

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

10 September 2019

Mr. President,

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of members of the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P).

We would like to thank the High Commissioner Madame Bachelet and her Office for their tireless endeavours in preventing the continuation of human rights violations, engaging with all Governments in order to secure respect for all human rights and enhancing international cooperation to protect human rights including through monitoring and reporting of gross human rights violations and abuses around the world, in accordance with their mandates. We further thank her for the oral update to the Council.

The work carried out by the High Commissioner, the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms is vital to fulfilling the Responsibility to Protect populations from genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing. Geneva-based human rights mechanisms play a fundamental role in upholding our individual and shared commitment to mass atrocity prevention.

Mr. President,

The High Commissioner's reports and regular updates on country specific situations are particularly relevant in supporting international efforts to address the risks of mass atrocity crimes, since they help raise awareness and are capable of mobilizing effective preventive and responsive action at an early stage. Further, OHCHR plays a crucial role in addressing factors which facilitate systematic human rights violations and can, through the wider Geneva-system, contribute to subsequent efforts of technical assistance and capacity building aimed at strengthening domestic atrocity prevention.

Furthermore, we highlight the importance of special procedures mandate holders, the Universal Periodic Review and other mechanisms under the auspices of the Human Rights Council in the context of assisting States to fulfil their international obligations. States also have an individual responsibility to protect their populations from mass atrocities and, where unable or unwilling to do so, the responsibility lies with the international community to act through the United Nations. Lastly, we would like to highlight the importance of strengthening coordination and streamlining the United Nations system in the field of human rights to more effectively prevent gross human rights violations.

Mr. President,

It is clear that the key to effective action in preventing mass atrocity crimes is through raising awareness of situations at risk. We therefore urge the High Commissioner to continue to shed light on systematic human rights violations and therefore mobilize support to take action. Towards this end, we call upon the international community better utilize this knowledge in order to act in a timely and decisive manner when early warning signs of possible atrocity situations emerge.

Thank you.