



SEPTEMBER 8, 2015

GENERAL ASSEMBLY INFORMAL INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE ON THE REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT

A VITAL AND ENDURING COMMITMENT: IMPLEMENTING THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT

STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR ZOHRAB MNATSAKANYAN, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ARMENIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

Mr. Moderator, Madame Jennifer Welsh, Mr. Adama Dieng,

The meaning and message of this meeting is indeed powerful enough to reflect on the capacity of the international community to protect people, the owners of the Charter of the United Nations, from the scourge of wars and atrocities. We are fifteen years away from the Millennium Declaration adopted within this very house. We are ten years away from the World Summit Document. In each of those, we have collectively reiterated our adherence to the Charter of the United Nations, which itself celebrates 70 years of its inception. These anniversaries intertwine with yet another one, most relevant to the purpose of this meeting - the tenth anniversary of the inception of the concept of Responsibility to Protect. The 7th report of the Secretary General is about a "Vital and Enduring Commitment" - as the title suggests. We truly welcome it. We applaud the depth of the analyses. We embrace the scope of its recommendations. That the commitment is vital we do not doubt. However, wouldn't anyone reasonably informed about the present day news, be questioning the nature of an enduring commitment? Do we have a cause for a celebration today? Representing the country and the people that I do, I would rephrase the question. Had there been a similar degree of global international legal and institutional arrangement one hundred years ago, as we know it today, would my people have known a different fate? I personally do not have an answer.

One might rightly reason that the responsibility to protect is embedded in the very Charter of the United Nations, as it declares a determination to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war and to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person. That the past ten years have effectively been about the institutionalisation of the responsibility to protect, doubtless, is a commendable progress. However, this is not a spotless process, as the concept has been enduring a notable

dose of obstacle, resistance and dispute. Indeed, at face value there is a consensus about the national and global responsibility to protect populations from mass atrocities. The three pillars of responsibility are brilliantly formulated in the report. We should, however recognise the challenge of an on-going debate that it is truly about what it says it is - to protect populations. The third pillar of the responsibility requires a genuine consensus. It requires a continued, sober, and thoughtful discussion in order to sweep away doubts and misconceptions. It also requires a genuine political will to accept the responsibility for the plight of victims of atrocities. Every single life spared in failure to deliver on this responsibility eclipses whatever success achieved elsewhere. Madame Welsh, the analysis of the three pillars is a commendable contribution to sustaining a reasonable discussion on the responsibility to protect.

We are deeply persuaded about the interlocking nature of the responsibility for protection with that of prevention. We are also convinced about the primary role of protection at national level. We are not aware of atrocity crimes, which had occurred unexpectedly. Each had a precursor, a build-up. Each atrocity crime has been detectable at an early phase. At the heart of atrocity crimes is a history of continued violations of fundamental human rights. We might recall that paragraphs 138 and 139 of the Outcome Document have been a result of deep reflections on the "complicity with evil" 11 years earlier in Rwanda. 10 years ago Armenia initiated a resolution in the Human Rights Commission, which provided a platform for the newly appointed Special Adviser of the Secretary General on the Prevention of Genocide to interact with the member states. As a result, the first report of the Special Adviser was drafted for the human rights body of the UN in 2006. It is remarkable in that it has recognised and outlined the important functions of early warning and early action before hell breaks lose. It sketched out a list of early warning signs, which might lead to atrocity. Today we commend the Special Adviser, Mr. Dieng, for his important contribution to further elaborating practical tools for detecting danger. The concept of early warning and early action leads to an important and rather simple conclusion. Responsibility to protect is first of all at the national level. It is achieved by means of political and institutional promotion of fundamental human rights. The elaborate system of human rights protection at the global level needs to be further geared up towards early warning and early action. Complicity with evil begins at tolerance towards continuing history of mass violations of human rights. We should also advance our thinking, efforts and tools to the rather disturbing phenomenon of atrocity crimes committed by non-state actors. This is an imperative.

In our view, responsibility to protect is strongly linked to the prevention of genocide. Armenia will continue to bring its modest contribution to the prevention of genocide, the latest of which was the renewed resolution of the Human Rights Council last March. On Friday, the General Assembly will consider a draft resolution entitled "International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide and of the Prevention of this Crime". It is meant to provide an additional platform and a tool for the United Nations and its membership to promote dialogue for the strengthening of the mechanisms of prevention. I take this opportunity to call upon all members to demonstrate adherence to prevention of genocide and to co-sponsor the draft resolution.

In respect of the 6th priority in the present report, concerning the strengthening of international networks dedicated to genocide prevention and R2P, Armenia brought its participation to the Fifth Annual Meeting of the focal points in Spain. The Government is presently examining the designation of a focal point for the Prevention of Genocide, who will also cover R2P.

Once again, we appreciate the important work of the Special Advisers, we commend the significant contribution of the civil society and academia to the concept and practice of protection and prevention. We remain committed to delivering on our continued support.

Thank you