

EXCERPTED STATEMENTS FROM THE OPEN DEBATES AT THE OPENING OF THE 63RD GENERAL ASSEMBLY SESSION

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General Assembly Chamber

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon

(...) [*Unofficial translation from French*]

Above all, I am thinking of human rights. It is essential to act upon the principle that justice is a pillar of peace, security and development. We must advance the **Responsibility to Protect**. We recognize that such issues are seldom black and white. We accept that politics can be complex and full of trade-offs. Yet we cannot let crimes against humanity go unpunished. We have it in our power to combat impunity. And therefore we must. (...)

Australia

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd

(...) The United Nations, and we its member nations, have a **responsibility to protect** the nations and the people of the world. (...)

Belgium

Foreign Minister Karel De Gucht

[Unofficial translation](...) I have a lot of respect for state sovereignty, it goes without saying. It is one of the principal founding principle upon which our international system is built. However, being a sovereign state also signifies taking responsibilities in the international community, most particularly with regards to a state's population. Being sovereign does not justify neglecting citizen's needs for development, security, rule of law and human rights. Sovereignty does not give a 'free pass' for any behavior incompatible with engagements that committed to within the UN. Sovereignty must be a positive force and not an excuse to avoid responsibility

and escape to international and humanitarian obligations. Otherwise it becomes what I would call "sovereignism", an abuse of sovereignty to shield from one's duties.

Too often, arguing around the respect of sovereignty prevents the international community from acting at a moment when a situation in a country deteriorates before our eyes, causing the suffering of a population and multiplication of grave violation of human rights. Examples are well known and touch us all. Myanmar, Darfur, Zimbabwe, East Congo: each situation makes us face our "**responsibility to protect**", responsibility that the international community is called to enact when a state is unable or unwilling to take its own responsibility. This can be done with humanitarian tools, civilian capacity, to missions to maintain or reestablish peace, or more upstream measures such as prevention. (...)

Bosnia and Herzegovina President Haris Silajdžić

(...) This organization's credibility is too important to the world to carry the burden of failure. Errors can be committed, but errors must not be repeated. We want the UN to right the wrongs. In fact, international law mandates that this must be done. Namely, the International Law Commission's Articles on State Responsibility, adopted in this Assembly's Resolution 56/83 of 12 December 2001, mandate that: "no State shall recognize as lawful a situation created by a serious breach of peremptory norm of general international law," which clearly includes the crime of genocide and the

crimes against humanity, “nor render aid or assistance in maintaining that situation.” (...)

Czech Republic
Minister for Foreign Affairs Mr. Karel Schwarzenberg

(...)The Czech Republic supports the principle of **responsibility to protect** formulated by the 2005 United Nations World Summit. The international community is responsible to protect peoples worldwide in case their governments are unable or unwilling to do so. Just over the last few years, we have seen some quite tragic examples desperately requiring our attention. I, therefore, welcome the Secretary-General’s efforts to advance this issue. A valuable contribution can be also provided by non-governmental initiatives by leaders such as Vaclav Havel, Kjell Magne Bondevik, and Elie Wiesel. (...)

Denmark
Chairperson of the Delegation Mr. Carsten Staur

(...) At the World Summit in 2005, the concept of **Responsibility to Protect** was endorsed. We must develop this concept further and ensure that states do their utmost to protect their citizens from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. We must discuss what the international community and the UN can do to assist states in meeting these obligations, and consider the means available to the international community if states manifestly fail to protect their populations. (...)

Georgia
President Mikheil Saakashvili

(...) Just before the land invasion began in the early hours of August 7th—after days of

heavy shelling had killed civilians and Georgian peacekeepers—we urgently sought to refute claims that 2,100 South Ossetian civilians had been killed by Georgians.

This was the excuse used by the invader for what is called a “humanitarian intervention”—a profound perversion of the **responsibility to protect**. (...)

Guatemala
President Álvaro Colon Caballeros

(...) We also renew our commitment to the responsibility undertaken in the 2005 World Summit to the concept of the **Responsibility to Protect** our populations against genocide, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity. (...)

Holy See
Chairperson of the Delegation
Archbishop Celestino Migliore

(...) One of the clear facts recognized by all is that every crisis presents a mixture of natural factors and elements of human responsibility. However, these are all too often compounded by tardy response, failures or reluctance of leaders to exercise their **responsibility to protect** their populations.

When speaking within these walls of the **responsibility to protect**, the common understanding of the term is found in the 2005 Outcome Document, which refers to the responsibility of the international community to intervene in situations where individual governments are not able or willing to assure the protection of their own citizens. (...)

(...) The **responsibility to protect** has been invoked by some as an essential aspect of the exercise of sovereignty at the national

and international levels, while some others have re-launched the concept of the exercise of responsible sovereignty. For his part, Pope Benedict XVI, in his address to the General Assembly at the United Nations last April, also recognized (...) that **the responsibility to protect** has served and must continue to serve as the principle shared by all nations to govern their populations and regulate relations between peoples.(...)

The “we the peoples” who formed the United Nations conceived the **responsibility to protect** to serve as the core basis for the United Nations. The founding leaders believed that the **responsibility to protect** would consist not primarily in the use of force to restore peace and human rights, but above all, states coming together to detect and denounce the early symptoms of every kind of crises and mobilize the attention of governments, civil society and public opinion to find the causes and offer solutions. The various agencies and bodies of the United Nations also reaffirm the importance of the **responsibility to protect** in their ability to work in close proximity and solidarity with affected populations and to put into place mechanisms of detection, implementation, and monitoring. (...)

Liechtenstein
Minister for Foreign Affairs Rita Kieber-Beck

(...) 60 years ago, this assembly adopted the Genocide Convention—a crime over which the International Criminal Court was given jurisdiction fifty years later. The Convention was born out of the desire to prevent the recurrence of genocide, yet it failed to achieve this purpose on several occasions thereafter. The rallying cry “Never Again!” can only be used so often before it loses credibility. In that spirit, all of us agreed to the concept of the **Responsibility to Protect**

(“**R2P**”) when we met at the Summit level three years ago. For us and many others, this was one of the most significant gains in the Summit Outcome, which was otherwise a mixed bag. Still, we are struggling with the challenge to make the concept widely understood and to apply it in practice. **R2P** is a narrow concept that is limited to clearly defined cases of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity. And it is based on the sovereign responsibility of States to protect their own populations as well as the United Nations Charter. We must maintain this conceptual clarity and provide for consistent implementation of the Summit decision. (...)

Lithuania
President Valdas Adamkus
(...) Shouldn't an alarm bell ring across the entire international community when we see such blatant attempts to cover up crimes against humanity?

Because security is indivisible, it is in the interest of the international community that the UN plays a greater role in strengthening preventive diplomacy and making the principle of “Responsibility to Protect” work. (...)

Luxembourg
Mr. Jean Asselborn, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Immigration of Luxembourg

[Unofficial translation](...) Finally, I care to focus the attention, once more, on our collective decision relating to the duty to protect populations against genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. We must follow-through and work on the concept of the **responsibility to protect**, which will have to find its application according to the criteria and conditions defined by the 2005 outcome

document, to gradually become an uncontested norm to guide the international community's action when the situation demands it. (...)

Malta
Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi

(...) Human security and the dignity of every man and woman require us to continue the discussion in order to build consensus on the principle of the **responsibility to protect**, particularly in relation to genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, as agreed by the 2005 World Summit. While we realise the sensitivity of the issue, Malta agrees with the Secretary-General that we need to move from declarations of commitment to practice and implementation. (...)

New Zealand
Chairperson of Delegation Rosemary Banks

(...) Finally let me reiterate the importance that New Zealand attaches to the concept of the **Responsibility to Protect**. The UN, through the Security Council, should be prepared to protect people against ethnic cleansing, genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity when national authorities fail to do so.

There is a clear need to enhance early warning systems to enable the Council to act in a timely manner. We look forward to the Secretary General's report on the **Responsibility to Protect** and we stand ready to help take this important initiative forward. (...)

Poland
President Lech Kaczynski

(...) I have already referred to Georgia in the context of energy security. However, the

situation in this country is much more serious. We witnessed illegal military aggression and division of the country, Fundamental principles of international law i.e. inviolability of borders and territorial integrity were infringed. We may not allow for relativisation of the principles of international law and for their free interpretation by some countries. It particularly refers to the principle of "**responsibility to protect**" which should serve the interests of the international community and not the interests of individual states. (...)

Romania
Minister for Foreign Affairs Lazăr Comanescu

(...) **Responsibility to Protect:**
The appalling humanitarian crises of the last decades should prompt a renewed effort to define ways to prevent and adequately react to such situations, and furthermore to rebuild for durable conflict resolution. Further efforts should be made to forge a common understanding of the conditions and application of the principle of **responsibility to protect**. One of the fundamental duties of government is to ensure the protection of innocent people, while one of the essential principles in international relations should be that of solidarity for human protection. (...)

Slovakia
Minister for Foreign Affairs Ján Kubis

(...) Justice is a prerequisite for peace, security and development, not in contradiction with them. "**Responsibility to Protect**" should be another leading policy and principle for our joint action - both in relation to genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity and in cases of large-scale natural disasters and

catastrophes. All that can be done while respecting the principles of the UN Charter and international law. We cannot any more afford another Rwanda in Darfur or elsewhere. (...)

Sweden
Chairperson of the Delegation Anders Lidén

(...) States have a **responsibility to protect** people within their own borders from massive violations of their human rights. If a state is not capable of doing so, it should ask the international community – the United Nations or regional organizations – for help. And we all have to be ready to assist. Not long ago, the UN and the African Union were able to support Kenya to prevent a frightening crisis from turning into the worst possible nightmare.

If a state is unwilling to protect people within its borders, the Security Council has to face its **responsibility to protect**. We need a Security Council that is ready to shoulder this responsibility and to work together, because unilateral action might run the risk of aggravating the problem and undermining international law and legitimacy. (...)

Switzerland
Chairperson of the Delegation Mr. Peter Maurer,

(...) This brings me to the subjects of “Responsibility to Protect” and “Prevention of Genocide” Switzerland welcomes the fact that these subjects have now been institutionally anchored more firmly within the UN. The “**Responsibility to Protect**” was approved in September 2005 in the framework of the UN World Summit. It is obvious that the operational implementation

of this concept can only be realized progressively. Nevertheless, Switzerland will engage in efforts to ensure that the concept is not reduced to that of “humanitarian intervention” and thus being used to question the consensus achieved in 2005. (...)