OPENING OF THE 66th SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY:
GENERAL DEBATE
STATEMENTS REFERENCING THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT
21-24 September and 26-27 September 2011
General Assembly Chamber

UN Secretary-General,
Ban Ki-moon

(...) A second great opportunity: prevention. This year the UN peacekeeping budget will total $8 billion. Consider the savings if we act before conflicts erupt – by deploying political mediation missions, for example, rather than troops. We know how to do this. Our record proves it – in Guinea, Kenya, and Kyrgyzstan. To prevent violations of human rights, we must work for the rule of law and stand against impunity. We have carved out a new dimension for the Responsibility to Protect. We will continue. (...) Let us commit the resources required. Let us raise “prevention” from an abstract concept to a core operating principle, across the spectrum of our work. (...) 

Belgium
Deputy Prime Minister,
Minister of Foreign Affairs;
Mr. Steven Vanackere

[Unofficial translation] (...) Belgium will not stand idly by when people claim a future free of coercion and terror. Instead of non-interference, Belgium believes in non-indifference. Sovereignty is no longer a wall leaders can use to violate the rights of their citizens. Sovereignty cannot be used as an excuse to run away from the responsibility to protect their people. (...) 

Look at Libya, where the Security Council was able to prevent a massacre in Benghazi. Belgium has decided, with the almost unanimous support of the Belgian Parliament to participate in the military operation 'Unified Protector', in assuming the risk and cost because it is convinced that the international community has a responsibility to take action when populations are exposed to an imminent threat. Molière said, we are not only responsible for what we do but also what we do not do. Now, when the immediate threat fades, the same international community has a responsibility to assist in the reconstruction of Libya, a responsibility that is integral, let us not forget, the responsibility to protect." (...) 

Benin
Minister for Foreign Affairs;
Mr. Nassirou Bako Arifari

[Unofficial translation] (...) Similarly, trials in operationalizing the responsibility to protect will need reflection to identify the contingencies of its application, to make it an institution of contemporary international law, and most of all to confirm that its aim is to save lives and contribute to the improvement of human security (...) 

Brazil
President;
Ms. Dilma Rousseff

(...) Much is said about the responsibility to protect; yet we hear little about responsibility in protecting. These are concepts that we must develop together. For that, the role of the Security Council is vital - and the more legitimate its decisions are, the better it will be able to play its role. (...) 

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Costa Rica
President;
Ms. Laura Chinchilla Miranda

(…) When education, persuasion and other preventive mechanisms are unable to deter the worst aggressions against humanity, the international community is faced with additional challenges. Among them is the protection of civilians summarized by the Responsibility to Protect. My country recognizes this as a priority and a guide for action, either preventive or reactive, stemming from legitimate and well-founded decisions. We hope that this concept, similarly to human security, will be outlined very clearly within the Organization. (…)

Estonia
President;
Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves

(…) Once again ongoing events underline the need for us to focus on the protection of civilians from atrocities. Even in the democratic part of my continent, the political project we today call the European Union was a reaction to mass murder and war. The very history of Europe motivates us to take preventive steps to avoid any repetition of such crimes. Therefore it is vital that we develop common practices and the capacity to implement the principle of R2P, better known as responsibility to protect.

Protecting civilians from atrocities is not just about “protection”. It also means bringing perpetrators of crimes and atrocities against civilians to justice. International law, and in particular the International Criminal Court, and the understanding that justice will be done, no matter how long it takes, are the tools we possess to prevent the worst human rights violations. Rule of law and respect for international law are what will help ravaged and victimized societies regain their dignity and rebuild their communities. (…)

Cuba
Minister for Foreign Affairs;
Mr. Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla

(…) While we are deliberating here in this hall, "another preventive" war is taking place in Libya using as a pretext "the protection of civilians". The United States and NATO, supposedly to avoid a massacre, launched a military attack against a sovereign State without there being any threat to international peace and security, and unleashed a "change of regime" operation. NATO imposed on the Security Council a dubious resolution authorizing "Member States (…) acting nationally or through regional organizations or arrangements … to take all necessary measures to protect civilians and civilian populated areas under the threat of attack". Afterwards, NATO violated this same resolution in order to supply weapons, fund one of the parties to the conflict and deploy operatives and diplomatic personnel on the ground.

Now everybody has a better understanding of the concept of "responsibility to protect" and what it can be used for. (…)

European Council
President;
Herman van Rompuy

(…) When, earlier this year, there was the risk of a bloodbath in Benghazi, European leaders together with others, acted with swiftness and determination, diplomatically (here in New York) and militarily. We could not allow the Libyan regime to take the lives of its own people. The principle of “responsibility to protect” was put into action – with perseverance and success. Now there is a "responsibility to assist" the new Libya with the political transition, the reconciliation and the reconstruction of a united country. The Transitional National Council, today in the
Libya seat, is ready for that task. Europe was, is, and will remain on the side of the Libyans. (…)

Ghana  
President;  
Mr. John Evans Atta Mills

(…) We are also committed to the global norm of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) and will continue to work closely with member-states, UN Friends of R2P, and the UN as a whole. The Government has taken measures to strengthen the rule of law by enacting appropriate legislation to promote accountability and good governance, protect human rights, ensure the independence and integrity of the judiciary, free and fair elections, and the freedom of the media (…)

Holy See  
Secretary for Relations with States;  
Archbishop Dominique Mamberti

[Unofficial translation] (…) These humanitarian emergencies emphasize the need for innovative methods to implement the principle of responsibility to protect, the foundation of which recognizes the unity of mankind and highlights the innate dignity of every man and every woman. As we know, this principle refers to the responsibility of the international community to intervene in situations where governments cannot or do not fulfill the first duty incumbent on them to protect their populations from serious violations of human rights as well as from consequences of humanitarian crises. (…)

It is worth repeating that even the use of force in accordance with UN rules must be a solution of limited duration, a measure of real urgency must be accompanied and followed by a concrete commitment to peace. There is a need to meet the challenge of responsibility to protect: there must be a deeper search for ways to prevent and manage conflicts by exploring every possible diplomatic channel through negotiation and dialogue, and by recognizing and encouraging even the weakest signs of dialogue or desire for reconciliation of the parties involved.

The responsibility to protect must be understood not only as military intervention, which should be a very last resort, but before anything, as an obligation for the international community faced to crisis to create genuine negotiations, to support the rule of law and encourage governments, civil society and public opinion to find causes and solutions to crises, in solidarity with affected populations, having at heart before anything integrity and security of all citizens. (…) As such, the responsibility to protect should be the criteria and motivation behind all the work of Member States and the UN to restore peace, security and human rights. In fact, history is full of successful operations of peacekeeping and peacebuilding which can offer valuable experience to conceive of models of how the responsibility to protect can be implemented (…)

Italy  
Minister for Foreign Affairs;  
Mr. Franco Frattini

(…) Our response to the [Arab spring] uprisings was consistent with our values. We called for dialogue and deplored the use of force against civilians. This was not enough in Libya, however, where the regime had vowed to slaughter its own civilians. The only way to prevent a massacre was for the international community to invoke the principle of responsibility to protect. By helping to implement this decision in military, diplomatic, and humanitarian terms, we shifted from a culture of sovereign impunity to one of responsible sovereignty, rooted in national and international accountability for the most serious violations of human rights. At the same time we
supported international sanctions against the Syrian leadership. (...)

Liechtenstein
Minister for Foreign Affairs;
Ms. Aurelia Frick

(...)
First, how did we do in our commitment to protect civilians? The United Nations has made much progress in developing the concept of the Responsibility to Protect. This concept has three pillars: in the first instance the primary responsibility of the affected States themselves and then, under the second pillar, responsibility for other States to assist in the protection of civilians. In two recent instances, however, the international community had to become active under the last, third pillar. We commend the Security Council for taking swift action to protect civilians in Libya and Côte d’Ivoire. In both instances, the Council authorized the use of force only as a last resort, but also without undue delay. Some have criticized the actions taken and argued that they are aimed at regime change. Let us not forget, however, that the regimes in question had a choice. It was them who chose to attack civilians. It was them who forced the international community to act. At the same time, we sympathize with those who perceive selectivity in the application of the responsibility to protect. As the stalemate in the Security Council on Syria shows, politics at times continue to trump principles. In response, however, we need more principled action, not more politics. (...)

Macedonia
Prime Minister;
Mr. Nikola Gruevski

(...)
It is a right and duty of every country to preserve and advance its citizens’ rights. It will be the best guarantee that the “Responsibility to protect” as a principle, will mostly be retained on its first, primary pillar. As a country that is building a model of inclusive democracy, we are convinced that human rights and freedoms should be an integral and important part of global governance. (...)

Luxembourg
Deputy Prime Minister
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Mr. Jean Asselborn

(...)
The international community had to react, to recognise its responsibility to protect Libyan men, women and children who were under fire. We could not stand by and admonish ourselves later on for having hesitated too long, for having neglected our responsibility to protect defenceless people from the cruelty of their own authorities. We did not want, once again, to be the powerless witnesses of large-scale violence. Our Organisation was able to react and demonstrate its capacity to act in a decisive, timely and just manner. The General Assembly suspended Libya from the Human Rights Council. Acting within the remit of Chapter VII of the Charter, the Security Council authorised all necessary measures to protect civilians and civilian populated areas under threat of attack. The Council could act so decisively because the international community and the region in particular supported its action. The Arab League played a very important role in this regard that I would like to salute in particular. (...)

Netherlands (The)
Minister for Foreign Affairs;
Mr. Uri Rosenthal

(...)
Lack of security is a fundamental threat to people's freedom. Providing security is a responsibility of governments and of the international community as a whole. In March this year, we rose to the challenge. Security Council Resolution 1973 on Libya was truly historic. It explicitly referred to the international community’s Responsibility to Protect. It highlighted the UN’s indispensable role. By
contrast, the Council’s failure to reach consensus on Syria has been at great human cost. (...) I urge all members of the Security Council to act decisively and agree on targeted sanctions against the regime. (...) 

Nicaragua
Minister for Foreign Affairs;
Mr. Samuel Santos López

(...) Nicaragua expresses its firmest rejection of the use of the "misnamed responsibility to protect" in order to intervene in our countries, to bomb civilians and change free and sovereign governments. We cannot allow the imposition of this new model of imperialist aggression nor the continued aggression of our peoples. Interference and intervention will not resolve crises, only dialogue and negotiation between brothers will resolve the political crises facing the peoples. (...) 

Norway
Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs;
Mr. Espen Barth Eide

(...) In Côte d’Ivoire and Libya, the United Nations has once again proved its worth by addressing some of the most challenging situations in the world. The resolve shown by the Security Council in Libya has reaffirmed its pivotal role in global governance and international security - the role that the Member States best owe it through the UN Charter. There are times when there is no alternative to the use of force. When the Security Council acts, it is up to us - the Member States - to put its decisions into practice. Norway’s active participation in the military campaign in Libya was first and foremost an expression of our belief in a UN-led world order and the principle of responsibility to protect. (...) 

Paraguay
President;
Mr. Fernando Lugo Méndez

[Unofficial translation] (...) We must continue to addressing to the General Assembly our preoccupations as to the development of the actions in Libya, which took place under Security Council Resolution 1973 and the concept of the “responsibility to protect”. We consider that the use of force must always be exerted as a last resort (...) 

Sweden
Prime Minister;
Mr. Fredrik Reinfeldt

(...) This year, we have witnessed courageous people in North Africa and the Middle East taking to the streets to fight for their dream. To fight for freedom, openness and democracy. For this, they must get our support. When there are threats of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing or crimes against humanity - when autocratic rulers like in Syria turn their guns on their own citizens - then the international community has a responsibility to protect civilians. (...) 

Syria
Minister for Foreign Affairs;
Mr. Walid Al-Moualem

On the other hand, popular demands and claims have been manipulated to further objectives which are alien to the interests and express desires of the Syrian people. These demands were the stepping stone used by armed groups to sow discord and sabotage our security. They became the new pretext for foreign interventions. Syria exercised its responsibility to protect its citizens. It acted to guarantee their safety and stability.

Vigilance against the danger of foreign intervention that assumes a different form with
every passing day, and challenging it does not mean underestimating popular demands. These demands have already been accommodated prior to the recent events. In our view, these are needed reforms that have fallen due. Many of their elements have been already met. Those reforms are a work in progress that will continue through national dialogue in the context of national unity, sovereignty and independence. (...)

Zimbabwe
President;
Mr. Robert Mugabe

Mr. President, bilateral hatreds and quarrels or ulterior motives must not be allowed to creep into considerations of matters pertaining to threats to international peace and security, or to the principle of the Responsibility to Protect. We are yet to be convinced that the involvement of the mighty powers in Libya’s affairs has not hindered the advent of the process of peace, democracy and prosperity in that sister African country. Our African Union would never have presumed to impose a leadership on the fraternal people of Libya as NATO countries have illegally sought to do. (...)

The newly minted principle of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) should not be twisted to provide cover for its pre-meditated abuse in violating the sacred international principle of non-interference in the domestic affairs of states because to do so amounts to an act of aggression and destabilisation of a sovereign state. Moreover, to selectively and arbitrarily apply that principle merely serves to undermine its general acceptability. Indeed, more than other states, all the five permanent members of the Security Council bear a huge responsibility in this regard for ensuring that their historical privilege is used more to protect the U.N. Charter than to breach it as is happening currently in Libya through the blatant illegal, brutal and callous NATO’s murderous bombings. (...)

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