

HRC36 Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect Statement 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

12 September 2017

Mr. President,

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

We thank the High Commissioner and his Office for their strong voice and advocacy for the promotion and protection of human rights and we encourage them to continue to mainstream RtoP in their work.

The protection of human rights and the prevention of human rights violations contribute to the prevention of mass atrocity crimes. The United Nations Human Rights Mechanisms are particularly well placed to contribute to that objective as they are focused on improving the compliance of States with international human rights obligations and commitments. By addressing specific situations of concern, reviewing the obligations and commitments of States, engaging with Member States on issues relating to their mandates, and making recommendations for action, the Human Rights Mechanisms play an important role in advancing preventive action, including as an early-warning tool, in ways that can contribute to States' efforts to advance their responsibility to protect.

The Human Rights Council protects human rights, promotes prevention and advances RtoP in at least three ways and in accordance with the Council's prevention mandate based on paragraph 5f of General Assembly Resolution 60/251; it provides technical assistance and capacity-building to help States protect their populations, it encourages and enables States to address widespread violations and abuses of human rights before they reach the level of mass atrocities, and it authorises investigations when mass atrocities may have been committed to report on them, prevent their recurrence and help strengthen accountability. In this regard, we also welcome the Secretary-

General's 9th annual report on *Implementing the Responsibility to Protect: Accountability for Prevention*, which underscores that RtoP is a key element of the Secretary-General's prevention agenda.

The Universal Periodic Review could be a useful mechanism that provides an opportunity for States to assess longer term mass atrocity risks and mobilise support to mitigate them, including through the provision of technical assistance and capacity building. As this year's Secretary-General report on RtoP notes, "Introducing an atrocity prevention lens to the UPR would help ensure that underlying risks are identified early, facilitate remedial action by national governments and promote international assistance".

Mr. President,

The international community should assist States in protecting human rights and promoting prevention, including exercising their responsibility to protect. Several countries that have experienced mass atrocity crimes receive technical assistance and capacity-building, including **Cambodia**, **Yemen**, the **Central African Republic** and **Sudan**. To strengthen this aspect of the Council's preventive work, we should take into consideration the needs and concerns of the State receiving assistance and be ready to offer long-term and sustainable support.

Mr. President,

While the mechanisms of this Council serve important early warning functions, when mass atrocities may occur or in their immediate aftermath, independent investigations mandated by this Council shine a light on reports of crimes allegedly perpetrated against populations by collecting evidence, identifying potential perpetrators, and offering options to address the abuses. Among others, mechanisms have been mandated for **Syria**, **Burundi** and **Myanmar**, and we urge all relevant States to cooperate fully with the relevant mechanisms.

Thank you.