

General Assembly Interactive Dialogue on the Responsibility to Protect
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Mr. President, Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen,

I wish to express my gratitude to you Mme President for the opportunity to speak at this interactive dialogue. My name is Doris Mpoumou and I am the Director of the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect.

The Coalition is the only global network of national, regional and international human rights, conflict prevention, peace and security, and women's rights non-governmental organizations dedicated to advancing the RtoP norm. In particular, the Coalition aims to consolidate the World Summit Consensus on the norm, increase awareness about the norm among governments, civil society and the media, strengthen normative endorsements at the national, regional and international levels, and encourage governments and other regional and international organizations to build their capacities to prevent and halt mass RtoP crimes.

Mme President,

In this context, we welcome your convening of this important interactive dialogue on Early Warning, Assessment, and the Responsibility to Protect and commend you for providing a forum for Member States to continue the consideration of the Responsibility to Protect, as called for by paragraph 139 of the *World Summit Outcome Document* and Resolution 308 of the 63rd session of the General Assembly.

We would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm our support for the norm which was hailed the most important achievement of the 2005 World Summit Outcome. Indeed, by endorsing the norm, world leaders made a historic commitment to transcend the existing concept of sovereignty by agreeing that states and the international community have a responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing. This outcome is a vital new tool for civil society to hold governments and the international community accountable when they are manifestly failing to respond to grave threats against humanity. Our role and challenge as civil society organizations is to galvanize political will to prevent and or halt the commission of mass atrocity crimes, which will ultimately save lives.

We believe that the advancement and institutionalization of early warning and assessment within the international community, as represented by the United Nations, is of paramount importance to the development of the Responsibility to Protect. The mandate of the Responsibility to Protect is, first and foremost, to prevent genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing, at the earliest stage possible; and (as stated in the SG's report on Early Warning...), early engagement/action is unlikely to happen without early warning and the assessment of early warning data.

The systematic collection and selection of information for the purpose of anticipating escalations in violent conflict is a common function of many regional, sub-regional and global



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organizations; and, in this regard, civil society can play a significant role in the gathering, selecting and distributing of location specific information. ECOWAS¹ early warning system ECOWARN² provides an excellent example of how this may be carried out. ECOWARN works through regional Observation and Monitoring Zones to utilize the knowledge of civil society actors, mostly from the West African Network for Peace building (WANEP), to provide insight into long-term and short-term causes of conflict, as well as venues for peacebuilding.³

As the Secretary-General's report stated, there are ample sources of early warning information; what is lacking is the coordination and analysis of early warning data and the development of strategic responses and policies for early engagement. In light of this, we welcome the initiative of the Secretary-General to consider ways in which the information that is already present within the United Nations system can be assessed in a timely manner to facilitate preventative action. We hope that his insights will provide for a productive discussion and precipitate in the development of practical and effective strategic responses.

We cannot stress enough the importance of cooperation and coordination between all relevant UN Secretariat departments, funds and programs, as well as between regional and international organizations in the prevention of genocide, ethnic cleansing, war crimes and crimes against humanity. This cannot be achieved without collaboration and cooperation with the Secretary-General's Special Advisors on the Prevention of Genocide and the Responsibility to Protect.

We wish to close by reiterating the centrality of prevention to the responsibility to protect, and thereby the importance of early warning and assessment.

The UN General Assembly continues to make a critically important contribution to progress in the pursuit of international peace and security. We believe that the overriding purpose of the Responsibility to Protect is to save populations from the most heinous of human rights violations: genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

We hope to participate in future dialogues on the Responsibility to Protect, and that the eventuality of future announcements will be undertaken in a more predictable way, so that governments and civil society representatives can engage the dialogue with adequate preparedness.

Despite all the challenges that may lie ahead, we believe that with the commitment of a group of like-minded governments from all regions working in cooperation with international, national and local civil society organizations from around the world, we can move RtoP from principle to practice— the principle of non indifference.

Merci de votre attention.

¹ Economic Community Of West African States.

² Economic Community of West African States Early Warning and Response Network.

³ See: http://www.oecd.org/document/59/0,3343,en_38233741_38242551_42930299_1_1_1_1,00.html