

Joint Statement on the Responsibility to protect Human Rights Council 16th Session Item 10
23 March 2011

This statement was delivered by the government of Australia.

Mr President, I have the honour to make the following statement on behalf of 55 countries. In 2005, the world's leaders declared with one voice that the international community should never again countenance indifference in the face of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. They committed, as set out in paragraphs 138 and 139 of the World Summit outcome document, to the "Responsibility to protect".

The Summit Outcome made clear that each individual state has the responsibility to protect its population from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. It also clearly indicated that "the international community should, as appropriate, encourage and help states to exercise this responsibility, and support the United Nations in establishing an early warning capability." The leaders committed themselves, as necessary and appropriate, to helping states build capacity to "protect their populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, and to assisting those which are under stress before crises and conflicts break out."

The task of the Human Rights Council in this effort is targeted but crucial. It is to support the practical implementation of the World Summit commitment. We must work with the High Commissioner, to support long-term measures that help states exercise their responsibility to protect, such as institution building, strengthening the rule of law, and technical cooperation to promote respect for human rights and to prevent and address human rights violations. The Council also has a role in working with states to help build capacities and share best practices that reduce social tensions and contribute to conflict prevention.

We recall the High Commissioner's statement of 23 July 2009, and the Secretary General's report on implementing the Responsibility to Protect (63/677). We also reaffirm our support for the mandates of the Special Advisers to the Secretary-General on the prevention of Genocide and on the Responsibility to protect.

We urge all states to implement their responsibility to protect their populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, and call on the international community to continue to provide international assistance and capacity building to help states in this regard.

We urge the Council to remain seized of this important issue, and to contribute, consistent with its mandate, to efforts within the General Assembly.

This statement was made on behalf of the following countries:

Albania, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cote

d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece,

Honduras, Hungary Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg,

Malta, Mexico, Monaco, Montenegro, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, panama,

Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Somalia,

Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tanzania, Thailand, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern

Ireland, Ukraine, United States of America, Zambia

