

**General Assembly informal interactive dialogue  
On the Report of the Secretary-General on the  
Responsibility to Protect**

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Matthew Rycroft, CBE  
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Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations  
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Thank you for convening this important meeting and thank you to all of the previous speakers, including the Secretary-General and President of the General Assembly. I'd like to focus on a couple of issues that the Secretary-General covered in his report—firstly conflict prevention and secondly accountability.

On the first, over the past year, we've continued to see that those at greatest risk of atrocity crimes are those in areas of ongoing conflict—places like Yemen, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and sadly, the list goes on and on. So, we believe that the best and most decisive way to prevent atrocities is to prevent and manage conflicts in the first place and to do that better than we currently are. We must do more than we are doing at the moment. So, we support the Secretary-General and his good offices and his team using their powers under the UN Charter to focus the attention of the Security Council whenever there are worrying developments at the earliest opportunity. Such early warning is the first step.

The second step is of course early action. We recognize as permanent members of the Security Council that the Council must do a better job than it currently is at turning that early warning into early action and to overcome the divisions which otherwise prevent us from taking meaningful action and protecting people who then face mass atrocities.

But there are things that the UN itself can do too, including overcoming barriers that get in the way of preventive action and the Secretary-General's reform agenda, particularly his focus on improving prevention will be vital if we are to move towards action in this area of preventing atrocities. We welcome his call for greater cross-pillar working and we support the whole agenda of sustaining peace.

On the second point, the UK welcomes the focus on accountability in this year's report. The UK has a longstanding commitment to bring perpetrators of atrocity crimes to justice and I want to particularly highlight the work we've been doing with the government of Iraq, following their request to the Security Council to get a Security Council resolution that would allow the implement of a mechanism to preserve the evidence of crimes committed in Iraq by Da'esh that eventually those that have committed those crimes are held to account. The resolution would establish a team to collect and preserve evidence of Da'esh's crimes in Iraq. That's a good step towards accountability for Da'esh's crimes but for by no means the end of the road. We will not relent in our efforts to hold those responsible to account and in doing so, I very much hope we send a message to all those who seek to harm civilians that there is no room to act with impunity. So finally, I just want to reiterate the UK's commitment to the responsibility to protect doctrine as a signatory of the ACT code of conduct and as a permanent member of the Security Council.

It's a responsibility we take very seriously and will continue to support discussion of the responsibility to protect.

Thank you very much.