

Press release:□

**** Launch of the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect ****

January 2009

On January 28, 2009 representatives of eight regional and international non-governmental organizations announced at a press briefing at UN Headquarters in New York the launch of a new human security network: the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect (ICRtoP).

The endorsement of the Responsibility to Protect by all the heads of government at the 60th UN General Assembly summit expresses the world community's responsibility to protect populations from genocide, ethnic cleansing, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Founding steering committee members for the new Coalition include Asian, African, Latin American and international civil society organizations. The founding Steering Committee is comprised of:

Coordinadora Regional de Investigaciones Económicas y Sociales (CRIES) (Argentina)

East African Law Society (Tanzania)

Human Rights Watch

Initiatives for International Dialogue (Philippines)

International Refugee Rights Initiative (New York and Uganda)

Oxfam International

The West Africa Civil Society Institute (Ghana)

World Federalist Movement-Institute for Global Policy

The Coalition will bring together civil society groups from all regions of the world with the following goals:

1. To strengthen normative consensus for RtoP at the international, regional, sub-regional and national levels.
2. To push for governments, regional and sub-regional organizations and the UN to strengthen capacities to prevent and halt genocide, crimes against humanity, ethnic cleansing and war crimes.
3. To further the understanding of RtoP among governments, non-governmental organizations, and the public.
4. To help build and fortify a like-minded group of governments in support of RtoP.
5. To mobilize non-governmental organizations to push for action to save lives in RtoP country-specific situations.

The West Africa Civil Society Institute (WACSI) from Ghana has been nominated to serve as the first Chair of the Coalition. Thelma Ekiyor, Executive Director, has accepted on behalf of WACSI.

The Steering Committee asked the World Federalist Movement-Institute for Global Policy (WFM-IGP) to serve as the Secretariat for the Coalition. WFM-IGP will integrate its five year old Responsibility to Protect-Engaging Civil Society (R2PCS) project into the Coalition initiative.

The Steering Committee and new Secretariat will need several weeks to complete the development of the basic materials and mechanisms for establishing the new Coalition.

While the R2PCS website, www.responsibilitytoprotect.org, the most comprehensive source of information on the Responsibility to Protect since 2003, will shortly undergo transformation to serve the goals of the Coalition, we intend to maintain access to all information and resources amassed over the years.

The Coalition emerged from a series of Global Consultative Roundtables on RtoP conducted around the world from February to August 2008. The new Steering Committee expressed its appreciation to other NGOs who helped in the launching, including the International Crisis Group, Refugees International, and the Global Centre for R2P. The Coalition is committed to working closely with these NGOs and with the governmental grouping, Friends of R2P, in preparing for the upcoming UN General Assembly consideration of the recent report of the Secretary-General: implementing the responsibility to protect.

The founding Steering Committee members are aware of the enormous challenges that must be overcome if humanity is to achieve the cardinal goals of RtoP: each individual State and the international community through the United Nations have the responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. This responsibility entails the prevention of these crimes, including their incitement, and when a state is manifestly failing, to take collective action.

The International Coalition for Responsibility to Protect is being launched to achieve these goals.