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**STATEMENT
BY**

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MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

**ON THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY INFORMAL
DIALOGUE ON THE REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-
GENERAL ON THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT
ENTITLED: "IMPLEMENTATING THE RESPONSIBILITY
TO PROTECT: ACCOUNTABILITY FOR PREVENTION"**

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Mr President,

My delegation thanks you for scheduling this interactive dialogue and for circulating the concept note that will guide our discussions here today. We further welcome the report of the Secretary-General, which highlights how the Responsibility to Protect fits into his wider prevention agenda, and outlines numerous practical steps Member States can take individually and collectively to bridge the gap between our near universal commitment towards the prevention of atrocity crimes and the current state of implementation of these commitments. South Africa further fully supports the Secretary-General's proposals to integrate the prevention of atrocity crimes into his plan to increase the ability of the UN Secretariat in the field and here at Head Quarters to work in a more integrated and coordinated manner and to mainstream prevention of conflict in the UN system.

We all agree that the Responsibility to Protect populations from atrocity crimes is first and foremost the state's responsibility supported by the international community if and when applicable and with a specific role for the UN Security Council to act in stopping such violations if it becomes clear that a specific state is: "manifestly failing" to implement its responsibility in this regard. South Africa agrees with the Secretary-General's assessment this commitment still has not found full practical implementation – as the numerous conflicts and refugee crises around the globe illustrate.

My delegation therefore fully agrees with the Secretary-General's stance that increasing accountability in the international system and within the UN Secretariat is one practical step towards addressing the gap between commitment to and implementation of the political norm of Responsibility to Protect. We will consider any measures proposed by the Secretary-General to Member States in this regard and fully support the practical proposals the Secretary-General has committed to implement to ensure greater accountability by the UN Secretariat to ensure robust and open "scrutiny of practice".

Mr President,

South Africa has long been a proponent of sharpening the tools provided by the Charter for the pacific settlement of disputes and for the UN Security Council to redirect its reflexive response to emerging conflict, which is either to ignore a developing situation or to respond through Chapter VII actions. We believe that the UN Charter adequately provides numerous measures to ensure the prevention of conflicts, and hence atrocity crimes, and that the UN requires "course correction" in its approach to matter related to peace and security. In addition, should the Security Council manifestly fail its responsibility in this regard – the General Assembly should be more willing to take action, especially if populations are at risk of suffering the four atrocity crimes in the ambit of Responsibility to Protect.

Moreover, the Security Council will do well to heed to the Secretary-General's assessment that prevention action is built on: a) trust; b) transparency; and c)

accountability. The Security Council, which as a result of its uneven implementation of its mandate, is suffering a trust deficit undermining its legitimacy, will do well to reconsider the manner in which it executes its mandate and address threats to and breaches of international peace and security; secondly, it should increase its engagement with member states, especially those affected by conflict and be open to effective engagement with regional and sub-regional institutions; finally, South Africa believes that the Security Council, as well as individual Member States on the Council, should be held accountable by the broader UN membership if it fails to execute its mandate – one way of doing so is to continue the push for the suspension of the use of the veto when considering action on atrocity crimes. In addition, the Security Council return to the full implementation and intent of Art 27(3) in which members of the Council who are party to a dispute / conflict situation under the consideration of the Council not be allowed to vote on decisions related to the dispute.

Subsequently, South Africa supports the proposed practical steps as outlined by the Secretary-General in his report. In this regard I wish to announce that South Africa has recently appointed a Senior Government official as Focal Point on Responsibility to Protect who will form part of the Global Network. We are of the view that in sharing South Africa's own painful history of suffering crimes against humanity, we could contribute in some small way in enhancing understanding of victims and in developing ways to strengthen prevention efforts and accountability measures.

In addition to the above, South Africa reiterates its support for - and commitment to the implementation of the rights and obligations under the instruments of internal human rights and humanitarian law. As already mentioned by other delegations, the African Continent has numerous instruments geared towards the protection of civilians against atrocity crimes, starting with Art 4 (h) of the Constitutive Act of the Constitutive Act of the AU; the AU Human Rights Court; the African Peer Review Mechanism; and the Council of the Wise to name but a few. South Africa is an active participant and staunch supporter of efforts to strengthen state institutions geared at the promotion and protection of human rights.

Mr President,

Gender and sexual based violence are employed by state and non-state actors as a deliberate strategy and when employed in a systematic manner these acts may well amount to crimes against humanity, war crimes or genocide. It is the responsibility of states to protect women and children and men against these acts. In this regard, the need for women peacekeepers is more urgent than ever as women are often better placed to carry out a number of crucial peacekeeping tasks especially with regard to allegations of sexual abuse/exploitation and provide safe environments for women to voice their safety and security concerns. It is in this regard that South Africa welcomes the appointment by the Secretary General of the first United Nations Victims' Rights Advocate, aimed at addressing accusations of sexual exploitation by peacekeepers.

Mr President,

South Africa will consider any further proposals placed on the agenda of the General Assembly related to increased accountability related to the prevention of atrocity crimes, especially those geared towards the enhancement of the prevention of conflict and increased risk of such crimes. South Africa further supports increased coordination and cooperation of the UN with regional and sub-regional organisations, specifically actions geared towards the strengthening of regional instruments and institutions. In this regard we look forward to the presentation by the Special Advisors on the Prevention of Genocide and Responsibility to Protect report on measures to be taken to improve early warning and prevention. We also fully support the Secretary-General's efforts and streamlining the Secretariat's peace and security architecture in such a manner as to mainstream preventative diplomacy.

In conclusion, we wish to reiterate the importance of continuing dialogue on these matters between Member States as well as between Member States and the UN Secretariat – the most significant success of the development of Responsibility to Protect as a political norm, is that it has developed in the General Assembly through in-depth dialogue and engagement which must continue.

I thank you.