

Russia's Statement at the 2014 UN General Assembly Dialogue on the Responsibility to Protect [Transcribed]

8 September 2014

Mr. Chairman,

The last rounds of interactive discussion have allowed us to have a thorough discussion of the major aspects of the issue of RtoP. The practicality of continuing theoretical debates on the substance of the concept is not obvious. So in this regard, in our statement, we would like to take a quick look at the recent report of the Secretary-General.

This year it is dedicated to a very important aspect, namely, international assistance to states for them to protect their populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. As with the previous reports, we looked at this document solely through the prism of the corresponding section of the final documents of the 2005 Summit, which are the only existing to date general frameworks for the concept of RtoP. In this regard, we are pleased to note that this report of the Secretary-General confirms the idea of an exclusive and critical responsibility of states to protect their own populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. Overall the document has useful and practically oriented information generalizing the approaches for the provision of international assistance to states in discharging their own obligations to protect their own populations.

We positively assess the attempt in the report to formulate a general code of principles to provide international assistance. It is not exhaustive, of course, but it contains some important items. In particular, we fully agree that the key to success of any international assistance is greater consideration of national ownership.

Each state is unique and without full consideration of its political, historic, legal, religious, cultural and other specificities international assistance might do more harm than good. Precedents are well known. They need to be carefully studied and analyzed so as not to repeat prior mistakes. This approach would allow us to infuse real content into another important principle in international assistance, "do no harm." We also support notions in the report of the special role of preventive measures in implementing RtoP and inapplicability of cut-and-paste approaches to providing assistance in the rule of law. At the same time we must note that the report does have places that raise some questions. As with prior reports, we are concerned about attempts to subsume into UN language under genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity, the general term of atrocity crimes, which is not known to international law and opens a huge space for arbitrary interpretation.

I would also like to talk about Rights Up Front separately. This is an intra UN initiative which was developed without the agreement of Member States and Member States participation. Member States have rather sketchy information on modalities and concrete results of its implementation. So positive assessments of this strategy in the reports of RtoP are still premature.