

**Statement by**

**Ambassador Ron Prozor**

**Informal Interactive Dialogue on**

**the Role of Regional and Subregional**

**Arrangements in**

**Implementing the Responsibility to Protect**

Mr. President,

The Lutheran Pastor, Martin Niemoller once wrote:

First they came for the communists,  
and I did not speak out because I was not a communist.  
Then they came for the trade unionists,  
and I did not speak out because I was not a trade unionist.  
Then they came for the Jews,  
and I did not speak out because I was not a Jew.  
Then they came for me  
and there was no one left to speak out for me.

The People of Israel recognize the evil that can be carried out when good men and women stand silent. We are a Nation that arose like a phoenix from the ashes of the Holocaust. We bear the memory of its horrors.

Founded in the wake of this seminal tragedy, the United Nations was charged with preventing the reoccurrence of such horrendous events. The Rwandan genocide, the massacres at Srebrenica and the Killing Fields of Cambodia remind us that the lessons of the past have not

always been heeded.

Israel welcomes the opportunity to engage in further discussion about the responsibility to protect.

First and foremost, states have a moral responsibility to prevent the spread of hatred and prejudice. Yet, many fail to do so. Indeed, some governments encourage intolerance to cynically distract citizens from the abuses and failings of their own leaders. The international community cannot ignore this great danger. History shows that dehumanizing statements lead to the most inhuman of acts.

Mr. President,

Education is the key to ensuring that the failures of the past do not become the tragedies of the future. Israel has unique experience in this regard. We have built a vibrant civil society from a melting pot of many different cultures from around the world. In our schools, every Israeli child is taught the value of pluralism and the importance of tolerance of other religions and ethnicities.

To this end, we support the Secretary General's observation in his recent report that "training, education and awareness-raising are natural areas for new partnerships". Civil society serves as another cornerstone of the responsibility to protect. Built on respect for human rights and freedom of expression, a strong civil society is critical for ensuring preventative action and sounding early warnings of mass atrocities.

We must also recognize that the responsibility to protect extends beyond governments. As mentioned in the Secretary-General's report, "sometimes, these crimes are committed not by governments, but by non-state actors, such as armed groups, drug cartels, or terrorists".

Mr. President,

Although we acknowledge the potential of the responsibility to protect to shield the vulnerable against the most serious of crimes, we remain mindful of its significant risks and challenges. Conceptual, institutional and political hurdles stand in the way of properly understanding and applying this concept. We must ensure that it does not become a weapon that is open to abuse and misuse.

The responsibility to protect does not require the creation of new international mechanisms. However, within the existing structure of the UN Charter, and other relevant instruments, we must transform lofty rhetoric into decisive action.

Dr. Martin Luther King once said, "In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends."

As we seek to apply this important concept, let us never lose sight of our fundamental responsibility to our fellow human beings. Like the pilot of a ship in stormy seas, we must navigate a steady course forward, moving past idle chatter, but steering clear of politicization

and abuse.

Thank you, Mr. President.