

## Group of Friends of R2P Geneva

### **Statement on Item 2 - Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General**

9 March 2017

Mr. President,

I have the honor to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect.

As the High Commissioner's Annual Report notes, 2016 saw many "significant and protracted crises [and] civilian casualties in conflicts reach alarming levels, while deaths and suffering from large-scale movements of people continued to rise".

We believe that this Council can and should exert greater effort to protect populations from mass atrocities by responding to early warning signs when they arise and preventing situations from escalating. To do this, we welcome the vital work of the High Commissioner and his staff and recognize their efforts in addressing violations and abuses of human rights before they reach the level of a mass atrocity.

We also strongly welcome the new Secretary-General's focus on creating a "culture of prevention" and to his commitment to *Human Rights Up Front*. In the Secretary-General's words, at the current time, the international community spends "far more time and resources responding to crises rather than preventing them".

Mr. President,

Preventing genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing is the *raison d'être* of the Responsibility to Protect. Widespread violations and abuses of human rights can lead to the commission of mass atrocities. By protecting populations from violations and abuses of human rights, we lay the ground for their prevention on a larger scale. RtoP is focused on prevention and provides member states and the international community with a toolkit of preventive and protective measures.

In this regard, the OHCHR, UN treaty bodies and special procedures can be exceptionally well-suited to help us identify mass atrocity risks. We encourage all of them to speak out responsibly and credibly to allow this Council to take timely action. We call on States to cooperate fully with Human Rights Council mechanisms established in view of preventing mass atrocities, and contributing to accountability for serious human rights violations and abuses.

The High Commissioner and his Office first and foremost play a key role in alerting the world to imminent dangers. We welcome the High Commissioner's strong voice in this area and encourage him to continue to draw attention to widespread violations and abuses of human rights that could lead to the risk of mass atrocities when needed.

A useful tool for all Human Rights Council mechanisms is the Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes, produced by the Office of the UN Special Advisers on Genocide Prevention

and RtoP. The Framework can help in monitoring and early warning of the risk factors, and strengthen our prevention and protection. We encourage all Human Rights Council mechanisms and governments to make use of the Framework.

Mr. President,

The information gathered on specific risks can help contribute to the prevention of mass atrocities. In this regard, we also encourage the Office of the High Commissioner and Special Procedures to continue to provide regular information in their annual reports presented to the Human Rights Council and to the United Nations General Assembly to encourage better and more timely preventive action, and continue to provide briefings within their mandate to the United Nations Security Council. We have a common responsibility to protect – we must and we can do better.

Thank you.