

Statement by H.E. Ambassador Ivan Šimonović, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Croatia at the 75th Session of the General Assembly to introduce draft resolution (A/75/L.82)

Debate on item 135:

The responsibility to protect and the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity

Mr. President,

I have the honour and privilege to introduce the draft resolution A/75/L.82, entitled “The responsibility to protect and the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.” It is submitted on behalf of the core group of countries, consisting of Belgium, Botswana, Costa Rica, Czech Republic, Denmark, Guatemala, Luxembourg, Morocco, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Romania, Rwanda and my own country, Croatia, and, in addition, on behalf of all the co-sponsors listed in the L-document as well as additional co-sponsors. Altogether 76 member states co-sponsored the resolution in front of you.

Mr. President,

The Responsibility to Protect (R2P) was unanimously adopted at the UN World Summit in 2005, the largest gathering of heads of states and governments in history.

Paragraph 139 of the World Summit Outcome Document (A/RES/60/1) commits states to continued consideration of the R2P within the General Assembly. This commitment was reiterated in the General Assembly’s 2009 resolution on R2P (A/RES/63/308), which was adopted following the first formal debate on the subject earlier that year. Between 2010 and 2017, the General Assembly held eight informal interactive dialogues on R2P. From the 72nd session onwards, members of the General Assembly have overwhelmingly supported the inclusion of R2P on its agenda and formal debates were held in 2018 and 2019. The 2020 formal debate had to be postponed because of the circumstances related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Concerned with the scale of atrocity crimes, the Secretary-General, in his reports of August 2017, entitled “Implementing the responsibility to protect: accountability for prevention” (A/71/1016-S/2017/556) and June 2018, entitled

“Responsibility to Protect: from early warning to early action” (A/72/884-S/2018/525), encouraged the General Assembly to place R2P on the agenda of the General Assembly.

The aim of this short and procedural draft resolution is to do just that: to include R2P on the annual agenda of the General Assembly, as well as to request the Secretary General to report annually to the General Assembly on the subject. The SG could include in his future reports the assessment of the implementation of the recommendations contained in his previous reports, as well as assess atrocity crimes risks, and the response of the UN actors. The recommendations of the reports should provide clear, action-oriented guidelines on how to improve the atrocity crimes prevention.

We believe that having R2P on the annual agenda of the General Assembly, as well as mandated annual reports by the Secretary General will contribute to furthering the dialogue among UN Member States on how to more effectively prevent genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and ethnic cleansing.

This resolution ensures benefits from formalising and regularising reports and discussions. However, it does not preclude complementing formal discussions with additional informal exchanges, when useful. In this way, we can combine a serious, structured dialogue with flexibility.

I hope that this resolution will help us to improve prevention. It provides opportunities for a serious and structured dialogue on how to achieve that. It is what people of the world expect from us. Its successful adoption will therefore send a very powerful message of hope.

The presentation of the draft resolution at the informal consultations on 20 April 2021 and our numerous bilateral conversations have confirmed the large interest by Member States in having R2P on the annual agenda of the General Assembly, as well as mandated annual reports by the Secretary General.

Delegations have had ample time to put forward proposals and all those who have done so during the informal consultations on 20 April 2021 were consulted in order to find the broadest possible agreement on the text. The high number of cross regional co-sponsors of this resolution reflects such an agreement.

Dear colleagues, prevention of atrocity crimes is one of the main tasks of the United Nations, reflecting core values of its Charter. Therefore, I invite all delegations to support and vote in favour of the draft resolution contained in document A/75/L.82.

I thank you.