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

16 April 2014 (Unofficial Transcript)

I, too, thank Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson and Ambassador Colin Keating for their statements.

Twenty years ago, despite numerous warnings, the States Members of the United Nations, and in particular of the Security Council, were not been able to take decisive measures that would have put an end to the spread of ethnic hatred or to prevent genocide. As my Minister of Foreign and European Affairs did in Kigali on 7 April, I wish to pay tribute to the hundreds of thousands of victims of genocide. I also pay tribute to the strength and determination of Rwandans who were able to rebuild their lives and their country after their terrible ordeal. Our meeting today will not restore life to the more than 800,000 massacred Rwandans or lessen the pain of the survivors, but it is an opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to applying the lessons of the past in order to prevent such atrocities from happening in the future.

The genocide in Rwanda unleashed a shock wave that rocked the entire United Nations. It raised fundamental questions about the authority and responsibility of the Security Council, the effectiveness of United Nations peacekeeping, the scope of international justice, the roots of violence and the responsibility of the international community to protect endangered populations from genocide. I shall focus on two points: the responsibility to protect and the fight against impunity.

The 1994 genocide highlighted the need for the United Nations to strengthen its capacity to respond to serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, and to give greater attention to the prevention of mass atrocities. It was a catalyst to the development of the principle of the responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. This principle, which Luxembourg fully supports, was endorsed by the 2005 World Summit. Since then, the Security Council has invoked the responsibility to protect several times, most recently in South Sudan, Yemen, Mali and the Central African Republic. The Council must continue on this path and embody the principle of the responsibility to protect in all its dimensions.

Luxembourg also reaffirms its full support for the Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General for the Prevention of Genocide and its early warning role. On our initiative, the Special Adviser was able to speak for the first time before the Security Council at its open meeting on 22 January (see S/PV.7098) to sound the alarm about the Central African Republic. Indeed, we must pay special attention to forewarnings of atrocities, in a logic of prevention. Sustained efforts are needed to end incitement to hatred and intolerance. The implementation of the Rights Up Front initiative, launched by the Secretary-General and the Deputy Secretary-General in December 2013, will also contribute to strengthening the capacity of the United Nations and the Council to respond in a timely manner.

Over the past 20 years, the Security Council has come to recognize that the fight against impunity is essential to preventing further genocide and to bringing justice to victims. Created on 8 November 1994 at the request of Rwanda, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) has played a crucial rôle. While the ICTR is about to conclude its work and its transition to the Residual Mechanism is in progress, we welcome the significant progress made by the ICTR in developing international law to bring justice to victims, apprehend fugitives and prosecute persons responsible for genocide and other serious violations of international humanitarian law.

The ICTR has been a source of inspiration to national and international courts, and in particular in the creation of the International Criminal Court. Mass atrocities committed in recent decades have shown that it was imperative to create a permanent court with universal vocation to end impunity for the most serious crimes. It is more important than ever that the Council fulfils its responsibilities to end impunity, including by providing unfailing support to the International Criminal Court.

This commemoration of the Rwandan genocide, a moment of reflection and pain, is also a moment of inspiration to action. We must act to prevent genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. Whether for Syria, South Sudan or the Central African Republic, we must do our all to ensure that the Security Council lives up to its responsibilities. Our goal must be to translate the moral imperative of "never again" into action. The unanimous adoption this morning of resolution 2150 (2014), drafted by Rwanda, impels us to do so. Let us comply in honour of the victims of the past and to protect future generations from the scourge of genocide.