

Statement delivered on behalf of the Permanent Mission of Belgium to the United Nations

General Assembly informal, interactive dialogue on the “Responsibility to Protect: Timely and Decisive Response”

5 September 2012

(UNOFFICIAL TRANSCRIPTION)

Belgium completely associates itself with the statement of the European Union.

The recent report of the Secretary General is in our view satisfactory because it outlines the foundation and the contours of the concept of R2P. I will confine myself to two points. The first is related to the international situation: we find it profoundly shocking to see that the international community has not, to date, been in a position to shoulder its responsibility to protect civilian populations massacred day after day by the Syrian regime. Must we recall here once again that primary responsibility for this protection resides with the Syrian authorities, whereas they are going so far as to use artillery, helicopters to bomb their own population.

The responsibility to protect against the gravest violations cannot thus be disqualified. Quite the contrary this unacceptable and incomprehensible blocking, as far as world public opinion is concerned, reminds us of the responsibility to protect to which we have collectively committed ourselves in 2005, need we recall. And more than ever before this is a concept for our day. After Srebrenica and Rwanda we do not want to see the international community have to ask for forgiveness once again for not having done what it should to protect civilians, who are today victims of the most heinous crimes. Inaction, as far as we see it, is not an option.

My second point, colleagues, I'd like to welcome the assertion by the Secretary General of certain aspects that my delegation deems to be particularly important when we talk about R2P. First, reaffirmation that every state has an inherent responsibility to protect. Second the assertion that the question that arises is really one of seeing how to achieve this objective in given specific circumstances. And third, that there is no particular rite of passage from one pillar to the next, but rather that they mutually reinforce each other. Furthermore, the Secretary General has very usefully recalled that the objective of the third pillar is not to substitute for the failing state but rather to provide conditions conducive to that state once again assuming its responsibility, or to convince that state to exercise its responsibility vis-à-vis its population. And lastly, it's important for us to recall, as does the Secretary General, that the Security Council must continue to respond flexibly to the need to protect populations from crimes that are covered by the concept of R2P with all the latitude granted him by the Charter.

And in conclusion, Mr. Moderator, my delegation expresses its thanks to the special advisors Mr. Deng and Mr. Ed Luck for their important work done with regards to the concept of responsibility to protect and their essential role. Lastly my delegation wants to wish Mr. Dieng and the moderator every success in the new responsibilities ahead, we assure you of our fullest support. Thank you.