

**UN General Assembly Dialogue on the Responsibility to Protect: Timely and decisive response** See a [print version](#) of the following brief summary.

The annual informal interactive dialogue on the Responsibility to Protect was held at the United Nations Headquarters on Wednesday, 5 September 2012. The dialogue was based on the “ [Report of the Secretary-General on the Responsibility to Protect: Timely and decisive response](#) ” (A/66/874) and addressed the measures available to international, regional, national and civil society actors under the [third pillar](#) of the Responsibility to Protect (RtoP, R2P).

Opening remarks were given by President of the General Assembly (PGA) H.E. Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser; UN Secretary-General (UNSG) H.E.

[Mr. Ban Ki-moon](#)

; and Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide

[Mr. Adama Dieng](#)

. The

[President of the General Assembly](#)

began the meeting by reminding participants that in discussing the implementation of RtoP, “

*the role of the UN is not to supplant or replace the State in meeting its legal obligation to protect...So, the international response is intended to reinforce, not undermine, national sovereignty*

.”

These remarks were followed by a panel of experts, moderated by Mr. Dieng. Panelists included

[Mr. Jan Eliasson](#)

, Deputy Secretary-General;

[Mr. Ivan Simonovic](#)

, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights;

[H.E. Mr. Gert Rosenthal](#)

, Permanent Representative of the Mission of Guatemala to the UN;

[H.E. Mr. Youssoufou Bamba](#)

, Permanent Representative of the Mission of Côte d'Ivoire to the UN; and

[Dr. Alex Bellamy](#)

, Professor of International Security at the Griffith Asia Institute in Australia. According to a

[concept note](#)

*distributed by the Office of the President of the General Assembly, panelists were asked to address*

the interconnectedness of prevention and response; the range of tools available under Chapters VI, VII and VIII of the United Nations Charter for implementing the third pillar of RtoP; partners for implementation; lessons learned from experience to date in implementing the responsibility to protect; protecting responsibly; and the way forward.

The panel of experts was followed by an interactive dialogue, moderated by Mr. Dieng, during which fifty-six Member States from the Global North and South, one regional organization, the

International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect (ICRtoP) and the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect spoke. Participants took the opportunity to express their **gratitude to Drs. Francis Deng and Edward Luck**, former Special Advisers to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide and the Responsibility to Protect respectively, for their tireless efforts to enhance the capacity of the UN in ensuring the protection of populations from mass violence. Participants also **welcomed Mr. Dieng in his new capacity as Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide**, and expressed their full support for his Office.

During the dialogue, participants reaffirmed that the **Responsibility to Protect is grounded in prevention**, and welcomed the Secretary-General's January [declaration](#) that 2012 be the "Year of Prevention". Most participants agreed that that RtoP, as it was agreed to at the 2005 World Summit, had achieved **widespread acceptance could not be renegotiated**. Many underscored the importance of RtoP's **narrowly defined scope**, reiterating the norm's application to cases of genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing. Participants largely agreed that **the four crimes and violations, in their very nature, threaten international peace and security**. Delegations lauded the sentiment expressed in the Secretary-General's Report that, since there are no situations in which states do not have a Responsibility to Protect, it is never a question of whether RtoP applies, but how best to implement the norm. The **non-sequential and mutually supportive nature of the three pillars** of RtoP was also endorsed in many statements.

As the importance of prevention was a point of consensus, so was the understanding that, **should preventive efforts fail, timely and decisive response** is necessary to protect populations. In discussing the implementation of response, many participants reminded that the norm's **third pillar involves a range of measures**. Delegations highlighted the many non-coercive tools available - such as fact-finding and commissions of inquiry, preventive diplomacy, mediation and good offices - that can be considered ahead of more coercive measures - such as referrals to the International Criminal Court, sanctions and arms embargoes and military force.

During the dialogue, Member States also raised concerns, and warned that the **norm should not be implemented selectively**

. Tactical issues were also raised, as some delegations criticized the way that UNSC [Resolution 1973](#) had been implemented, saying that actors went beyond the mandate of the Resolution. Others stated their concern that

**RtoP not be used as a tool for regime change**

, and discussed the potential

**consequences of arming civilians**

in order to protect populations. Nonetheless, many Member States agreed with the

[Secretary-General](#)

that while concerns that have arisen on the implementation of response measures should be addressed, “

*fears of [the Responsibility to Protect’s] possible misuse should not inhibit us in the face of incitement and grave violence*

.”

Particular emphasis was also placed on the role of the UN Security Council (UNSC) in operationalizing RtoP. Comments raised by

[Singapore](#)

were echoed in multiple interventions, recalling the recently proposed

[resolution](#)

by the “Small 5” (S5) countries, which included a

**call for Permanent Members to refrain from exercising veto power**

in cases of RtoP crimes. Several Member States also insisted on the need for

**increased assessment and monitoring of UNSC Resolutions**

, particularly in cases where military measures are authorized.

Several interventions

**welcomed the**

[Brazilian](#)

**initiative of ‘**

[responsibility while protecting](#)

’

(RwP), noting that the points outlined in RwP can assist with ensuring proportionality and accountability.

Ever present throughout the day’s discussions was the

**ongoing crisis in Syria**

and the commission of RtoP crimes against the state’s populations. Several Member States called for cooperation and collaboration amongst governments, and particularly within the

UNSC, to bring an immediate end to the bloodshed. In discussing the ongoing violence, multiple interventions reflected on the role of the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council and High Commissioner for Human Rights and regional organizations in condemning the atrocities being committed and calling for further action to protect populations.

Also mentioned was the potential

**role of civil society**

in advancing the Responsibility to Protect, as well as the question of how Member States can enhance partnerships and collaboration with civil society. In addition, some interventions highlighted initiatives at the national and regional levels to enhance timely and decisive response, including the

**national focal points initiative**

which calls for the designation of a senior government official for RtoP within capital..

Participants expressed an overwhelming consensus on the

**importance of the General Assembly dialogues**

in increasing understanding of RtoP and advancing the norm within the UN system.

See the

[statement](#)

from the ICRtoP and check our

[website](#)

for compiled statements from the dialogue.

ICRtoP will release a report reflecting on the key points from the dialogue following the event. For additional background, read ICRtoP's [overview](#) of the UN Secretary-General's report and the Coalition's complete

[At a Glance series](#)

on "third pillar" tools.

See ICRtoP's [letter](#) to Member States ahead of the dialogue advocating for the inclusion of key points related to timely and decisive response in their remarks.

See the [UN press release](#) , the webcast of the [morning session](#) and [afternoon session](#) of the dialogue.

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**Statements:**

— [Opening Remarks](#) [H.E. Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, President of the General Assembly](#)

[H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-moon, UN Secretary-General](#)

[Mr. Adama Dieng, Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide](#)

[Panel of Experts](#) [Mr. Jan Eliasson, Deputy Secretary-General](#) [Mr. Ivan Simonovic, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights](#)

[H.E. Mr. Gert Rosenthal, Permanent Representative of the Mission of Guatemala to the UN](#)

[H.E. Mr. Youssoufou Bamba, Permanent Representative of the Mission of Côte d'Ivoire to the UN \(French\)](#)

[Dr. Alex Bellamy, Professor of International Security at the Griffith Asia Institute in Australia](#)

[Interactive Dialogue](#) [European Union](#) [Norway](#) [Brazil](#) [Australia](#) [United Kingdom](#) [France](#)

[South Africa](#)

Libya

[Switzerland](#)

[Italy](#)

[Republic of Korea](#)

[Mexico](#)

[Slovenia](#)

Burundi

[Chile](#)

[Venezuela](#)

(also available in

[Spanish](#)

)

[Germany](#) [Tunisia \(French\)](#)

[Netherlands](#) [Ghana](#) [Singapore](#) [Iran](#) [Peru](#) [Malaysia](#) [Qatar](#) (also available in [Arabic](#))

[Estonia](#) [Liechtenstein](#) [New Zealand](#) [Uruguay](#) [Belgium](#) (unofficial transcription in [English](#))

[Hungary](#) [Ireland](#) [Luxembourg](#) [Denmark](#) [Portugal](#) [Argentina](#) [Israel](#) [Czech Republic](#)

[Pakistan](#)

(unofficial transcription)

[Spain](#) [India](#) [Russian Federation](#) (unofficial transcription in [English](#) )

[United States of America](#) [China](#) (unofficial transcription)

[Nigeria](#) [Rwanda](#)

[Sri Lanka](#) [Japan](#) [Georgia](#) [Morocco](#) (unofficial transcription)

[Egypt](#) (unofficial transcription)

[Costa Rica](#) [Viet Nam](#) [United Arab Emirates](#) (unofficial transcription)

[Canada](#) (unofficial transcription)

[Cuba](#) (unofficial transcription)

Syrian Arab Republic

[International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect](#) [Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect](#)

**Additional commentary on the GA dialogue:**

[Global Action to Prevent War](#)

[NATO Watch](#)

[Asia Pacific Centre for R2P](#)