

Annan said the world organization's job should be to prevent suffering, but, all too often it fails to do so, because the gravity of the threat is not recognized until too late. Annan said U.N. members should recognize that, if a particular state is unwilling or unable to protect its citizens against extreme violence, the council must assume the responsibility.

But, he warned whenever the council took responsibility for protecting civilians, it must craft an unambiguous mandate, and provide adequate resources to do the job properly. Everyone involved -- from the council itself, the broader UN membership and the Secretariat in New York and personnel on the ground -- must fully understand the expectations they have aroused among people desperate for protection in the face of grave danger, Annan said.

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