

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

11 September 2018

Mr. President,

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

Together we would like to express our deep gratitude and admiration for the outgoing High Commissioner, who fought tirelessly to promote and protect human rights, gave a voice to millions of victims of large-scale human rights violations and abuses, and played a fundamental role in stressing states' individual and shared responsibility to protect populations from mass atrocity crimes.

We call upon the new High Commissioner, in accordance with her mandate, to continue highlighting gross human rights violations and abuses, which often times serve as early warning signs of situations that may escalate into mass atrocity crimes.

Mr President,

Thirteen years ago the international community unanimously endorsed the responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing. Geneva-based human rights mechanisms often lay the ground for the prevention of mass atrocity crimes by speaking out and acting upon widespread violations and abuses of human rights. We therefore wish to highlight the importance of a more systematic integration of human rights into conflict and atrocity prevention agendas.

In this regard, the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council are exceptionally well suited to highlight early warning signs and provide information on potential and current mass atrocity situations. In particular, their advocacy and awareness-raising activities for both thematic and country-specific issues allow for the effective and timely responses to large-scale human rights violations. We encourage the Special Procedures mechanisms to highlight mass atrocity risks in their annual reports presented to the Human Rights Council, and further emphasize the importance of regular briefings, within their mandate, to the UN Security Council.

In addition, the Human Rights Council and its procedures plays a crucial role in strengthening states' individual efforts to prevent mass atrocity crimes. By providing technical assistance and capacity building measures, states are able to strengthen respect for the rule of law and good governance and consolidate effective and accountable national institutions, which are key elements for effective atrocity prevention.

We further welcome the work of the Human Rights Council's ongoing investigation mechanisms as well as other Mechanisms. Such investigative mechanisms allow the Human Rights Council to respond to situations of serious violations of international law, promoting accountability and fighting impunity. Ensuring accountability for mass atrocity crimes also plays a fundamental role in preventing their recurrence.

Mr President,

Ongoing conflict and atrocities around the world demonstrate the need for greater attention on the linkages between the prevention of mass atrocity crimes, which often times arise from long standing and widespread violations of human rights, and the maintenance of

international peace and security. Human rights violations and mass atrocity crimes are both also often times a result of failures of maintaining the rule of law and development, including discrimination, lack of good governance and radicalisation.

In this respect, we wish to express our strong commitment to the Secretary General's *Human Rights Up Front* among other efforts to strengthen ties between peace and security, development and human rights. Emphasizing the need for greater cooperation between various UN agencies and organs will allow for a more holistic, effective and timely response to persistent and widespread human rights violations and situations at risk of mass atrocity crimes.

Mr President,

The current displacement of over 65 million people due to conflict, violence and atrocities demonstrates the need for a strong and consolidated commitment of the international community to adhere to the international rule of law. As such, we are ready and committed to assist member states in upholding their primary responsibility to protect populations from mass atrocity crimes. We must also ensure that those responsible for mass atrocity crimes are brought to justice.

Thank you.