

SUMMARY OF THE SEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY DIALOGUE ON THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT



INTERNATIONAL COALITION FOR THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT

On 8 September 2015, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) held its seventh annual informal, interactive dialogue on the Responsibility to Protect (RtoP, R2P) at United Nations headquarters in New York. The dialogue followed the release of the UN Secretary-General's (UNSG) seventh report on RtoP, entitled "[A vital and enduring commitment: implementing the responsibility to protect.](#)" The report reiterated the commitment that States made a decade ago, i.e. to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing as articulated in paragraphs 138 and 139 of the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document. In his report, the Secretary-General assessed the progression of the norm over the past ten years, identified core challenges and opportunities for implementation, and detailed six core priorities for the international community to undertake to more effectively fulfill RtoP. (To read the ICRtoP's summary of the report, click [here](#)). The overwhelming majority of interventions delivered at this year's dialogue expressed support for the UNSG's report and his six core priorities for implementation.

The dialogue began with opening remarks from UN Secretary-General (UNSG) Ban Ki-moon and the Office of the President of the General Assembly (PGA). The UNSG commended the true consensus on the norm that has developed over the past ten years and called for three steps to transform the principle into practice. First, he urged for Member States, especially Security Council members, to cultivate the political space necessary to prevent and respond to atrocity crimes. Secondly, he asked for the development of strong connections between early warning and early action. Lastly, the UNSG pushed for States to demonstrate "courage in publicly confronting and addressing signs of risk."

H.E. Mr. Einar Gunnarsson (Iceland) delivered a statement on behalf of H.E. Mr. Sam Kutesa (Uganda), President of the General Assembly (PGA), and echoed the remarks of the UNSG. The PGA also stressed the importance of strengthening national capacities for detecting and preventing the commission of atrocities. Additionally, the PGA encouraged greater cooperation between the UN and regional and sub-regional organizations to enhance implementation of RtoP.

Informal, interactive dialogue on RtoP

Following the UNSG and PGA statements, the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide, Mr. Adama Dieng, moderated the informal, interactive dialogue. **69 Member States and one regional organization delivered statements on behalf of 89 States, which is the highest number of States to participate since 2009.** In addition, four civil society organizations, including the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect (ICRtoP), as well as three ICRtoP members, delivered interventions.

The European Union statement, given on behalf of European Union (EU) Member States as well as the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro, Liechtenstein, Ukraine, and Georgia, stressed the urgency for the UNGA to step up and reaffirm its collective commitment to RtoP. The EU also announced that it had recently joined the Global Network of R2P Focal Points. **At least 26 speakers pointed to the importance of regional networks and offered support for the Global Network of R2P Focal Points throughout the dialogue.** Additionally, the EU stressed that prevention efforts are far more effective than

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dealing with situations where atrocity crimes are imminent, and pushed for early warning to lead to early action.

Prevention, as a main tenant of RtoP, was discussed by a cross-regional group of at least 30 Member States, including the Czech Republic, South Africa, and Peru. Luxembourg and Malaysia echoed the Secretary- General's report, insisting that "prevention must become the rule rather than the exception." Hungary highlighted the Framework for Analysis of Atrocity Crimes as a key tool for early warning mechanisms, while Australia, Canada, and Sweden underscored that when prevention does not succeed, timely response from the international community, specifically the Security Council is critical.

The Netherlands delivered a joint statement on behalf of the 49-member Group of Friends of RtoP (GoF), only the second time the group has given an intervention at a dialogue. The GoF statement recognized the important role of civil society in advancing the norm and set the stage for a few calls to action that were reiterated in many Member State interventions throughout the day. The GoF first called for an adoption of a resolution on the 10th anniversary of RtoP, reaffirming the UNGA's commitment to the principle and the notion that "the international community should never submit to the politics of indifference and inaction." **Throughout the day, 20 other individual States would join the Group of Friends in showing support for a UNGA resolution on RtoP.** Secondly, the GoF also pronounced that the informal dialogue on RtoP should be moved onto the formal agenda of the General Assembly. **16 of the 20 States calling for a UNGA resolution offered their explicit support for the formalization of the dialogue on RtoP; meanwhile, seven States expressed caution on the dialogue's formalization.**

Additionally, the majority of interventions in this year's dialogue focused on concrete measures for the implementation of RtoP, rather than on the conceptual development of the norm as in years past. For example, Tanzania and India emphasized the need for national ownership of RtoP. Costa Rica, Croatia, Thailand and Nigeria called for increased support for capacity building processes. Hungary and Slovenia stressed that accountability is the best way to prevent the reoccurrence of atrocity crimes; **and a total of 16 Member States as well as the EU pushed for States to support the International Criminal Court and/or ratify the Rome Statute.**

One of the strongest calls to enhance the implementation of RtoP that emerged throughout the dialogue was the appeal for veto restraint within the Security Council in circumstances where mass atrocity crimes are occurring. **A total of 34 individual States and the EU included declarations in support of veto restraint through either/both of the complimentary initiatives led by the governments of France and Mexico, and the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency Group (ACT).** France's statement primarily focused on their joint proposal with Mexico for a political declaration in which the Permanent Members of the Security Council would commit to not using their veto in circumstances where atrocity crimes are occurring. France included that they will be hosting a pledging event on 30 September for States to support the political declaration. Additionally, Liechtenstein's statement discussed the ACT's "code of conduct," to which all Member States have the opportunity to sign on to in support of Security Council action against atrocity crimes. Liechtenstein announced that they will be launching the ACT "code of conduct" on 24 October.

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Furthermore, several State interventions focused on the convergence of RtoP with related thematic areas, such as Women, Peace and Security, disarmament, the role of non-state actors, and human rights. This year's dialogue saw an increase in Member State recognition of the unique impact of atrocity crimes on women and girls as well as the need to ensure their equal participation in society. Additionally, New Zealand pointed to the importance of the use of the Arms Trade Treaty for disarmament efforts. Thirteen States also mentioned the need to address the new protection challenge identified by the UNSG in his report of non-state armed groups committing atrocity crimes and the shared responsibility to protect populations. Moreover, the Secretary-General's Human Rights up Front initiative, as a way to enhance the protection of populations from atrocity crimes, was raised by 15 individual States, the EU, and the GoF. In recognition of the wide breadth of areas in which RtoP could enhance the work of the UN system, **21 States and the GoF delivered statements that advocated for the principle to be mainstreamed throughout the UN, alongside the Peacekeeping, Peacebuilding and Universal Periodic Review processes.**

Questions Remain on RtoP for a Small Number of States

A small number of States, such as Venezuela, Myanmar, Iran, Cuba, and Egypt, expressed their continued concern with the implementation of RtoP. Many of these countries noted their apprehension that the norm could be used to wrongly justify military intervention and some stated their assessment that the three pillars of RtoP should be implemented in a sequential manner. The vast majority of States who participated in the dialogue; however, reaffirmed their belief that the pillars are non-sequential and mutually reinforcing, as outlined in the 2009 [report](#) of the Secretary-General, and reiterated that military force under RtoP is only a tool of last resort and must be authorized by the UN Security Council. An additional concern raised by Venezuela was that RtoP divided Member States into two camps: those who are responsible and those who are not. UN Special Adviser on RtoP, Dr. Jennifer Welsh, addressed this point by reaffirming that RtoP resolutely delineates that all States bear the primary responsibility to protect populations from the four crimes and violations.

Civil Society Participation

The UN Office on Genocide Prevention and RtoP provided time for civil society to speak following Member State interventions during the morning and afternoon sessions of the dialogue. Four civil society organizations delivered statements to the UNGA: the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect (ICRtoP); the Global Centre for R2P (GCR2P); the Asia-Pacific Centre for R2P (APR2P); and the Canadian Centre for R2P (CCR2P).

All four civil society groups recognized the remarkable progress that has been achieved over the past ten years in the conceptualization and implementation of RtoP. However, each of the civil society representatives also pointed to the various situations in which civilians in South Sudan, Syria, Yemen, the DPRK, amongst many others, continue to experience the grave consequences of inaction in the face of atrocity crimes. As such, the ICRtoP, GCR2P and CCR2P offered support for the complimentary French/Mexico and ACT initiatives for veto restraint within the Security Council. Additionally, ICRtoP and GCR2P

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encouraged a UNGA resolution on the 10th anniversary of RtoP and the placement of the UNGA dialogue on RtoP on to the formal agenda.

The ICRtoP statement, delivered by Fadi Abi Allam, Executive Director of Permanent Peace Movement, highlighted the Arms Trade Treaty- which when implemented properly- can be utilized to protect populations by denying exports of weapons to perpetrators of atrocities. Additionally, ICRtoP and APR2P urged for holistic protection of populations by addressing sexual and gender based violence and ensuring equal participation of women in the operationalization of RtoP.

Closing Remarks by the Special Adviser on RtoP

The Special Adviser on RtoP, Dr. Jennifer Welsh, delivered closing remarks, which noted that the dialogue had featured a renewed sense of the “real consensus” that has developed on RtoP over the past ten years. She commented particularly on the notion from Ghana, Poland, and Denmark that RtoP cannot exist in a vacuum but must be integrated into existing practices and review processes. Additionally, Dr. Welsh concurred with Albania that the principle alone cannot protect populations from atrocity crimes, but the success of the norm demands political will. Furthermore, she recognized the concerns of some States surrounding military means and reiterated that pillar three of RtoP encompasses much more than military intervention. Finally, Dr. Welsh conveyed the true relevance of RtoP to contemporary challenges, such as the role of non-state armed groups and the global refugee and migrant crisis. Following the dialogue, Mr. Adama Dieng, the Secretary-General’s Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, joined Dr. Welsh for a [press conference](#) on implementing RtoP.

For a full list and links to interventions given, please see www.responsibilitytoprotect.org and click on Our Work/Summaries.

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ICRtoP

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For more information, visit our
Website: responsibilitytoprotect.org
Blog: icrtopblog.org
Facebook: facebook.com/icrtop
Twitter: twitter.com/icrtop
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The International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect convenes and collaborates with civil society, Member States, and regional and sub-regional organizations to continue close scrutiny of the consistent implementation of the third pillar and develop effective methods to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity.

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Collection of Full Interventions:

**Many thanks to the GCR2P for their complementary work in compiling the below statements.*

[Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon](#)

[Office of the President of the General Assembly](#)

[Dr. Jennifer Welsh](#): Secretary-General's Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect

Regional Organization:

[European Union](#) (on behalf of European Union Member States, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Liechtenstein, Ukraine and Georgia)

Member States:

[Australia](#)

[Albania](#)

[Armenia](#)

[Azerbaijan](#)

[Belarus \(other language\)](#)

[Belgium \(French\)](#)

[Botswana](#)

[Brazil](#)

Canada

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[China](#)

[Costa Rica](#)

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[Cuba](#)

[Cyprus](#)

[Malaysia](#)

[Mexico](#)

[Morocco \(French\)](#)

[Myanmar](#)

[Netherlands](#)

[Netherlands \(on behalf of the Group of Friends on RtoP\)](#)

[New Zealand](#)

[Nigeria](#)

[Norway](#)

[Panama](#)

[Peru \(Spanish\)](#)

[Philippines](#)

[Poland](#)

[Qatar](#)

[Republic of Korea](#)

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[Czech Republic](#)

[Denmark](#)

[Egypt](#)

[Estonia \(on behalf of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania\)](#)

[Finland](#)

[France \(French\)](#)

[Georgia](#)

[Germany](#)

[Ghana](#)

[Guatemala \(Spanish\)](#)

[Hungary](#)

[India](#)

[Indonesia](#)

[Iran](#)

[Israel](#)

[Italy](#)

[Japan](#)

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[Russian Federation \(Russian\)](#)

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[Venezuela](#)

Civil Society

[International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect](#)

[Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect](#)

[Asia-Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect](#)

[Canadian Centre for the Responsibility to Protect](#)