

World Embraces Responsibility to Protect — Not Because It Is Easy, But Because It Is Right: remarks on the 18th Anniversary of the Genocide in Rwanda United Nations, Deputy Secretary-General Asha-Rose Migiro's

11 April 2012

Today, we solemnly gather to remember the almost 800,000 innocent people in Rwanda who became victims of genocide. As we recall the victims and their surviving families, we vow to continue to work to achieve justice, to promote peace and reconciliation, and to prevent genocide and mass atrocity crimes from occurring anywhere in the world.

Today is also a global reminder of the collective imperative to recognize the warning signs of impending violence. We acknowledge the efforts of the Rwandan Government and so many others who have supported the country on its long road to recovery.

The United Nations, too, has sought to strengthen its efforts. In 2004, on the tenth commemoration of the Rwanda genocide, the Secretary-General established the Office of the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide. And, at the 2005 World Summit, Heads of State and Government unanimously endorsed the

Responsibility to Protect

, pledging to never again abandon people threatened by the crimes of genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing. States affirmed their individual

responsibility to protect

their own populations from these crimes and accepted a collective responsibility to help protect other populations at risk.

The United Nations system continues to work in close partnership with regional organizations and mechanisms, Member States and other partners to ensure that societal fissures and the precursors of violence — hatred and discrimination — are identified early and acted upon.

(...)

Prevention does not mean looking the other way in times of crisis, in the vain hope that things will get better. Prevention means proactive, decisive and early action to stop violence before it starts. (...)

The world has embraced the

responsibility to protect

— not because it is easy, but because it is right to protect populations at risk of genocide and

mass atrocity crimes.

On this day, let us together pledge to intensify those efforts. Let us do so in the memory of all those lost — and to advance the Charter of the United Nations on which we work to uphold everyday and everywhere. (...)

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