

# RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT ENGAGING CIVIL SOCIETY

A Project of WFM-IGP's Program in Preventing Conflicts and Protecting Civilians

## Support UN Reform to Stop Genocide

2005 could be the year when "never again" actually means never again. As the world looks upon the crisis in Darfur, more than ten years after Rwanda, heads of state will assemble in New York for a High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly. They will be asked to commit to strengthening international institutions, especially the UN, to ensure that global security challenges are indeed met with global responses.

Following upon the Secretary

General's Report, *In Larger Freedom*, countries are overwhelmingly supportive of a global vision in which security means security for all people, including protection from genocide and terrorism and freedom from poverty and disease. States must demonstrate their commitment to this new vision by agreeing to bold reforms that, if adopted, could significantly address one of the worst shortcomings within the global security system, the failure to prevent and

respond to genocide, ethnic cleansing and other large scale violations of human rights.

Negotiations are going on now in capitals and at the UN. Civil society organizations must engage in this process to ensure that their governments commit to a more secure international system, especially for the world's most vulnerable populations.

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*And even harder experience has led us to grapple with the fact that no legal principle - not even sovereignty - should ever be allowed to shield genocide, crimes against humanity and mass human suffering.*


*- Secretary-General Kofi Annan,  
In Larger Freedom*

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of its purposes the achievement of international cooperation in promoting human rights. The responsibility to protect is a policy statement that seeks to reconcile what are at times conflicting imperatives.

According to these principles, sovereignty and responsibility are the foundations of the state. Sovereignty entails the state's responsibility to protect its population. When a state is unable or unwilling to protect a population in danger of genocide or other large scale atrocities, the international community must take collective action, including diplomatic, humanitarian and other measures short of the use of force.

*Continued on reverse*



*Civil society can play a valuable role to ensure that reforms needed to protect civilians are given due consideration during the reform process. We are now calling for NGOs to work in their local communities, in capitals, and at regional and international organizations to ensure support for these proposals.*

*See reverse side to get involved as an NGO*

## Reforms for Preventing Conflict and Protecting Civilians

Responsibility to Protect-Engaging Civil Society (R2PCS) believes that the proposed package of reforms has great potential as a system of protection. Some vocal critics have argued that these initiatives codify a system of coercion and intervention. To the contrary, if governments commit themselves to addressing the interconnectedness of threats by agreeing upon and implementing this package of reforms, there will be far greater likelihood that states can and will act collectively before thousands of lives are lost.

### **The responsibility to protect**

The "emerging norm" of the responsibility to protect is a featured issue in UN reform negotiations. States have been asked to

endorse the responsibility to protect as a basis for collective action to rescue populations in grave danger when their governments are unable or unwilling to act.

The responsibility to protect is a commitment to a continuum of actions from prevention to reaction and rebuilding, when necessary, with an emphasis on prevention. This is a rules-based approach that moves forward outdated notions of sovereignty that have long been used to justify international inaction in the face of genocide and gross crimes against humanity.

The UN Charter affirms a principle of non-interference in the domestic affairs of a sovereign state but also gives as one

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## Preventing Conflicts / Protecting Civilians (cont'd)

Governments' defense of the traditional view of sovereignty only partly explains past failures by the international community to act in the face of grave atrocities. The lack of political will is at least equally to blame, as is the absence of global institutional authority and mechanisms to preserve and enforce peace. The responsibility to protect and the other recommendations described below are aimed at achieving a collective commitment to human protection.

### Criteria for Intervention for the Purpose of Human Protection

If exhaustive preventive and diplomatic efforts fail to avert a humanitarian crisis, the responsibility to protect may compel the Security Council to react, including authorizing enforcement measures as a last resort. World leaders are being asked to adopt criteria that must be satisfied in order for the Security Council to take action. These criteria are intended to restrict the possibility of unilateral or preemptive wars being conducted under the guise of humanitarian intervention.

These criteria are: (1) the seriousness of the threat; (2) the proper purpose of the proposed military action; (3) whether means short of the use of force might reasonably succeed in stopping the threat; (4) whether the military option is proportional to the threat at hand; (5) whether there is a reasonable chance of success.

Such principles could serve as indica-

tors for when the Security Council should intervene, as well as to determine when "responsibility to protect" justifications are disguising other motives. If the criteria are satisfied, this would encourage action where political will is otherwise lacking or is obstructed by one country's strategic interests.

If criteria are not met, this would attest to possible improper motives of the would-be intervener or would indicate that not all non-military measures have been exhausted. These criteria would thus promote more effective responses by the Security Council while deterring illegitimate preemptive wars.

### Improving Security Council Practices

Much of the attention on the UN reform process is focused on the subject of Security Council expansion. We ask civil society to consider several procedural recommendations that should be included in this process.

The Security Council should adopt a code of conduct whereby permanent members of the Security Council pledge themselves to refrain from the use of veto in cases of genocide and large-scale human rights abuses. This recommendation could curtail improper uses of the veto and advance the responsibility to protect. It is a misuse of the UN charter for permanent members to exercise the veto to advance extraneous national political interests.

The Security Council should adopt a system of indicative voting to increase the transparency and accountability of the Security Council. This is a procedure whereby Security Council members could call for public indication of member's positions on proposed Council actions. Council members should also consider a system of paragraph by paragraph voting on resolutions. Because measures set out in Security Council resolutions can range from toothless statements of condemnation to strict punitive measures, this mechanism would make clear the support of Member States for particular measures proposed in a draft resolution.

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*Support improvements to the international system to protect vulnerable populations.*

*Ask Member States to:*

- *Endorse the Responsibility to Protect*
  - *Support use of force criteria to ensure a rules-based system for collective action*
  - *Improve Security Council procedures*
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**Get  
involved  
as an  
NGO**

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Interested organizations are invited to join the R2P-CS Network to connect to other organizations that are working toward changes in the way that international and regional organizations and governments respond to emerging threats of large-scale loss of life. Find more information about our network and sign up at <http://www.wfm.org/joinr2p-cs> or contact us at [r2p-cs@wfm.org](mailto:r2p-cs@wfm.org).

More information on the UN reform process, including valuable issue-tracking tools and the most up-to-date information, is available at our affiliated website <http://www.ReformtheUN.org>

visit <http://www.responsibilitytoprotect.org> to take action on these proposals