

NGOs Send Letter to RIGOs in Advance of GA Dialogue on Role of Regional Organizations in Implementing RtoP

The following ICRtoP letter was sent on 19 April 2011 to Heads of Regional Organizations in advance of the informal interactive dialogue on the role of regional and sub-regional organizations in implementing the Responsibility to Protect (RtoP), scheduled for 12 July 2011.

The letter was sent to the following RIGOs: African Union, Economic Community of West African States, Council of the European Union, European Commission, Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Organization of American States, Intergovernmental Authority on Development, International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, Organization of the Islamic Conference, League of Arab States, Southern African Development Council, East Africa Community, Caribbean Community, Gulf Cooperation Council.

As NGOs dedicated to advancing the Responsibility to Protect norm worldwide, we are writing to you in advance of the **12 July 2011 UN General Assembly (GA) informal interactive dialogue on the role of regional and sub-regional organizations in implementing the Responsibility to Protect (RtoP)**. We encourage you to share with us in advance how you will use this opportunity to communicate your organization's commitment to the prevention of mass atrocities and articulate your proposals for how the region can fully support international obligations under the Responsibility to Protect.

World leaders made a historic commitment to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity with the unanimous adoption of the Responsibility to Protect at the 2005 World Summit. At the GA debate on RtoP in 2009 and the GA dialogue on early warning and assessment in 2010, Member States emphasized the important role that regional and sub-regional organizations have in all aspects of implementation of RtoP, from prevention to assistance to response.

ICRtoP Members believe that regional and sub-regional organizations are central in preventing and reacting to mass atrocities. Regional and sub-regional organizations have a unique understanding of internal developments in countries facing potential or current atrocities and are often the first to become aware of crimes being committed. As a result, they are able to play a direct and crucial role in implementing early warning measures. With tailored responses, regional and sub-regional organizations can respond early to crises by deploying eminent persons/envoys, encouraging measures such as mediation between parties, and dispatching fact-finding delegations to regions affected. Regional organizations can also deliver punitive measures, by denying an offending State membership in the regional organization or, in some cases, denying rotational Chair. In certain regions, regional organizations can monitor the enforcement of sanctions and contribute to the deployment of regional and international peace missions to protect civilians. Recent events only underscore the growing influence that regional organizations can have in the decision-making process of the UN Security Council.

At the 2009 and 2010 GA discussions Member States also recalled that organizations should undertake “region-to-region learning and lessons-learned processes concerning assistance relating to the Responsibility to Protect.” As expressed by the European Union at the last GA debate on RtoP, “cooperation is a key factor of an improved international response to RtoP situations”.

The upcoming GA informal interactive dialogue is an opportunity to focus on the issues facing the implementation of RtoP as well as highlight the contribution of regional and sub-regional organizations in enhancing this important norm. In preparation for your involvement in the dialogue, we encourage your organization to reflect on measures it has taken and what can still be done to prevent and halt mass atrocity crimes. As regional and sub-regional organizations are widely viewed as an indispensable partner in translating the global commitment into actual policy, it is in this same spirit that they can foster regional ownership of RtoP and ensure that it is localized in a manner consistent with regional norms.

Civil society in diverse global regions is committed to practical engagement with regional and sub-regional organizations through consultations, workshops and other means, thereby enhancing regional capacity to take early action to avert and react to genocide, crimes against humanity, ethnic cleansing and war crimes. As final plans continue to be shaped by the UN Secretary General, President of the General Assembly, and the Special Advisers on the Prevention of Genocide and the Responsibility to Protect, we look forward to continuing our engagement with you.

Sincerely,

Asia-Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect (Brisbane, Australia)

Coordinadora Regional de Investigaciones Económicas y Sociales (CRIES) (Buenos Aires, Argentina)

Droits Humains Sans Frontières (Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo)

Genocide Alert (Köln, Germany)

Genocide Intervention Network/Save Darfur Coalition (Washington, DC)

Global Action to Prevent War (New York, USA)

Human Rights Watch (New York, USA)

Human Rights Network Uganda - HURINET (Kampala, Uganda)

Initiatives for International Dialogue (Davao city, Philippines)

International Crisis Group (Brussels, Belgium)

International Refugee Rights Initiative (New York and Uganda)

Montreal Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies, Concordia University (Montreal, Canada)

Pan Africa Lawyer's Union (Arusha, Tanzania)

The Stanley Foundation (Muscatine, USA)

United Nations Association of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Kinshasa, DRC)

West Africa Civil Society Institute (Accra, Ghana)

World Federalist Movement-Canada (Ottawa, Canada)

World Federalist Movement-Institute for Global Policy (New York and The Hague)

World Federation of United Nations Associations (New York and Geneva)