

**Informal interactive dialogue on the  
"Report of the Secretary-General on the Responsibility to Protect: A vital and enduring  
commitment: implementing the responsibility to protect"**

**New York, 8 September 2015**

**EU STATEMENT**

Mr President,

The Candidate Countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia\* and Montenegro\*, and the EFTA country Liechtenstein, as well as Ukraine and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

Thank you for giving the floor to the European Union. We want to thank the Special Advisors Dieng and Welsh for their briefing and their steadfast work in contributing to a world free of mass atrocities. We also reiterate our support to your joint office and I am glad to announce that the EU is joining the Global Network of RtoP Focal Points being the first intergovernmental regional organization to do so and encourages others to do the same.

Ten years ago Member States recognised the imperative to prevent and halt atrocity crimes with the adoption of the principle of the Responsibility to Protect at the 2005 World Summit. Since then a global political consensus has emerged around RtoP as a normative framework to prevent atrocity crimes, in which States have the primary responsibility to protect their populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. Individual Governments as well as international organisations have increasingly referred to the principle of RtoP as the framework guiding their actions, including the UN Security Council and the Human Rights Council. It is time for the General Assembly to step up and reaffirm its commitment.

Citing the principle, the international community has offered assistance to populations in danger. All in all, the political willingness to act to prevent atrocities has increased – and this is partly due to the international community's better understanding of the circumstances in which atrocities are likely to be committed.

This anniversary allows us to do some stocktaking and to consider lessons learned for the future. While more needs to be done on structural risk factors, mediation, peacebuilding and conflict prevention, the concept's success will also depend on our improved individual and collective ability to truly and consistently adhere to our responsibility to protect populations in danger of atrocity crimes. This year's reviews of the Peace Operations, Peacebuilding architecture and Women Peace and Security show how the concept is now integral part of the work of the UN.

Yet, despite all the progress in the last decade, we still live in a world where atrocities happen. In order to honour the historical commitment undertaken by Heads of State and Government in 2005, much more needs to be done to prevent atrocity crimes. The key word here is 'prevent'.

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\* *The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.*

Prevention is usually far more effective than dealing with situations where atrocity crimes are imminent. Our efforts must be focused on identifying the early signs that could lead to the worsening of a particular situation. In this context, international and regional human rights mechanisms are a crucial element in the operationalisation of RtoP. We need to improve our capacities to analyse situations and include relevant findings in our mutual political dialogues and concerted follow up for preventive action and during all stages of the conflict cycle.

The development of better early warning capabilities can help anticipate risks of potential atrocities and mobilise resources to respond preventively. The EU early warning system has been on the forefront in including the risk of atrocity crimes from the beginning. We welcome the "Framework of analysis for Atrocity crimes" and the future publication of the compendium of best practices as important elements of the UN's efforts to strengthen early warning systems. In this context we wholeheartedly support the SG initiative "Human Rights up Front".

The EU particularly emphasises the importance of analysing underlying root causes and working on mitigating structural risk factors for conflict prevention including for atrocity crimes. This structural approach often requires long term commitment and investments – be it on the national or on the international level.

Going from early warning to early action is essential. The primary responsibility of the Security Council for the maintenance of international peace and security including in preventing atrocity crimes and upholding accountability is essential in this regard. Its failure to act in recent cases is a severe disappointment and unfortunate signal to victims. We therefore call on the members of the Security Council to refrain from voting against a credible draft resolution on timely and decisive action to end the commission of genocide, crimes against humanity or war crimes, or to atrocity crimes and we welcome the work of the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency Group and France in this regard.

We also need to increase cooperation to minimize the means available for committing atrocity crimes. This includes reducing the availability of small arms and weapons as well as support for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes. The EU welcomes the achievements of the Arms Trade Treaty and promotes its full universalization.

The International Criminal Court and different transitional justice mechanisms have contributed to the prevention of atrocity crimes. Domestic capacities have also been enhanced as many of the States Parties to the Rome Statute have revised their laws to include criminalisation of genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. Transitional justice initiatives have become an essential part of post-conflict peace-building efforts. We call on all States that have not yet ratified the Rome Statute to do so and to promote its universal implementation.

Following the firm belief that local and regional initiatives are the best means to prevent and resolve conflict, the EU further aims at strengthening local and regional capacities for conflict management. The EU cooperates closely with partners around the world to support ongoing peace processes, as recently demonstrated in the Malian peace agreement.

The EU stands ready to continue working further on upholding its commitment to RtoP and in accordance with international law to heed and advance the principle in its actions to prevent

and halt atrocity crimes. Ultimately RtoP is about saving lives and protecting populations from atrocity crimes.