

Statement by Chile at Security Council Meeting on: Threat to International Peace and Security:
Prevention and Fight Against Genocide

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(Unofficial Transcript)

We thank Nigeria for organizing this important meeting in the framework of the activities commemorating the twentieth anniversary of the genocide in Rwanda, whose victims, among them many children, we remember today with deep respect and solidarity. We appreciate the statement made by Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson and through him the commitment of the Secretary-General in this area. We are particularly grateful to Ambassador Keating for the reminder he has given us and for his words on the lessons learned that we should consider today.

My country had the honour to participate in the commemoration held in Kigali on 7 April. At that time we conveyed our solidarity with the people of Rwanda. We would like to once again express our gratitude for our invitation to that commemoration, which our special envoy described as a powerful experience in both human and professional terms.

The gravity of the crime of genocide and its general condemnation meant that a mere four years elapsed between the conception and adoption of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, which established that its States parties must undertake to prevent and punish that crime in time of peace or war. The International Court of Justice has ruled that those obligations extend even to those that are not party to the Convention because they are obligations *erga omnes*.

Genocide springs up in divided societies, where perceptions and feelings of exclusion that fuel actions against specific groups, creating the conditions for the crime. Such declines in respect for human rights are often a warning sign that demands that national and international authorities display the political will necessary to recognize and report them, as many other speakers have said. In that regard, we emphasize the Secretary-General's Rights Up Front initiative, since it reaffirms the central role of human rights in the United Nations system, as well as the importance of the work of the Offices of the Special Advisers on the Prevention of Genocide and on the Responsibility to Protect, which have a vital preventive role to play.

Prevention is possible and should be a central part of our responsibilities as a Council and an international community. There is room here to exercise preventive diplomacy and make efficient use of existing early-warning mechanisms. With that end in view, we recognize the role of regional and subregional organizations, such as the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, as well as of local and religious leaders, women, young people, civil society and the media. We must improve coordination and cooperation with such actors. To that end, international cooperation is necessary. The establishment of national commissions for the prevention of genocide and the efforts made in that regard by the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, mentioned at the Arria formula meeting on intercommunal dialogue and crime prevention of 14 March, are examples to consider.

Greater commitment to strengthening the rule of law and respect for international law, in particular human rights and humanitarian international law, will make it possible to improve levels of inclusion and respect for diversity, development and social justice, thereby dealing with the root causes of such conflicts, as the Permanent Representative of Rwanda pointed out.

Each State has the primary responsibility to protect its population against massive and widespread human rights abuses. The international community must stand by and support Member States when they willfully or owing to a clear inability do not meet that obligation under the concept of the responsibility to protect, enshrined in the 2005 World Summit Outcome (General Assembly resolution 60/1). Chile has convened a series of seminars and meetings at home in the context of its commitment to the concept of the responsibility to protect and its preventive nature. This year, we hope to hold a new outreach seminar at the intersectoral level together with the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect.

Another key aspect is the need for international mechanisms and/or tribunals to ensure accountability, thereby preventing impunity and, at the same time, serving as a tool for deterrence and the prevention of future crimes. In that regard, we recall the important role of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. We also underscore the role of the International Criminal Court, established by the Rome Statute, which is one of the most important developments in international criminal justice of the past 50 years, since it is the only permanent independent international criminal court to complement national criminal jurisdictions established in order to deal with, inter alia, the crime of genocide. Given its complementary nature, States must duly cooperate with the Court in order for it to fully discharge its mandate.

In conclusion, Chile wishes to reiterate the appeal we launched at the General Assembly for countries that have the veto power to refrain from using it in cases of crimes against humanity, war crimes, genocide or ethnic cleansing, since that detracts from the effectiveness of the Council in upholding the most fundamental values and principles of humanity. We urge the Security Council, in particular its permanent members, to shoulder that responsibility. Let us not forget the failures of recent years and the complex situations facing us today. May we not act too late.