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Informal Interactive Dialogue on the Responsibility to Protect (R2P)

**Statement by H.E. Gillian Bird
Ambassador and Permanent Representative
of Australia to the United Nations**

(Check against delivery)

Mr Moderator, contemporary conflicts underscore that R2P is as important as ever. Sadly, the indifference of some Member States to their R2P responsibilities is a driver of much of the death and displacement we are witnessing. We therefore welcome the Secretary-General's Report providing a vision for how we can collectively tackle obstacles to R2P's implementation.

Prevention is the keystone. As the Report highlights, preventive capacities need to be cultivated at the local, national, regional and international levels in order to translate early warning into early response.

The Joint Office of the Special Advisers on the Prevention of Genocide and the Responsibility to Protect has a critical role to play in this context. Our diplomatic networks also have a role to play. Australia has prioritised atrocity risk sensitisation programs based on the UN Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes for diplomats being posted overseas, to ensure they are better informed to identify emerging threats.

When we become aware that States are failing in their R2P responsibilities we must speak out - in the Human Rights Council, the General Assembly, and the Security Council. I can assure you that Australia's voice will be loud and clear.

Article 24(2) of the Charter reminds us that the Security Council must discharge its duties in accordance with the Purposes and Principles of the United Nations. Despite this, all too often the veto has been used to impede action. The widespread support for the ACT Group's Code of Conduct and the French-Mexican Initiative on veto restraint demonstrates that the Membership expects the Council to meet its Responsibility to Protect. Australia certainly expects nothing less.

When prevention efforts fail, we must ensure that those who commit mass atrocity crimes are held to account – either by national courts or the International Criminal Court. Impunity sends a dangerous message to perpetrators and victims – and paves the path to recurring violence.

Australia recently commissioned a Domestic R2P Implementation Study. It found that we are effectively meeting our R2P responsibilities, and identified some areas to further strengthen Australia's capacity to respond overseas - which we are addressing. We can all, each and every one of us, do better when it comes to building a collective will to prove we mean what we say, when we say 'never again'.

Mr Moderator, in closing, let me congratulate the Secretary-General on his leadership on R2P and urge the incoming Secretary-General to ensure that R2P's implementation remains a core priority.

Thank you.