewed faith in collective action and an improved capacity to coordinate early responses.

Expected outcomes

The fact that genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity continue to be committed constitutes a stark reminder of the need for continued dialogue by the General Assembly on how to prevent these crimes. The 2016 informal dialogue on the responsibility to protect offers an opportunity for re-affirmation of the individual and collective responsibility to protect, and for further discussion on how to bolster and accelerate efforts for effective implementation of the principle.

The dialogue is intended to emphasize the value of a collective approach to protecting populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, as well as their incitement. It will also help to reaffirm the important role of the General Assembly in advancing the principle of the responsibility to protect.

Provisional programme

The informal, interactive dialogue will take place from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm and from 3:00 pm to 6:00 pm on 6 September 2016 in the Trusteeship Chamber at United Nations Headquarters in New York. The President of the General Assembly and the Secretary-General (by video-message) will provide opening remarks. A panel discussion with the Deputy Secretary-General and the two former Special Advisers on the responsibility to protect will follow. The Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, who will serve as moderator for the dialogue, will then open the floor to delegates and other participants. Delegations are encouraged to

engage in an open and interactive discussion. Delegations will be requested to limit their statements or interventions to a maximum of three minutes. The President of the General Assembly will close the event with concluding remarks.

There will be an established list of speakers. Delegations wishing to speak are kindly requested to inscribe to the list of speakers through the General Assembly Affairs Branch (Ms. Antonina Poliakova, e-mail poliakova@un.org; tel. 1-(212) - 963-5063), copy to Ms. Mary Muturi (e-mail muturi@un.org) by 1:00 pm on 1 September 2015.

Civil society organizations interested in attending the event should register with osapg@un.org for a special event ticket. Organisations interested in speaking at the event should express this interest when registering to attend.

Time	Programme
	<u>Opening remarks</u>
10:00 am	H.E. Mr. Mogens Lykketoft, President of the United Nations General Assembly
10:10 am	H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations (video message)
	<u>Interactive dialogue</u>
	Moderator: Mr. Ivan Šimonović, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights
10:20 am	Introductory remarks by Mr. Jan Eliasson, Deputy Secretary-General
10:30 am	<u>Remarks by the following panelists:</u> ▪ Mr. Adama Dieng, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide [Presentation of the 2016 Secretary-General's report] ▪ Dr. Edward Luck, former Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect ▪ Dr. Jennifer Welsh, former Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect
1:00 pm	Interactive dialogue adjourns

3:00 pm	Interactive dialogue resumes
5:50 pm	<u>Closing remarks</u> H.E. Mr. Mogens Lykketoft, President of the United Nations General Assembly
6:00 pm	Interactive dialogue concludes