

**Informal, Interactive Dialogue of the 69th Session of the General Assembly on the
Responsibility to Protect: Fulfilling Our Collective Responsibility**

New York, 8 September 2015

PRESIDENT'S SUMMARY

Background

1. The President of the 69th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, H.E. Sam Kahamba Kutesa, convened an informal, interactive dialogue on the 2015 Report of the Secretary-General on the Responsibility to Protect: “A Vital and Enduring Commitment: Implementing the Responsibility to Protect”, on 8 September 2015. The dialogue commenced with opening remarks by the Vice-President of the General Assembly, H.E. Mr. Einar Gunnarson, and the Secretary-General of the United Nations, H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-moon.

2. H.E. Mr. Einar Gunnarson opened the dialogue by noting that the meeting provided an important opportunity for the General Assembly to continue its consideration of the responsibility to protect, particularly with respect to advancing implementation of the principle. Noting that the adoption of the responsibility to protect at the 2005 World Summit transformed expectations about the protection of populations from atrocity crimes, H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-moon drew attention to the wide range of serious crises currently facing the international community. The Secretary-General recommended concrete steps to put the principle into action, placing particular emphasis on investing in prevention, acting in a timely and decisive manner, countering the rise of violent extremism, and helping societies to rebuild in the aftermath of atrocity crimes. Issuing a strong call to action, H.E. Mr. Bank Ki-moon urged Member States to demonstrate political commitment to the responsibility to protect, including by expanding existing networks of focal points dedicated to atrocity crime prevention and by strengthening cooperation at the regional level.

3. Mr. Adama Dieng, Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide, moderated the informal dialogue and Ms. Jennifer Welsh, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Responsibility to Protect, provided closing remarks. Special Adviser Welsh reiterated the primary responsibility of Member States to protect their populations and underscored that implementation of the principle must be in accordance with the United Nations Charter and other principles of international law. The Special Adviser also noted the concerns expressed by some Member States about the use of force with respect to the responsibility to protect, called for continued discussion of how to best undertake timely and decisive response, and stressed that Pillar III of the responsibility to protect includes a wide range of peaceful diplomatic, political, and humanitarian measures. Special Adviser Welsh concluded by urging Member States to build on the consensus established over the past decade by accelerating implementation of the responsibility to protect in keeping with the Secretary-General's call to action.

Summary

4. The European Union, 69 Member States and four civil society organisations intervened in the dialogue. The Netherlands also delivered a statement on behalf of the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect.

5. Member States reaffirmed their commitment to protecting populations by preventing genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, in line with paragraphs 138 and 139 of the 2005 World Summit Outcome (A/RES/60/1). Member States stressed the importance of engaging in effective prevention, but also drew attention to the urgent need to respond to the significant number of current crises that feature acts that may constitute atrocity crimes. In this respect, many Member States expressed support for the six priorities outlined in the Secretary-General's 2015 report on the responsibility to protect: (1) demonstrating political commitment; (2) investing in atrocity crime prevention; (3) ensuring more timely and decisive response; (4) preventing recurrence of atrocity crimes; (5) enhancing regional action; and (6) strengthening peer networks.

6. Delegations noted the need to strengthen national capacity to prevent and respond to atrocity crimes. Interventions highlighted the importance of providing international support for these efforts in a manner that respects national ownership. Many Member States also identified the appointment of national focal points for the responsibility to protect as a significant step towards implementing the principle and urging expansion of existing networks dedicated to atrocity crime prevention and response.

7. Delegations highlighted the paramount role played by inclusive and legitimate governance, respect for human rights, and the rule of law in building societal resilience to genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. In this respect, Member States recognised the need to invest more in prevention mechanisms, analysing root causes, and mitigating structural risk factors. Many interventions also emphasized the need to ensure accountability for atrocity crimes, noting the vital role played by the International Criminal Court. Other Member States urged full participation in and ratification of relevant legal instruments, particularly the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

8. The dialogue featured considerable discussion about timely and decisive response in situations of manifest failure by national authorities to protect their populations. Several Member States emphasized that the responsibility to protect must be implemented in a consistent manner and that the use of force must be a matter of last resort, authorized by the Security Council, and undertaken in accordance with the United Nations Charter. Others drew attention to humanitarian consequences of current crises and urged more effective action in the face of atrocity crimes. Some Member States declared support for the initiative by France and Mexico on restraint in the use of the veto and the Code of Conduct developed by the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency (ACT) Group of Member States, which seek to ensure effective Security Council action in the face of atrocity crimes. Member States regularly stressed that prevention remains the primary tool for implementation of the principle, but also noted that when prevention fails early action and mobilization is less costly than late intervention or no intervention.

9. A significant number of Member States stressed the linkages between the responsibility to protect and the work of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations, the review of the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture, and the High-Level Review and Global Study on Security Council Resolution 1325. Others also referred to the 2015 Post-Development Agenda and Sustainable Development Goal 16 on peaceful and inclusive societies. Member States noted the emphasis placed by these processes on prevention and stressed the importance of mainstreaming the responsibility to protect in the work of the United Nations.

10. Considerable attention was drawn to the efforts of the Special Advisers of the Secretary General on the Prevention of Genocide and on the Responsibility to Protect, with Member States noting the need to support them in their work. Member States also recognized the great progress that has been made in the institutionalization of the principle within the UN system and some welcomed the Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes as a useful tool for strengthening prevention, enhancing early warning, and improving training.

11. Member States emphasized the growing challenge posed by non-state armed groups, particularly those that are spreading forms of violent extremism and posing serious threats to minority groups and vulnerable populations. In confronting this challenge, Member States also urged the international community to maintain full respect for relevant provisions of international humanitarian and human rights law. Member States further referred to the significant role that religious and traditional leaders can play in preventing incitement and violence that could lead to atrocity crimes, while promoting tolerance and diversity within communities.

12. In looking to the future, Member States reaffirmed the central role of the General Assembly in advancing the responsibility to protect. A number of States suggested that inclusion of the responsibility to protect in the formal agenda of the General Assembly would allow for more sustained and systematic consideration of the principle. Others called for the adoption of a General Assembly resolution on the responsibility to protect.