

United Nations: Inter-Parliamentary Union Opens 2008 Hearings At Headquarters On Theme: Effective Peacekeeping and Conflict Prevention

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The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) opened a two-day hearing at United Nations Headquarters this morning on maintaining peace and preventing conflicts, which Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said was the primary mission assigned the Organization by its founders some 63 years ago.

The 2008 Parliamentary Hearing "Towards Effective Peacekeeping and the Prevention of Conflict: Delivering on our Commitments" was jointly organized by the IPU and the Office of the President of the General Assembly. The two themes of the session's first day were on the concept of "**the responsibility to protect**", and sexual violence against women and children during times of conflict, as well as the United Nations' role in that regard. The hearing wraps up tomorrow with a consideration of ways to integrate the human security approach into the work of the United Nations, as well as an examination of the key challenges facing the world body's peacekeeping operations. ()

During the morning session on "**the responsibility to protect**", the representative of Rwanda contrasted the international community's passivity in the face of the 1994 genocide of Tutsis, with its move to action during recent troubles in Kenya. Kenya's crisis had been managed by the region and the United Nations. He noted: "There was one coordinated intervention to stabilize the situation. Mediation prevented the situation from perhaps degenerating into crimes against humanity and genocide."

Concerning prevention, he insisted on the role of education for populations, teaching them to respect the life of others. That must begin in primary school, and also involve the army; an army that must respect human rights, he recommended. History must not be an eternal beginning, and we must, through it, learn," he concluded, recalling that "never again" had been said following the Holocaust.

For her part, Nicola Reindorp, Director of Advocacy for the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, citing the examples of Iraq or Georgia, cautioned against the risk that States would unduly invoke the **responsibility to protect** a population to justify interventions that, in fact, only served their own interests.

Conversely, the representative of the French Parliament cautioned against an interpretation that was too restrictive or rigid. Such a view would risk that an intervention, however necessary, would take place too late -- after having verified that a State was not dealing with its obligations or was incapable of protecting its citizens -- when there remained, in fact, only one thing left to do: "count cadavers". ()

Source: Unavailable

UN Press release: <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2008/pa4.doc.htm>