



World Federalist Movement – Canada

Mouvement fédéraliste mondial (Canada)

Seminar Report:

***Next Steps to Advance
The Responsibility to Protect***

University of Ottawa

October 28, 2010

Meeting Summary

The public seminar on “Next Steps to Advance The Responsibility to Protect” was sponsored by World Federalist Movement – Canada and took place October 28, 2010 at Desmarais Hall, University of Ottawa. The meeting included presentations by the Speakers and Respondent, followed by a period of questions and discussion.

Moderator: Dr. James Christie, Director, Ridd Institute for Religion and Global Policy, University of Winnipeg

Speakers: H.E. Wim Geerts, Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to Canada

Dr. Allan Rock President, University of Ottawa, former Ambassador of Canada to the United Nations

Respondent: Evan Cinq-Mars, former Coordinator, Stand Canada & recent intern at the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect, New York

The following summarizes the main topics and themes reviewed during the presentations and discussion period.

(1) Understanding the Responsibility to Protect (R2P)

The January 2009 report from the UN Secretary General, “Implementing the Responsibility to Protect” presents the “three-pillared” approach, namely (1) the responsibility of states to protect their own people; (2) international assistance and capacity-building to help states implement this responsibility; and (3) timely and decisive response from the international community. These are three interconnected and equally important aspects, which together form the principle of the Responsibility to Protect.

Although most attention is paid to the more controversial notion of coercive action, “pillar three” actually includes a range of possible measures. Use of force is always a last resort. Kofi Annan’s efforts to avert violence in Kenya are an illustrative example of effective intervention, without resort to use of force.

Some participants brought forward an understanding of R2P and proposals from the 2001 report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS). They noted that the 2005 language at the UN Reform Summit was a lowest common denominator agreement resulting from inter-state bargaining in a less-than-propitious political environment. Furthermore, the Reform Summit dealt with many of the post-conflict reconstruction issues elsewhere, in the context of the recommendations leading to the new Peacebuilding Commission. R2P could, for example, apply in cases of natural disaster, such as recent events in Burma and Haiti.

Others were more cautious. They felt that any deviation from the agreed language in paragraphs 138 and 139 of the Reform Summit Outcome and the Secretary-General’s Report risked weakening the norm at a time when support is still fragile.

R2P critics should be reminded that R2P is not a threat to state sovereignty; it reinforces the responsibility and authority of the state, and calls for international cooperation and assistance in efforts to reinforce state capacities.

There is a need to better integrate gender concerns into the framework of the Responsibility to Protect. Frequently women are deliberately targeted. An R2P gender dimension would better articulate the specific measures to protect women and girls.

(2) Immediate Next Steps

The Netherlands has succeeded Canada as Co-Chair (with Rwanda) of the “Friends of the Responsibility to Protect” group of states at the United Nations.

A “roadmap” for advancing R2P in the near term should include:

1. concrete measures for prevention and assistance;
2. continued outreach to mobilise and secure broad support.

Prevention and assistance. Here there is need to develop support for measures that could be taken nationally and internationally.

States that genuinely attempt to make good governance a reality, for example by strengthening the rule of law or implementing the human rights conventions, are less susceptible to the most serious human rights violations. The Human Rights Council’s Universal Periodic Review process could be an important instrument to determine if countries are taking their responsibility to protect seriously. In practical terms, states can help prevent mass atrocities by supporting the work of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

The early-warning commitments agreed to in 2005 have yet to be put in place. The recent July 2010 report of the UN S-G offers a roadmap for strengthening the early warning capacity within the UN Secretariat. Implementing these recommendations should be a priority for members of the R2P Friends Group. Early warning is also one of the key areas where civil society can make important contributions.

Another immediate priority is the setting up of a Joint Office to support the Special Advisors on R2P (Mr. Luck) and on the prevention of genocide (Mr. Deng).

Continued outreach. The need to broaden awareness, understanding and support for R2P was highlighted in a number of contexts.

- At the UN, strengthening cooperation among like-minded countries, to broaden support across regional boundaries, remains a priority. There were differences of views regarding the extent to which “R2P Friends” should engage directly to address the concerns of those states that are critical of R2P, or have genuine concerns regarding implementation. It was noted that the number of governments

- critical of R2P is decreasing. As well as broadening support among a growing number of states, the Friends Group could consider further developing the concept of how they understand membership in this ad hoc grouping, i.e. a set of principles or proposals that help define the “Friends of R2P.”
- Civil society’s necessary role in contributing to a wider understanding of R2P was highlighted. The new International Coalition emphasizes outreach in regional contexts, particularly in the Global South, but there is much more that needs to be done. There is a sense that the international community’s discourse on R2P is still by and large a “UN insider’s game;” that acceptance of the new normative framework is progressing, but not far enough or fast enough.
 - Contributing to R2P outreach efforts was mentioned as a suggested role that could be filled by Canadian NGOs.

The scope (membership and programmatic reach) of the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect (ICRtoP) needs to be developed, in order that R2P becomes more widely understood by international civil society. In the context of recent events in Kyrgyzstan, R2P formed part of the international community’s appeals and aid to support the cessation of ethnic violence. Civil society’s crisis monitoring and early warning contributions require informed and empowered organizations on the ground in crisis-affected countries and regions.

(3) Regional Approaches

There was reference at various points during the meeting to the contributions of regional organizations (such as the African Union, ECOWAS, IGAD, SADC, EU, OSCE, LAS, OAS, ASEAN) and of regional approaches to communicating and advancing the R2P norm. Their role mediating internal conflicts is increasingly recognised. Regional organizations and neighbouring countries often have the most accurate information and a good understanding of the specific context, in order to develop the most appropriate strategies to respond to particular situations.

However, global support is also needed. Regional cooperation linked to global cooperation offers the best prospects.

The expected 2011 debate at the UN General Assembly will focus on strengthening regional and sub-regional approaches to R2P.

(4) Further Developing the R2P Toolbox

Meeting participants all recognized the need to strengthen and develop the “R2P Toolbox.” Not surprisingly, there were differences of views regarding how far and how fast one could push the envelope. Suggestions discussed at the meeting include:

- Expanding the UN’s roster and capacity to deploy trained mediators.

- A wider range of targeted sanctions with maximum impact on a rogue regime, or individuals in authority, without punishing populations at large.
- A standing, 15,000-member UN rapid-response force with specialized training and equipment. A UN rapid reaction capacity (others referred to a “UNEPS,” a UN Emergency Peace Service) would help remedy the problems associated with slow deployments of peacekeepers in times of crisis that result from the current practice of cobbling together peace support operations from national contingents.
- Calling for a more formal set of rules on conditions for the use of force in civilian protection contexts, as called for in the 2001 ICISS report;
- Addressing the problems posed by the veto power of the permanent members of the UN Security Council. The P5 said “no” to any discussion of this in 2005; the issue needs to be revisited. A campaign led by a number of U.S. NGOs calling for a “Global Responsibility not to Veto,” would require the permanent members to agree not to use their veto where the Security Council is considering matters where genocide or other atrocity crimes are being considered. Canada could support this proposal.
- There is a need to encourage the incorporation of R2P frameworks in the capacity-building development assistance provided by donor countries. Genuine initiatives in this direction would also support a positive outcome at next year’s proposed General Assembly debate on the role of regional and sub-regional organizations in implementing the Responsibility to Protect.