

Statement by the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect re: HRC 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

8 March 2018

Mr. President,

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the 51 members of the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect.

We thank the High Commissioner and his Office for their tireless efforts to promote and protect human rights. The reports and regular updates of the High Commissioner are of fundamental importance to shed light on violations and abuses of human rights, which, if not tackled effectively and immediately, may reach the level of mass atrocities. The work of OHCHR can play an essential role in early warning and contribute to the prevention of genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing. We therefore strongly encourage the High Commissioner and his Office to continue assisting the international community to fulfil its responsibility to protect and to prevent mass atrocity crimes in accordance with his mandate.

We further call upon the High Commissioner to continue highlighting gross human rights violations, which is crucial in ensuring the international community puts human rights up front and can help us to mobilize action when we see an emerging risk of mass atrocities.

The UN Human Rights Council and its mechanisms provide additional opportunities for preventive action including through highlighting country-specific and thematic situations of concern and strengthening the compliance of States with their obligations under international human rights law. In addition, technical assistance and capacity building can allow states to build sustainable security situations and strengthen their resilience to risk of mass atrocities.

The various mechanisms also play a crucial role in the aftermath of mass atrocity crimes. They provide the basis for accountability processes which may help deter the recurrence of mass atrocities and related crimes and can play a significant role in providing access to truth as well as, potentially, justice, reconciliation and healing.

Mr. President,

The Secretary General's focus on prevention highlights the intrinsic link between the work of the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms and the prevention of mass atrocity crimes. In that regard, we strongly encourage the Council to deepen its engagement with the Joint Office for the Prevention of Genocide and the Responsibility to Protect, and to make use of the Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes as appropriate, which is a useful tool for monitoring situations of risk.

The Group of Friends of RtoP welcomes the inclusion of RtoP in the agenda of the 72nd General Assembly, which is an important step in advancing and promoting RtoP in the UN system.

Mr. President,

The annual reports provided by the High Commissioner play a critical role in raising awareness and speaking out on violations and abuses of human rights. The international community should make use of this information and engage in better and more timely preventive action in accordance with the UN Charter.

Thank you.