

General Assembly Debate Statement: Edward Luck

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I have seven points I would like to respond to, whether they are the lucky seven remains to be seen. The first to those who say it's not time for implementation and it's time for debate, let me just say that we really have no choice but to implement as best we can. Both governments and publics alike expect us to do our best. We can't wait until we perfect a theory before we start to respond to emergencies around the world.

Second of all, in that regard, we need to recognize that there are potential pitfalls. We need to move prudently and by step-by-step. We have to be careful not to do any harm but we must move forward. In addition, if we were to leave this to others we would risk, in fact that these concerns would become a self-fulfilling prophecy. We must prove that there is a multi-lateral alternative that the UN with its regional and sub-regional platforms are reasonable society partners are up to the task of preventing these crimes and protecting populations. As the Secretary General said we cannot tell victims that we are debating whether to come to their aid. If I can use a colloquialism: this particular horse is out of the barn and we cannot put it back in.

Now my second point, and that under laid it, is that now that we are in an age of practical practice of R2P, we must learn and learn quickly how to do better. There will be lessons for the secretariat and there will be lessons for the member states as well and for intergovernmental partners on the regional and sub-regional level also. At the same time we need our critics but we need our critics to focus on our performance and less on theory. If we really interested in theory there is a whole journal devoted to the theory of R2P and new issues coming out every couple of months.

This morning there were several comments about friends, about neighbours and about family. Now to me these seem like the people who tell it like it is and so we might have more discussion about peer review and peer pressure something that was raised in the SG's report but something that was not addressed this morning.

A 3rd point I would like to respond to is that many delegations spoke about consistency. There we might expect higher standards on the part of the secretariat that we might on the behalf of intergovernmental bodies. If those of us on the secretariat seem to be inconsistent in what we say or do in particular situations please let us know. But we recognize that intergovernmental bodies are necessarily political. Whether they are global or regional or sub-regional they are political bodies and therefore they may see things in a less than scientific consistent way. We should recognize that as well that no two situations are identical. Assessments are extremely important because we should avoid a false consistency applying the same template or the same response to quite different situations. Third we should recognize in terms of consistency that one of the variables and in recent cases one of the most important variables was that we saw rather different attitudes regionally in several recent crises. So the regions may not always be consistent as well.

Now the fourth point I would like to respond to is on comments made this morning relating to political will. I think we do need more energy on how to generate political will both globally, regionally and sub-regionally. One way maybe be earlier consultations , try to foster common views and another maybe is to look at intergovernmental bodies to look at how they interact and in this regard the security council may look at its interactions with regional bodies and vice versa.

The 5th point I would like to respond to is about the nature of partnerships. It seems to me that partnerships at this point should be defined largely by operational requirements, who can bring what to the table in a timely manner. In that regard there are a lot of comments about early warning, early warning is important, but I think common assessment and sharing assessments of situations is even more important. We should have shared views about comparative advantages and about capacity gaps among the various bodies. I think we ought to think about more about messaging. Who says what when about particular crises. We should find better ways to deal with the splitting tactics. And how better to maintain a united front in particularly sensitive areas.

Sixth, I think we need to recognize that we are not always going to succeed. The principle of R2P doesn't depend on always absolute and perfect application. That is not real life, we are going to have ups and downs and we need to learn from our failures as we move forward. We might do a little less finger pointing, there is an old saying that failure is an orphan and little more of joint lessons learned exercises. In this regard the emphasis in the Secretary General's report and by several speakers this morning across the regional spectrum would be particular apt.

My final and seventh point is about prevention. I think everyone this morning mentioned that prevention is to be preferred. I think that's obvious and I don't think there is any dissent on that. But we have to recognize that prevention doesn't always work. So what happens when prevention fails? In this regard this was the first of a series of reports on R2P that we submitted both to the Security Council and to the general assembly. And those here who are on the security council or are thinking about joining the security council I hope that we have given some thought about the implications to the security council about some of the things in the Secretary General's report, particularly some of the relationships with the regional bodies.

Finally, and I think only a couple of delegations mentioned it this morning. There is one suggestion in the report about the possibility for the interactive dialogue for next year is an assessment of those cases which the UN in one way or another has applied R2P in recent years. That list of cases is getting quite long and we thought it might be quite useful to look at the 3rd Pillar application of R2P in particular situations in recent years. As people have already mentioned that doesn't necessarily mean coercive measures it may also mean diplomatic means and others applied. I said there is a growing list already and internally the secretariat must do some assessments and I think it would be much more effective if we did that assessment together with the member states and I would be interested in people's reaction as to whether this would be an apt topic for an interactive dialogue next year. Finally, I only hope that the discussion this afternoon is as good as the one this morning. I thought it was a terrific interchange and a very good way to start the day.