

2017 United Nations Informal Interactive Dialogue on the Responsibility to Protect

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Good afternoon. On behalf of the Auschwitz Institute, please first allow me to express my thanks to the Secretary General for issuing the excellent report that has inspired this gathering, to the President of the General Assembly for convening this Interactive Dialogue, and to the Joint Offices of the Special Advisers on the Prevention of Genocide and the Responsibility to Protect for all of their continued efforts.

Our organization, the Auschwitz Institute for Peace and Reconciliation – AIPR – works with States around the world through education, training, and technical assistance to support them in developing and strengthening policies and practices for the prevention of genocide and other mass atrocities.

The Secretary General’s report notes that “the legal obligations of States extend to addressing root causes of atrocity crimes”. To this end, we engage directly with States to equip and empower them to fulfil these obligations with a focus on aiding in the development of durable institutions that respond to risk factors and stop potential atrocity crimes before they develop. This also ensures that those responsible for preventing atrocity crimes at the national level are trained and prepared to do so.

National Mechanisms are important element of State-level prevention. Our Booklet on National Mechanisms for the Prevention of Genocide and other Atrocity Crimes, which is published annually and made available to the public, contains examples of States working to fulfil their protective and preventive obligations through new or existing inter-ministerial bodies. We would like to commend these States for serving as leaders and examples for the international community.

In addition to working directly with States to fulfil their Responsibility to Protect, our work also supports and engages with regional bodies dedicated to the prevention of atrocity crimes. In this context, I would like to draw particular attention to two of the regional bodies mentioned in the Secretary General's report, which often serve as models for the international community. The first is the Latin American Network for Genocide and Mass Atrocity Prevention – to which the Auschwitz Institute has the honor of serving as Technical Secretariat – with the second being the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region.

Networks and arrangements like these bring together legislators and decision-makers from different States within a given region on a regular basis in order to discuss planned and ongoing work related to prevention. These frameworks provide a forum that allows for an ongoing exchange of proven policies and best practices, as well as allowing participants to benefit from the exchange of lessons learned – between colleagues from neighboring countries – as they work to reinforce national and regional mechanisms that prevent and halt atrocities. Arrangements such as these build on national-level initiatives and encourage the creation of context-specific approaches and strategies, as well as systems for prevention. They not only promote the prioritization of preventive policies within the agendas of participating member-states, but also support the development and implementation of standardized training programs for public officials. Furthermore, bringing officials together on this basis helps to reinforce a shared sense of community and, with it, confers an additional layer of accountability between peers.

Thank you very much for this morning session. It is our hope that the Interactive Dialogue, together with the Secretary General's report, will serve to inspire important progress in ensuring that accountability is maintained relative to the prevention of atrocity crimes to the benefit of vulnerable populations around the world.