

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS TO THE 39TH INTERNATIONAL PEACE INSTITUTE
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Thank you very much. It's an honor and a pleasure to be here, especially with so many of you who work with the UN system every day to try to protect civilians from harm. I'm particularly grateful to the Government of Austria for hosting me today, and to the International Peace Institute for its valuable work.

Colleagues, we have just drawn down the curtain on the bloodiest century in human history. That is why the United States is determined to work together with you and others to ensure that the 21st century takes a far lesser toll on civilians—on innocents who should be sheltered by the rule of law and the rules of war. I believe deeply that atrocities are not inevitable. They need not be part of the landscape of world politics—unless we let them be.

In recent years, our consciences have been seared by the horrors of Srebrenica, Rwanda, and Darfur. Today, we are challenged again by the desperate plight of civilians in such places as Somalia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Sri Lanka, among others.

My interest here is deep and, in part, personal. In 1994, I was serving on the National Security Council staff at the White House. That December, I visited Rwanda for the first time—just six months after the Ex-FAR and Interahamwe finished with their machetes, pangas, and guns. As long as I live, I will never forget the horror of walking through a churchyard and adjacent schoolyard where one of the massacres had occurred. Six months later, the decomposing bodies of those who had been so cruelly murdered still lay strewn around what should have been a place of peace. For me, the memory of stepping around those corpses will remain the most searing reminder imaginable of what we must all aim to prevent.

Last month, I visited Rwanda again with my colleagues on the UN Security Council, which was the first time for me in several years. We visited the phenomenally powerful Kigali Genocide Museum, which is the gravesite for some 250,000 victims. We spoke with survivors, with killers, with government officials, and many who are trying and, to an amazing extent, succeeding in overcoming the past. We were reminded of our shared responsibility for the international community's failure to act in the face of the last genocide of the 20th century. And I could not help but think of our collective failures that persist to this day.

Ever since the Holocaust, the world has often said, "Never again." In our hearts, I believe we mean it. But the undeniable fact is: we all have much more to do to give those words meaning and strength, to make them real.

Yet at the core of my being, I believe that our new century can and must be better than the last—more rooted in humane values, more committed to human rights. Much brave

work has already been done. The horrors of the 20th century have helped give rise to an important shift in our thinking about mass slaughter—and to a range of new tools to prevent and respond to it. The international community has started to create a new vocabulary for talking about genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing. And it has started to craft a new way to stop them.

The Responsibility to Protect—or, as it has come to be known, R2P—represents an important step forward in the long historical struggle to save lives and guard the wellbeing of people endangered by conflict. It holds that states have responsibilities as well as interests—and that states have particularly vital duties to shield their own populations from the depraved and the murderous. This approach is bold. It is important. And the United States welcomes it.

We are not alone. All 192 UN member states adopted the Responsibility to Protect at the World Summit in 2005. The next year, the Security Council reaffirmed this commitment—and the related principle of protecting civilians—in Resolution 1674, and the Council has taken R2P at least partly into account in its actions on Sudan and the DRC.

The Responsibility to Protect is rooted in the principle that states have a fundamental responsibility to protect their populations from such atrocities as genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing. It holds that other states, in turn, have a corollary responsibility to assist if a state cannot meet its fundamental responsibility to its citizens—or to take collective action if a state will not meet that fundamental responsibility. R2P enjoins us to mobilize a wide spectrum of policies and instruments, both as individual nations and as an international community. Only rarely, and only in extremis, does that include the use of force.

That is the principle. Turning it into practice will take resolve. The consensus reached in 2005 was—to be frank—more broad than deep. We have seen some erosion of will since then, and we may see more, particularly in an age of economic crisis, political jolts, and transnational threats.

So let me touch on a few key challenges that states of goodwill face in trying to save lives from those bent on mass slaughter, and then offer a few thoughts toward an agenda for common action. These challenges are real. But we can meet them if we work together and remain ever mindful of the stakes of failing to act.

First, we still face confusion and misunderstanding—willful or otherwise—about what the Responsibility to Protect is and is not.

To take just one example, some defended the war in Iraq by invoking the Responsibility to Protect, a tactic that still casts a shadow on efforts to deepen the consensus around the R2P concept. Some still conflate R2P with an unfettered right to intervention. It is not. In fact, the Responsibility to Protect asks us to mobilize a range of responses that have nothing to do with intervention.

Some have also suggested that the Responsibility to Protect is merely a preoccupation of the West. I believe our African colleagues would disagree, and rightly so. Let us remember that the African Union beat all of us to this principle. In 2000, its Constitutive Act invoked a concept of “non-indifference” in the face of grave crimes, and Article 4 of that Act authorized decisive AU action to put a halt to war crimes, genocide, and crimes against humanity. Let us also remember that the World Summit consensus on the Responsibility to Protect passed in very large part because of the determined advocacy of concerned African states. So let no one dare suggest that the most basic precepts of humanity and decency somehow belong to only one part of the globe.

We must also resist the temptation to apply the concept too widely, even when we are moved by other instances of human suffering. The Responsibility to Protect should be invoked only in truly grave cases. The power of R2P is precisely that it reminds us to act in the face of genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing. The power of R2P is that it insists that especially egregious crimes demand braver and better behavior from all of us. This does not mean that we should be indifferent to the broad range of perils that threaten people’s lives and welfare. It means merely that we have a particular responsibility to respond to the worst outrages.

Second, we should not wait for genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, or ethnic cleansing to occur before we act. The potential for mass atrocities is greatest amid war and civil strife. But genocide and mass killings are by no means a simple and inevitable consequence of conflict. The decision to use mere differences among groups as a license for atrocity or a path to power is precisely that: a craven decision, one consciously made by the wicked, the callous, and the cruel.

Third, humanitarian requirements will often jostle with other legitimate policy concerns. It does no good to pretend that priorities do not sometimes compete—and even where they do not, even where our values and our interests fall neatly in step together, the answers are not always obvious. Again, consider Sudan, where we simultaneously face the genocide in Darfur, the recent expulsion of critical international NGOs, a faltering North-South peace process, and the risk of new instability in various parts of the country. The urgency and complexity of the overall situation can distract us from addressing adequately any single imperative, and indeed, the reverse is also a risk.

The fourth challenge is the question of tactics. When mass atrocities erupt or loom, we must carefully weigh whether invoking the Responsibility to Protect will actually improve our chances of success. Will it make it easier to win over the cooperation we will need? Or will it drive potential partners away? There are no one-size-fits-all answers.

Consider Kenya in 2007-08, which is often called one of the first successful instances of R2P in action. Contested elections led to the rapid displacement of an estimated 600,000 people and to widespread abuse, rape, and murder, including the horrible death of 30 people who were burned alive inside a church.

The good news is that international action was swift. The African Union took an early lead, with two mediation initiatives—eventually led by former UN Secretary-General

Kofi Annan—that produced a power-sharing agreement just two months after the initial crisis began. In a consensus Presidential Statement, the UN Security Council endorsed the AU process and the invaluable operational support that Annan’s efforts were receiving from the UN Secretariat.

But more troubling news is that the conditions that produced such a rapid response in Kenya were far from typical. And even in the Security Council, international unity did not come easily. It’s worth noting that the Responsibility to Protect was explicitly not part of the debate in the Council—and colleagues who handled this issue in 2008 tell me that it was difficult even to build support for a Council vote of confidence in Annan’s mission. Raising the R2P flag may be morally satisfying, but it can be politically fraught.

These, I would suggest, are some of the core challenges that make it harder to save civilians from mass atrocity. So how can we overcome them?

We are lucky to have the benefit of many efforts that help suggest the way ahead, including crucial work done by a wide array of NGOs and experts from around the globe, the Secretary-General’s report, and the report of the Genocide Prevention Task Force, co-chaired by former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and former Secretary of Defense William Cohen and jointly convened by the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, the American Academy of Diplomacy, and the United States Institute of Peace. Let me touch on key elements that they raise.

Indeed, we must do more to prevent conflicts and reduce the risks that cause them. We know a good deal more today about how poverty, environmental pressures, poor governance, and state weakness raise the risk of civil conflict. But we have yet to act consistently to reduce these risks. We must renew our efforts to deploy new and existing tools to limit the likelihood that disputes will explode into mass violence. That means combating poverty, fighting discrimination, assuring that scarce resources are shared more equitably, better tapping alternative and renewable resources, strengthening the rule of law, and building more accountable and democratic institutions to thwart the abuse of power and limit the corrosive effects of corruption. We must recognize that development and security are inextricably linked. We must look anew at ways to support fragile states, particularly as they are rattled by global forces such as climate change and the financial crisis. And, as the Secretary-General’s report notes, we must build up the institutions that make a society resilient in the hour of crisis: including communities, churches, mosques, synagogues, temples, schools, independent media, and strong civil society organizations.

In addition, we should sharpen and strengthen our instruments for conflict management, and hone them to cope specifically with mass atrocities. That means working with willing partners, including the United Nations, regional and sub-regional groups, development banks, donors, and nongovernmental organizations. It means making sure our tools are sturdy. It means garnering sufficient resources. And it means keeping our efforts coordinated and bound together with a unity of purpose that has too often been elusive.

Let me briefly discuss several of those instruments.

First are the linked questions of early warning, analysis, and decision-making. We must do more to ensure that a lack of information will never be a reason again for inaction. Working with governments, regional organizations, and NGO partners, we should strive to collect more, different, and better information about the risks and signs of mass violence—and then to share it. That data should also be analyzed with extra sensitivity to the potential for atrocity. And it should be channeled in real time to decision-makers who can do something about it.

But one significant caveat: history shows that slow policy responses to mass slaughter often stems from factors other than a genuine absence of information about what is unfolding. More often, policymakers knew a significant amount but were held back by competing policy priorities, limited knowledge of the country at risk, disincentives for speaking out, political concerns, and other factors.

Second, preventive diplomacy. The last twenty years and more have taught us that international mediation and diplomacy, backed by a readiness to use other tools, are among the most effective ways to prevent and halt violence. At the UN, innovations like mediation standby teams are an important start, but these teams remain underutilized and they need more resources. We still have too few mediators with the right skills ready to deploy in real time—and, I might add, far too few women. We need also greater surge capacity, closer cooperation among mediators, and better coordination between mediation and other tools of conflict management. And we need to redouble our efforts to forge the international unity it will take for mediation to succeed.

Third, peacekeeping. We greatly appreciate the courage and dedication shown by UN blue helmets around the world, but these brave men and women are often stretched up to—or beyond—their limits. We must make sure that peacekeepers have the help they need to prevent a fragile peace from breaking down, and we must invest in more effective and efficient peacekeeping that can protect civilians menaced by rebel bands and marauding gangs, whether in Haiti or the eastern DRC.

But UN peacekeepers—even better trained and equipped ones—are not always the right solution when innocents are in peril. Sometimes, an unfolding atrocity is so large or so fast that it can be quelled only by the swift arrival of combat-ready brigades or their equivalent—operating outside the UN chain of command, and not built from scratch as a UN peacekeeping force must be. Only a handful of countries have this capacity at the ready, and even fewer can or will guarantee a response when called upon. Such governments, and regional organizations including NATO and the European Union, must take a hard look at their will and capacity to quickly deploy—either to fill the gap before peacekeepers arrive, to reinforce them during a crisis, or to respond in cases where peacekeepers are not the right answer to begin with.

Through our Global Peace Operations Initiative, the United States has helped train and equip tens of thousands of peacekeepers, and we are working to improve peacekeepers' abilities to protect civilians from the imminent threat of violence.

Fourth, we must put the bite back in sanctions. We have increasingly sophisticated tools to compel states and leaders to abide by international laws and norms. Through the UN, we can freeze individuals' assets, ban international travel, restrict the flow of luxury goods and arms, and do much more to limit abusers' abilities to threaten others. But the Security Council often finds it difficult to overcome member states' reluctance to wield and fully implement sanctions on behalf of the victims of mass atrocities. I hope to be able to work with my Security Council colleagues to make better, smarter use of sanctions—not only to maintain global order or to halt proliferation but also to save innocent lives at immediate risk. Sanctions can be an effective, if not always a flexible, targeted instrument, and we must seek to strengthen them.

And, finally, peacebuilding. We still have much more to do to foster firm foundations for peace in societies that are trying to leave years of conflict behind them. Just because the killing stops does not mean it won't start again. The past decade has witnessed major innovations in peacebuilding, including the creation of the UN's Peacebuilding Commission, but we have much farther to go. We need more flexible development funds that arrive sooner; early investments in the core capacities of a struggling state; international support for national efforts to reinforce the rule of law, demobilize ex-combatants, and reform state security services. We need lasting support for victims of sexual violence and other human rights abuses, and an insistence that we not assume the job is done until the peace is secure.

The United States is committed as well to doing its part to strengthen the international human rights architecture, which will help establish global norms that abhor genocide and mass atrocities. The United States strongly supports the UN's network of Special Rapporteurs and Experts, which can provide invaluable information on unfolding calamities or potential ones. A more robust field presence from the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights is one tool to help build up national human rights institutions and help make a difference when a crisis erupts.

As you know, the United States will soon join the UN Human Rights Council. We will use that seat to push hard for balanced and credible action, to change the rules of the game, to scrutinize human rights records across the board, and to cast the spotlight on the world's worst abusers. In a crisis, the Council's ability to call special sessions—something too often abused in the past—can focus needed global attention and action on deteriorating human rights conditions.

To conclude, the Responsibility to Protect is a duty that I feel deeply. I believe we must be voices for action in the face of genocide and mass atrocities, even if we are lonely ones.

The world will never give us the quiet we might wish to gather our thoughts, weigh our options, and summon our nerve. Even as we speak, the ground is burning in all too many places. We must prepare for the likelihood that we will again face the worst impulses of human nature run riot, perhaps as soon as in days to come. And we must be ready.

We know there will be more perpetrators. We know there will be more victims. But we must work to ensure that there will also be more justice and fewer and fewer bystanders.

We all know the greatest obstacle to swift action in the face of sudden atrocity is, ultimately, political will. The hard truth is that stopping mass atrocities requires more than just the wisdom to see a way to save innocents from knives and the guns. It requires above all the courage and compassion to act. Together, let us all help one other to have and to act upon the courage of our convictions.



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