

EU Statement – United Nations General Assembly: Informal Interactive Dialogue on the Responsibility to Protect

6 September 2017, New York – Statement on behalf of the European Union and its Member States by Jo Adamson, Deputy Head of Delegation, at the United Nations General Assembly Informal Interactive Dialogue on the Responsibility to Protect

Mr. President,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the EU and its Member States.
We thank the President for organizing today's debate.

To paraphrase Lakhdar Brahimi, meeting the challenge of saving populations from mass atrocity crimes is to a very significant degree the yardstick with which this Organization is judged by the peoples it exists to serve. The theme of the Secretary-General's 2017 report on the Responsibility to Protect is accountability for prevention. When it comes to mass atrocity crimes, the priority of prevention over response is more obvious than anywhere else. Indeed, strengthening accountability for the implementation of the Responsibility to Protect means reinforcing our preventive approaches to better protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and from crimes against humanity. How does the EU live up to its commitment to implementing the Responsibility to Protect? And what more can we do collectively to enhance accountability for the prevention of mass atrocity crimes? To start with, we must support the UN Secretary-General's broad focus on prevention. Atrocity prevention should be central to the wider agenda of conflict prevention as well as to the agenda of sustaining peace. The overarching ambition of conflict prevention fully resonates with the European approach to security, as envisaged in our Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy. Against the alarming trend of an increasing number of deliberate attacks against civilians, we have to close the gap between rhetoric and actions. We have to start with practical steps to better operationalize the Responsibility to Protect and to better harness its preventive potential. For our part, we have been promoting the Responsibility to Protect as an integral part of foreign and security policy. To realize our commitment to atrocity prevention, the EU and its Member States have appointed 23 national Focal Points and one regional Focal Point on the Responsibility to Protect. Our conflict Early Warning System has been at the forefront of including the risk of atrocity crimes into EU policy considerations, and we are preparing a specific toolkit on atrocity prevention. Some EU Member States are currently working on the creation of a system to survey atrocity risk assessment. Furthermore, as part of the implementation of our Global Strategy, we will be looking at integrating multiple existing risk assessment processes into a single assessment of risks and factors of resilience. This is designed to enable crisis prevention and mitigation efforts to be better informed, and better supported by early political action.

Mr President,

The EU welcomes the recommendations in the report of the Secretary-General on strengthening accountability at all levels and of all players for the prevention of mass atrocity crimes. We welcome the new practice of convening informal thematic panels in preparation for the Secretary General's report, and encourage the continuation of this practice. The EU and its Member States will take all relevant recommendations under consideration to inform our policies and actions, including our cooperation with other States and partners.

As regards the UN system, the Security Council holds a crucial responsibility and authority to protect populations from mass atrocity crimes. We echo the recommendations of the Secretary-General to Members of the Council to make better use of available tools and to endorse result-oriented proposals which allow for more timely and more decisive action on atrocity prevention. The Council should also make better use of preventive tools such as informal meetings open to civil society and other member states..

In a similar vein, the EU welcomes the emphasis in the Secretary-General's report on enhancing the role of the General Assembly on implementing the Responsibility to Protect. The EU supports the Secretary-General's recommendation on the inclusion of the Responsibility to Protect on the formal agenda of the General Assembly.

Continued UN guidance, coordination and support to Member States on implementing the Responsibility to Protect will be essential. The Secretary-General will play a central part in promoting a culture of prevention across the Organization. We urge the UN Secretariat to produce better evidence-based insight into more effective structural and operational measures to prevent atrocity crimes. The Special Advisors on the Prevention of Genocide and on the Responsibility to Protect will retain crucial roles in maintaining our collective focus on implementation, in particular on the prevention of atrocity crimes.

Mr. President,

The EU supports the ambitious reform agenda of the Secretary-General. The upcoming reforms will provide an opportunity to strengthen accountability for the prevention of atrocity crimes in an integrated manner across the UN's three pillars.

As atrocity prevention has multiple dimensions, it remains essential, both for the EU and for the UN, to take a multi-dimensional approach, including the use of all available policies and instruments. The EU remains intent to lead by example. Our Global Strategy lays the foundations for an integrated approach to conflict and crises and for a new policy approach on strengthening the resilience of states and societies. We have been working to better join up our different interventions and instruments, so as to become a more effective and stronger partner, including for the UN. When it comes to the prevention of mass atrocities, the EU has pursued a multi-sectoral approach: from our field missions and operations working for the protection of civilians to our capacity building programmes for atrocity prevention, guided by the new European Consensus on Development.

The UN also needs to work in a coherent and integrated fashion to become fit to address the complex, multi-sectoral challenges of atrocity prevention. UN reform efforts should be geared towards enhanced synergies, capacities and accountability across the UN system. Under the leadership of the Secretary-General, we encourage the Special Advisors to continue their efforts at mainstreaming the Responsibility to Protect across the UN system, to continue to improve cooperation and coordination among UN entities as well as to provide them with operational guidance and advice.

Mr. President,

The EU welcomes the Secretary General's approach on a comprehensive atrocity prevention strategy, effectively incorporating the Human Rights Council, human rights treaty bodies and special procedures mandate holders as well as the Universal Periodic Review process. International and regional human rights bodies and mechanisms are crucial elements in the operationalization of the Responsibility to Protect, in particular through their potential to identify risk factors and to deter atrocity crimes. We welcome the Secretary-General's recommendations to make better use of human rights bodies and mechanisms in preventing mass atrocity crimes. We also reconfirm our support to the Secretary General's "Human Rights Up Front" initiative as a key enabler of enhancing system-wide capacity in the UN to prevent violations of international human rights and humanitarian law.

Promoting respect for the human rights of all and promoting the fight against impunity are part and parcel of the EU's engagement in atrocity prevention. We will continue our investments into protecting the fundamental rights of minorities around the world and at home and into securing the inclusion of all parts of society, without discrimination and through dialogue.

The EU and its Member States remain committed to promoting the efforts to end impunity for the most heinous atrocities and encourage the universal acceptance of the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court. Through our support for the ICC, we have been fostering capacities for accountability and reconciliation. These are key elements for ensuring non-recurrence and thus the prevention of future atrocities.

Mr. President,

The EU has an enduring and firm commitment to eradicate genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. We will continue to fulfil our legal, moral and political responsibilities to

prevent these crimes. We will continue to work with other States and partners and we will strive towards a strong and continuously evolving partnership with the UN to collectively realize the Responsibility to Protect.

I thank you.

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