Informal Interactive Dialogue on the Role of Regional and Sub-regional Arrangements in Implementing the Responsibility to Protect – 12 July 2011

On 12 July, the General Assembly met for the third time to discuss the Responsibility to Protect (RtoP), and the role that regional and sub-regional organizations play in protecting populations from mass atrocities. As expressed by the UN Secretary-General, the roots of the Responsibility to Protect, “extend to the early declarations of ECOWAS, the pioneering work of the High Commissioner on National Minorities of the OSCE, the legal and human rights traditions of the Americas and the spirit of non-indifference that animates the African Union”.

Panelists during the morning session included the Executive Secretary of the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region, the High Commissioner on National Minorities of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, and the Secretary for Political Affairs of the Organization of American States. Throughout the day, interventions were delivered by 43 Member States, 3 regional organizations (the European Union, the African Union and the Caribbean Community) and 4 civil society representatives. The afternoon session included the Secretary General and his Special Advisors on the Prevention of Genocide and on the Responsibility to Protect, Francis Deng and Edward Luck.

Please see the 27 June report of the Secretary General in advance of the dialogue, and ICRtoP’s summary of the themes and overall support for RtoP:

Many Member States welcomed the latest report of the SG and voiced their support for continued discussions of RtoP within the GA. A majority of statements pointed to the evolution of RtoP from what was seen as a controversial concept when endorsed in 2005 to an evolving norm that had in the last year become an “operational reality.”

Member states:

- shared valuable lessons from recent events in Libya and Côte d’Ivoire, notably the role that the AU, ECOWAS and the Arab League played in calling for specific actions to halt mass atrocities;
- called for better cooperation and coordination between the UN and the regional bodies, stressing the importance of information sharing, education and cross-regional exchanges on best practices and lessons learned;
- emphasized the preventive aspect of RtoP and the critical importance of strengthening early warning, mediation and other tools for prevention, noted in the Report as ‘under-resourced locally, nationally, regionally and globally’;
- voiced support for the work of the UN Joint Office on the Prevention of Genocide and RtoP;
- highlighted their support for appointing national RtoP focal points, as well as the
International Criminal Court and the Peacebuilding Commission as two complementary tools for ensuring accountability and rebuilding in the aftermath of mass atrocities.

Edward Luck noted in particular that a determinant variable to consistency was the availability of cooperation with and support by regional organizations for early reaction to crises. Cuba, Pakistan and Venezuela remained the only countries to refer to RtoP as an imperialist doctrine, calling for the UN to abstain from implementing RtoP while the norm is still being developed.

II. NATO intervention in Libya & Pillar III

A number of countries raised concerns and reservations about the manner in which NATO is using force to implement Resolution 1973 in Libya, pointing to challenges in putting in place a more effective framework to protect populations in the midst of an armed conflict. Member States noted the important role of regional organizations in the responses to the crises in Libya and Côte d'Ivoire, highlighting the call by the AU, ECOWAS and the Arab League for specific actions to halt mass atrocities. Guinea, having suffered recent atrocities, shared its experience on the role that West African states in responding collectively to the plight of victims and refugees.

Speaking on the third pillar of RtoP, which deals with timely and decisive action in the face of the four crimes, many Member States emphasized that third pillar response includes peaceful, economic, diplomatic and humanitarian means, with the use of force as a last resort. Several Member States expressed interest in continuing discussions on the implementation of pillar III, supporting the proposal in the Secretary-General report to hold next year’s debate on the issue.

See more in our report on the dialogue. See our summary of the dialogue in Spanish.
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UN Officials

United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon
Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect, Dr. Edward Luck
Special Advisor on the Prevention of Genocide, Dr. Francis Deng
President of the General Assembly, Joseph Deiss (Français)

Member States (in order of presentation):

- European Union  Barbados on behalf of CARICOM  Costa Rica on behalf of Costa Rica, Denmark and Ghana  Cuba
- Sweden
- Israel
- Ireland
- Hungary
- Switzerland (Français/English)
- Chile (Español)  African Union
- Germany
- Guatemala (Español)
- Armenia
- Jordan  Brazil  Morocco  Lebanon  United States  Spain (Español)
- Netherlands  United Kingdom  Pakistan  Venezuela (Español)  Japan  Slovenia
- New Zealand
- Belgium
- Czech Republic
- Kenya
- Georgia
- Mexico (Español)
- Honduras (Español)
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Liechtenstein

China

Iran

Russian Federation

France  
(Français)

Italy

Republic of Korea

Australia

Democratic People’s Republic of Korea

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Please see the UN  press release  for further information and the Video archive also available in  Part 1  and  Part 2 .