

**Statement by H.E. Ms. Sanja Stiglic, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Republic of Slovenia**

Mr. President,

At the outset, let me thank you for organizing this important debate in the General Assembly. I would like to thank the Secretary General for his unwavering commitment and presentation of the report on the Responsibility to protect earlier this week as well as the Special Advisor on R2P Edward Luck for his outstanding contribution to this topic. Slovenia fully associates itself with the Statement delivered by Sweden on behalf of the European Union.

One can not overstate the significance of this debate. At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century we had to witness events that shocked our human conscience: genocide in Rwanda in 1994, followed just one year later by the massacre in UN declared safe-haven Srebrenica in 1995. Credibility of the UN was damaged and is still not fully recovered. The failures to protect human beings from mass atrocities and from gross and systematic violations of human rights should not be repeated. We should have learned enduring lessons from these tragic events. Yet in the last decade new situations and humanitarian crises remind us that we still haven't found the right tools to respond in a timely and effective manner.

Today's debate provides the first opportunity for Member States to comprehensively address the responsibility to protect in the UN General Assembly. It is our hope that it will be used to reflect on how best to implement the concept in practice, but also as an important step towards building confidence among states from various political and regional groups.

Responsibility to protect is our common responsibility. No region is immune to these atrocities. They can occur anywhere in the world at anytime. We have never anticipated that evil like Srebrenica can happen in our vicinity in the heart of Europe 50 years after the horrors of the Second World War and the Holocaust. This was one of the reasons for Slovenia's active engagement on the inclusion of the R2P concept in 2005 World Summit Outcome document. It is now time to operationalize the concept in order to make a real difference on the ground.

Mr. President,

We welcome the SG's report on R2P and see this report as a crucial starting point for discussions to follow. The report on the implementation of R2P is a comprehensive and balanced one. It narrows the scope of R2P to four sets of crimes and three pillars that are equally important. Moreover, the report outlines the importance of sovereignty by underlining that the purpose of R2P is to build *responsible sovereignty*, not to undermine it. The R2P is based on the existing international law and nothing about this concept implies any alteration to the UN Charter provisions. Responsibility to protect is not synonymous with military intervention. These are important messages to all of us.

Prevention is a key element of the implementation of responsibility to protect. Establishing the early warning capability as mandated in paragraph 138 is essential and we look forward to see the Secretary General's proposals for strengthening the United Nations early warning capacity later this year. The role of Special Advisor of Secretary General on the Prevention of Genocide Francis Deng is of particular importance in this regard. The role of the regional organizations is indispensable given their knowledge of regions and the specificities of countries.

The International Criminal Court is an essential pillar of an emerging system of international justice and is a powerful tool to address and deter the commission of the most serious crimes such as genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Assistance to States and capacity building to strengthen the capacity of States in their own responsibility to protect is equally important. Rule of law, a competent and independent judiciary, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, protection of minorities, security sector reform, sustainable development, a robust civil society, independent press and tolerant political culture constitute indispensable elements of implementation of R2P.

All the above components are fundamental to preventing the perpetration of crimes relating to the responsibility to protect and to help stabilize post-conflict societies from reemergence of conflicts. Capacity building and technical assistance programmes are very often based on partnerships with the UN and its range of agencies, funds and programmes, regional and sub-regional organizations, civil society partners and private sector.

Mr. President,

Member States hold the primary responsibility to protect their populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. When all preventive measures fail and a State manifestly fails to protect its population from these crimes, the international community should be prepared to take collective action in a timely and decisive manner, in accordance with the UN Charter, to ensure an early and flexible response. There is a broad range of tools available under Chapter VI, VIII and VII of the UN Charter. We join those who call upon the Security Council permanent members to refrain from the use of veto in situations of genocide, crimes against humanity and serious violations of international humanitarian law.

Mr. President,

In the 2005 Outcome document, the responsibility to protect was for the first time collectively and irrevocably endorsed by one of the largest gathering of the world leaders in history. The 2005 consensus was clear and based on a strict and narrow conception of what R2P is and what it is not. It is now our responsibility to implement it in practice. Addressing R2P and potential R2P situations ultimately remains a matter of political will. Indifference is not an option. The consequences of inaction far outweigh the risks of timely prevention and response. The history will judge us on what we do in the face of the worst atrocities. We have the opportunity to transform

the words "never again" into reality and save lives of innocent civilian populations. It is our responsibility to seize this opportunity.

We look forward to constructive discussions on this important concept within the UN and broadly. A continued engagement of the General Assembly on this subject proved to be necessary and Slovenia looks forward to future reports by the Secretary General on implementation steps relating to the responsibility to protect.

Thank you.