

Canadian Statement at the United Nations General Assembly Interactive Dialogue on the Responsibility to Protect, 6 September 2017

Mr. President,

Canada thanks the President of the General Assembly for convening this Informal Interactive Dialogue, and the Secretary-General for his thoughtful, action-oriented Report on *Implementing the Responsibility to Protect: Accountability for Prevention*. We also take this opportunity to commend the essential work of the UN office of the Special Advisor to the Secretary General on the Prevention of Genocide, and the Special Advisor on R2P.

Canada shares the view in the report that legal, political and moral accountability is critical in order to translate the responsibility to protect (R2P) into an agenda for individual and collective action. Protection of populations from atrocity crimes depends on direct action by those responsible –first and foremost national governments, the international community, and the UNSC- to implement their stated commitment to the three pillars. They are accountable for their action, or inaction, and we are all subjected to the consequences when prevention fails.

The report's focus is particularly relevant as the world is witnessing immense suffering among conflict affected populations in such settings as Syria, Yemen, South Sudan, to name just a few, and where not only civilians and civilian objects but humanitarian and medical personnel have been indiscriminately targeted.

The Security Council has a unique responsibility in helping prevent atrocity crimes; it is in our collective interest to have a Security Council that puts a rules-based international order ahead of national interests and that responds in a timely manner in situations where early signs of atrocity crimes have emerged.

Ensuring accountability is absolutely crucial to deterring the occurrence and recurrence of mass atrocity crimes, to promoting reconciliation and to bringing about justice for victims. Canada continues to be committed to the International Criminal Court, and to ending impunity for atrocity crimes. If survivors are to obtain justice, investigating and prosecuting international crimes is vital.

To translate early warning to early action, we must make use of the tools at our disposal. An enhanced use of Human Rights Mechanisms for atrocity prevention is also critical, notably tools such as UN mandated Commissions of Inquiry, Fact-finding Missions and Investigations, which are increasingly being used to respond to situations of serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law, including atrocity crimes, and to deter the recurrence of violations.

Canada believes that the General Assembly has a role to play in R2P and atrocity prevention. Last year, we co-sponsored the UN General Assembly Resolution to establish the International, Independent and Impartial Mechanism (IIIM), which will assist in the investigation and prosecution of those responsible for war crimes or crimes against humanity in Syria, including by collecting, consolidating, preserving and analyzing evidence.

Canada reaffirms its support for the inclusion of a prevention and R2P item in the General Assembly to allow for a substantive and inclusive dialogue on these important norms and their effective implementation.

Finally, Canada remains committed to the responsibility to protect and was pleased to formally join the Global Network of R2P Focal Points earlier this year.

Thank you, Mr. President