

Statement by Councillor Christoph Retzlaff on "Responsibility to Protect" in the General Assembly

Jul 12, 2011

(as delivered)

Informal Interactive General Assembly Dialogue on the Report of the Secretary-General

“The role of regional and sub-regional arrangements in implementing the Responsibility to Protect”

Mr. President,

I would like to thank you for convening today’s dialogue on the role of regional and sub-regional arrangements in implementing RtoP. I would also like to thank the panelists for their valuable contributions.

Let me start with a general remark:

The progress we have seen in implementing RtoP in the last years is indeed encouraging. We have applied this principle in a number of specific situations. This is a decisive step that clearly demonstrates that RtoP has become a broadly accepted concept and an emerging norm of international law.

Mr. President,

Germany aligns itself with the statement made by the EU-Delegation. In order to be brief in this interactive debate, I would like to highlight three points:

1. I think we all agree that prevention is the best form of protection. This should be the focus of our common efforts in implementing RtoP. It is first and foremost the responsibility of each state to protect its population from mass atrocities. This, I think, is broadly accepted. Cooperation in order to prevent mass atrocities is another important basic principle of RtoP. If the state fails to act it is the obligation of the international community to act. So the most important challenge ahead in further implementing RtoP is to work together between states and the international community early enough to prevent mass-atrocities and to provide protection. This is exactly why more effective global-regional collaboration is key for prevention.

2. Regional and sub-regional arrangements are particularly important as they are indeed key-partners for the development of tailor -made strategies that often suit best to emergency situations. They are close to the events. They know circumstances, history and culture often better than decision-makers far away. The views of neighbouring states and regional organisations are therefore obviously important when determining which course of action to take in particular situations.

3. The concrete task for us therefore is to find out how regional organisations can further develop their cooperation and what role the EU can play in this respect.

Mr. President,

let me conclude by underlining Germany's commitment to the further implementation of RtoP. I would like to thank you for your initiative and the Secretary-General for his crucial leadership on this important issue.

Thank you.