ICRtoP reaches out to regional and sub-regional organizations to encourage participation in upcoming 2012 UN General Assembly dialogue

International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect

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On behalf of the ICRtoP, the following letter was sent to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, African Union, Caribbean Community, European Union, East African Community, Economic Community of West African States, Gulf Cooperation Council, Intergovernmental Authority for Development, International Conference of the Great Lakes Region, League of Arab States, Organization of American States, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and Southern African Development Community.

As members of the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect (ICRtoP), a global civil society network of over 40 organizations dedicated to advancing the historic norm worldwide, we are writing to you in advance of the 2012 UN General Assembly (UNGA) informal interactive dialogue on the implementation of third pillar measures under the Responsibility to Protect (RtoP). We have written to UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon highlighting the central part played by regional and sub-regional organizations in discussions on RtoP and their critical importance in the implementation of a broad range of timely and decisive response mechanisms. The date for this year’s dialogue has yet to be confirmed; however ICRtoP has engaged with the office of the President of the General Assembly and the Secretary-General advocating for the date to be announced as well as the report of the Secretary-General to be released two months prior to the dialogue. Ahead of this year’s meeting, we ask that your organization use this opportunity to express its commitment to mass atrocities prevention and to articulate its capacity and readiness to respond to and halt crimes under the RtoP framework.

Pillars one and two of the RtoP framework assert the primary responsibility of states to ensure the safety and security of their populations from of genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing, and articulate the international community’s responsibility to assist states in fulfilling these protection obligations. The third pillar of RtoP states that the international community should use appropriate diplomatic, economic, humanitarian and other peaceful means to protect populations from mass atrocities. If a state fails to protect its populations or is in fact the perpetrator of crimes, the international community must respond timely and decisively and be prepared to take stronger measures, including the collective use of force through the UN Security Council and in accordance with the UN Charter.

ICRtoP members believe that regional and sub-regional organizations are central in preventing and responding to mass atrocities. At the 2011 UNGA informal dialogue on the role of regional and sub-regional organizations in implementing RtoP, Member States highlighted the importance of cooperation between these bodies and other actors. Regional and sub-regional organizations can actively work to respond timely and decisively to the threat of RtoP crimes through a broad spectrum of measures, such as: requiring states seeking membership to
ICRtoP reaches out to regional and sub-regional organizations to encourage participation in upcoming 2012 UNGA dialogue to commit to the prevention of mass atrocities; conducting preventive diplomacy; establishing fact-finding missions; adopting economic sanctions and embargoes; encouraging cooperation with regional justice mechanisms and the International Criminal Court; and contributing in some capacity to military operations such as peacekeeping, monitoring and defense missions.

In recent years, regional and sub-regional organizations have taken rapid and robust action to protect populations from the threat of mass atrocities. Such measures have included mediation facilitated by the African Union in Kenya to respond to election-related violence, sanctions endorsed by the Economic Community of West African States in Côte d’Ivoire, the international policing operation deployed in Kyrgyzstan by the Organisation of Security and Cooperation in Europe, and the European Union’s adoption of travel bans and the freezing of financial assets in response to the threat of atrocities in Libya. Measures taken by actors, such as the League of Arab States in its ongoing efforts to resolve the Syrian conflict and the Gulf Cooperation Council-led negotiation of a political solution in Yemen, illustrate the increasingly crucial role regional and sub-regional organizations play within the framework of RtoP. We hope that existing mechanisms continue to be enhanced, and that regional organizations around the world strengthen their capacities to prevent and respond to mass atrocities.

This year’s dialogue presents a significant opportunity for your organization and all actors to reflect on past action to prevent and respond to crises, and to engage in discussion on how best to implement measures moving forward. Civil society groups, including ICRtoP members, are committed to actively engaging with regional and sub-regional organizations to enhance awareness and capacity to prevent and respond to genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing in their regions. (…)

See here for a response received from the Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council.