

**Statement by Finland at the UN General Assembly Informal Interactive Dialogue on  
the Responsibility to Protect**

**6 September 2016**

Mr President,

I wish to thank you for organizing this informal interactive dialogue. The topic of our session today could not be more acute. The suffering of civilians in Syria and South Sudan, for example, clearly demonstrates the failure to operationalize our commitment to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. It is high time to step up our action for Responsibility to Protect.

Finland welcomes the 8<sup>th</sup> annual report of the Secretary-General. As reminded by the report, Responsibility to Protect is a political commitment we all have agreed at the highest level in the 2005 World Summit. Finland strongly encourages states to reaffirm their commitment to Responsibility to Protect. At the national level, we have done so in the form of a policy paper on RtoP. At the international level, inclusion of the item in the formal agenda of the General Assembly as well as adoption of a substantial resolution reaffirming the principle, are steps that we consider necessary.

Conflict creates fertile ground also for atrocity crimes. We fully agree with the report on the need to show a greater effort in terms of prevention. We welcome the momentum around conflict prevention created by the three UN reviews. Turning that enthusiasm into concrete action requires above all political will. There are positive experiences of the power of mediation and peacebuilding, development cooperation, policing, the rule of law, human rights protection and women's empowerment, all of which need further investments, both political and financial.

In addition to conflict prevention, specific attention is needed to prevent atrocity crimes. We have a wide set of tools, such as the Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes, human rights mechanisms including the UN human rights system, the Human Rights up Front initiative and EU's Conflict Early Warning System that should be better utilized.

Even though the risk for atrocity crimes is not particularly high in my own country Finland, we have set policies to prevent atrocity crimes from happening in the future. We attach great importance to social inclusion and prevention of marginalization,

rights and status of minorities, and to prevention of radicalization and violent extremism. It is also important to de-escalate tensions, often related to migration, that point to the polarization of society. This work is done throughout the administration and in close partnership with civil society.

Mr President,

The Security Council bears a special responsibility in preventing and responding to mass atrocity crimes. As the report rightly suggests, the Council's practices should emphasize prevention and early action. And when prevention fails, ensuring a timely and decisive response to mass atrocity situations is indispensable. Committing to the ACT's Code of Conduct and the French-Mexican initiative on refraining from the use of veto right in cases where atrocities or the threat of atrocities is evident should be the starting point.

Countering impunity for genocide, crimes against humanity or serious war crimes is an essential part of the implementation of RtoP. For the Security Council, this entails ensuring that situations in which such crimes may have been committed and national judicial proceedings are not available, are referred to the International Criminal Court. Referrals to the ICC should be followed by sustained efforts to enforce arrest warrants and put pressure on non-cooperative governments.

Lastly, I wish to express our heartfelt thanks for the invaluable work accomplished by Ms Jennifer Welsh as the Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on RtoP as well as Special Adviser on Prevention of Genocide Mr. Adama Dieng. We very much look forward to working with the new Special Adviser on RtoP, Mr Simonovic. I also wish to thank Secretary-General Ban for his tireless efforts and great leadership in promoting RtoP. We wish that the next Secretary General will follow SG Ban's excellent example and show the leadership and commitment needed to promote further operationalization of the RtoP.

Thank you.