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**UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
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Informal interactive dialogue on the Responsibility to Protect (R2P)

**Statement by H.E. Gillian Bird
Ambassador and Permanent Representative
of Australia to the United Nations**

Thank you Mr President.

Ten years after the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) was enshrined in the World Summit Outcome Document, the need for R2P has never been more profound. Atrocities are fuelling and driving conflicts, large-scale displacement and massive humanitarian need.

We endorse the six priorities the Secretary-General has identified to implement R2P – this is an action plan for the next decade.

While the principle is now widely understood and embraced, we must continue to reinforce that R2P is, first and foremost, about prevention. R2P derives from the principles of the UN Charter, and it is inherently linked to the protection of civilians. Successful prevention enhances state sovereignty.

Mr President

Where prevention does not succeed, timely and decisive response by the international community – especially the Security Council – is essential. The Secretary-General's

report encourages the international community to draw on the *full* range of tools available to respond to a given situation – non-military as well as military.

During our recent Security Council term, Australia sought to bring an R2P sensibility to all our work. This included our efforts to address the humanitarian situation in Syria, to bring the gross human rights violations in North Korea onto the Council's agenda, our work on sanctions and arms embargoes, and supporting protection of civilians to sit at the core of UN peacekeeping.

We call upon Council Members to uphold their responsibility to protect in all aspects of their work.

Beyond the Security Council, a comprehensive approach is needed to conflict prevention across the breadth of UN activities that incorporates atrocity prevention, as well as protection of civilians, human rights and peacebuilding considerations.

The concurrence of reviews of peace operations, peacebuilding architecture, Resolution 1325, the Sustainable Development Goals and R2P's 10th anniversary provides a valuable opportunity to enhance coordination across the UN's work. The UN Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes provides a worthy tool to guide the mainstreaming of atrocity prevention across the UN system.

Mr President

As noted in the Secretary-General's report, non-State armed groups, such as Daesh, have embraced atrocity crimes as a means to advance their objectives. If we are to effectively tackle the increasing strength and expansion of terrorist groups and armed militia, we must recognise the link between atrocity prevention and countering violent extremism. Both R2P and countering violent extremism require us to address the root causes of instability and inter-communal tensions. Actions such as strengthening governance and rule of law, and fostering equitable and inclusive communities and economic growth, help to both prevent and counter violent extremism and address risk factors for atrocity crimes.

Such action must be undertaken with full respect for the universality of international human rights and humanitarian law.

Mr President

Australia thinks the time is right for the General Assembly to formally consider how atrocity prevention can be best implemented by Member States. R2P is simply too serious an issue to remain on the sidelines. A General Assembly resolution in the forthcoming 70th session which reaffirms the 2005 UN World Summit Outcome on R2P would be an important step.

We recognise that some States have reservations about R2P. But these concerns relate primarily to *how* R2P is implemented, and *not* whether the responsibility exists. And it makes placing R2P on the formal agenda of the General Assembly for discussion all the more important.

The 2005 World Summit Outcome explicitly gave the General Assembly the responsibility to take R2P implementation forward. It is time for the General Assembly to formally take up its mandate.

Thank you.