

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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**REMARKS TO GENERAL ASSEMBLY
INFORMAL INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE ON
“FULFILLING OUR COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY:
INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE AND THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT”
New York, 8 September 2014**

Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The adoption of the responsibility to protect at the 2005 World Summit embodied a collective determination to counter atrocity crimes with resolve. Today, this commitment is being severely tested.

The world faces a series of conflicts that feature acts that shock the global conscience -- from the horror unfolding in Iraq and Syria, to persistent violence against civilian populations in South Sudan, the Central African Republic, Ukraine, Northern Nigeria, Pakistan Gaza and elsewhere.

These crises illustrate the human costs of failure: the failure to confront the rise of extremist ideology that propagates hate and manipulates inter-communal differences for political gain; the failure of States to protect their own populations; and the failure of the international community to react to early warning signs or to respond adequately once atrocity crimes are taking place.

Turning a blind eye to these acts is no longer tenable. Our responsibility to prevent and protect is collective and urgent.

My yearly reports on the responsibility to protect have outlined how Member States and the international community can best develop the tools and capacity to address the structural and proximate causes of genocide, war crimes, ethnics cleansing, and crimes against humanity.

My latest report offers a series of specific recommendations for improving international assistance to States seeking to protect their populations. This approach is grounded in a spirit of partnership, and is meant to strengthen state sovereignty rather than challenge it. As the former High Commissioner for Human Rights said in her last briefing to the Security Council, “Early UN action to address human rights *protects States*, by warding off the threat of devastating violence.”

Action on a variety of fronts is needed to strengthen the capacity of States and the international community to protect populations at risk of atrocity crimes.

We should target our efforts towards populations we know are vulnerable, and support those capacities that specifically inhibit atrocity crimes. Within the UN System, we have established a quarterly review of serious human rights violations in all regions of the world to help us act before situations deteriorate into crises. We are also developing informal channels of communicating situations of concern to Member States, with a view to their reaching early consensus on timely and effective action to save lives..

Indeed, the responsibility to protect is closely intertwined with a responsibility to prevent. I welcome the Security Council discussion on prevention last month, and the Council's ensuing resolution 2171, which encourages me to refer information and analysis that could potentially help to prevent serious violations of international law, and which expresses the Council's willingness to give "prompt consideration" to my early warning signals.

The timely and effective delivery of international assistance to national authorities under Pillar II of the responsibility to protect would not only protect populations at risk, but also reduce the need for more costly and contentious options under Pillar III.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are approaching the end of the first decade of the responsibility to protect. The principle has made unprecedented progress. Despite the debates that have naturally accompanied cases of its application, Member States have agreed on many aspects of the three-pillar framework that I laid out in 2009. I want to commend the General Assembly for its continued consideration of the issue and for its willingness to remain vigilant about crises that include the commission of atrocity crimes.

We must now build on these foundations by crafting an ambitious vision for the next ten years and by acting decisively on our responsibilities.

As Secretary-General, I have reaffirmed the centrality of human rights promotion and protection in the work of the United Nations, including through the Human Rights Up Front initiative. I have a particular responsibility to act as a spokesperson for those who are vulnerable and threatened, and to ensure that Member States hear the uncomfortable truths about their plight.

I encourage you to join me in upholding these commitments and to redouble your own. Our collective responsibility to protect demands far more from us at this deeply troubling time for all humankind.

Thank you.