

Statement delivered by Spain – Informal Interactive Dialogue on R2P, 6 September 2016
[UNOFFICIAL TRANSCRIPTION FROM WEBCAST]

Thank you Chair.

We can agree with the EU delegation's statement and that of the Group of Friends on the Responsibility to Protect.

One of the areas which give this organization the greatest sense is the need to protect people who are at risk of becoming victims of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes or ethnic cleansing. Therefore I am delighted that one of my first interventions as Ambassador for the Spanish mission to the UN is to be able to stress the importance of the Responsibility to Protect.

Moderator, we are not talking about an abstract concept. Unfortunately in too many places in the world, in Syria, Iraq, in the Central African Republic or in Yemen, just to give a few examples, we are able to see the damage caused by extreme indiscriminate violence and the effects of the persecution of communities because of their ethnic or religious position and there are continuous violations of International Humanitarian Law and human rights. We are extremely concerned about all negative trends such as the systematic use by some non-state groups of forced displacements and sexual violence. These are used as tactics of war and terrorism. All of these acts could be termed as crimes against humanity, war crimes or genocide. Spain would like to reiterate here today its commitment to the three pillars of the Responsibility to Protect and to the need to continue working in greater depth on the work that we began in 2005.

We agree that we must overcome this debate on concepts, and complement it with practical measures such as those proposed by the Secretary-General in his report. This goes for those which refer to the national level and those which refer to the United Nations such as the new resolution from the General Assembly and the creation of a formal point on the Agenda of this organization. My country lays particular importance upon the Responsibility to Protect and did so in its recent tenure in the Security Council. We would therefore call for the members of the council to use the working methods of the organ to address mass atrocities. This includes the Code of Conduct and the Restriction of Vetoes and events such as that organized by our country in 2015 or the reaction of reporters which involve the responsibility to protect and incorporate this within their reports, particularly the Special Advisors of the Secretary-General for the Prevention of Genocide and that for the Responsibility to Protect when they are addressing situations of high risk.

We must lead by example we believe, as we did in the cases of Burundi and South Sudan. Spain wishes to suggest that we explore the possibility of the Informal Group for the Protection of Civilians and the Group of Experts on Women, Peace and Security as well as the Group on Children and Armed-Conflicts should systematically incorporate this focus whenever it is relevant. The preparation of the sessions for these mechanisms will also be useful for the Secretariat be working in a more coordinated and effective way in order to underlie the value of preventative work which is incumbent upon all of us. Because of the importance of prevention and early warning and the impact this can have in this type of crimes, Spain is in favor of strengthening cooperation and dialogue in the Security Council and in the Human Rights Council. The Universal Periodic Review and the Special Procedures are extremely useful tools so that we

can ensure and look at whether we really are doing enough nationally and regionally to prevent atrocity crimes or whether on the other hand we could be doing much more.

In the area of peacekeeping and protection we also believe that protection of civilians is crucial as are mandates for the protection of children and women. So in our opinion, these should continue to have great relevance and great weight in peace operations. We believe that atrocity crimes should be part of the pre-deployment phase. The needs of civilian protection must always be taken into account, so my country therefore fully supports full implementation of Kigali Principles.

One of the best measures to ensure that atrocity crimes do not occur again is to make sure that there is proper accountability. We wish today to reaffirm our acknowledgement of the work of the International Criminal Court and urge all member states to cooperate the International Impartial and Independent Mechanism established by the General Assembly to investigate atrocities committed in Syria. This might facilitate accountability in the near future.

Finally, Moderator, we believe that the Responsibility to Protect must be an essential element in the United Nations reform. Therefore we would like to express our support to the work of the Special Advisors of the Secretariat on the Prevention of Genocide and the Responsibility to Protect and also all of those mandates which are pillars of the prevention architecture in this organization. We believe in the responsibility to prevent, react and build. Inaction is not an option that we can allow ourselves.

Thank you.