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STATEMENT BY

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to the United Nations

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

**Informal interactive dialogue on the report of the Secretary-General on the
responsibility to protect**

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Mr. President, thank you for giving me the floor.

The Netherlands aligns itself with the EU statement and the statement on behalf of the Group of Friends of R2P.

I thank the President of the GA for organizing this important debate. I also thank the distinguished speakers for their insightful remarks.

Since the collective agreement on the Responsibility to Protect at the 2005 World Summit, we have seen significant advances by the international community in terms of institutionalizing R2P. In the next decade, we need to take ambitious steps forward in terms of operationalizing the norm. We can and must do better.

We commend the Secretary-General for his continued commitment to R2P and compliment him on this excellent and comprehensive report. It is a clear example of the maturation of R2P as a norm and offers very concrete steps to put this norm into practice.

The NL remains a strong supporter of the work of the Joint Office of the Special Advisers for the prevention of Genocide and the Responsibility to Protect. We thank the Special Advisers for their ceaseless efforts on behalf of atrocity prevention. We fully support the Spirit of Pillar II enshrined in this Report: The Responsibility to Protect is a collective responsibility of states and the international community, requiring more and better coordination and cooperation. We do not need to reinvent the wheel, but we need to do things smarter. We subscribe to the 5 common principles outlined in the Report: national ownership; mutual commitment; do no harm; prioritizing prevention; flexibility.

I cannot emphasize enough the importance of prioritizing prevention of mass atrocity crimes, as well as the two most important factors for effective prevention: human rights and accountability.

1. Human Rights

We welcome the growing recognition that Human Rights violations are an indicator of the likelihood of mass atrocities. A few examples of steps that are being taken to use this knowledge for prevention:

- The UN Human Rights Council does vital work helping identify countries at risk of mass atrocities devise cooperation and assistance strategies.
- The Rights Up Front Action Plan, embedding mass atrocity prevention in the core of the UN.
- The recent debate in the SC on conflict prevention, and the initiative inviting permanent members to consider using their veto in a more restrained matter when it comes to prevention of mass atrocities.
- The Netherlands is cohosting a ministerial Roundtable on R2P Pillar II and Human Rights during the upcoming ministerial week, to exchange best practices on how countries can assist one another in strengthening their HR institutions and strategies.

2. Accountability

Without accountability, a society cannot heal itself after human rights violations and mass atrocities, leaving lingering tensions and the risk of re-escalation of conflict and violence.

It is often necessary for states to assist each other in realizing accountability for atrocity crimes, for example by securing evidence, testimony, assets and suspects, The Netherlands, Argentina, Belgium, Senegal and Slovenia have initiated a universal treaty on mutual legal assistance and extradition for domestic prosecution of the most serious international crimes. A growing number of states is supporting this , and we invite all interested parties to join our efforts. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Special Advisor Dieng for the support he has shown this initiative.

Conclusion:

Twenty years have passed since the tragic events in Rwanda put genocide prevention firmly on the international agenda. But despite all we have learned, history is repeating itself before our eyes. South Sudan, CAR, Syria and Iraq have shown once again how quickly situations spiral out of control once a critical threshold has been crossed.

We cannot stand by idly. The cost of failure to prevent mass atrocities is just too high:

The ensuing social and economic instability have devastating long term effects on civil populations.

Trying to address the direct consequences, the UN is severely overstretched in terms of humanitarian aid, peacekeeping operations and post conflict peacebuilding efforts.

But most of all, the costs in terms of human life and suffering are unacceptable.

On the eve of the first decade of R2P as a global norm, it is time to take this discussion to the next level. The UNGA has a responsibility to address these issues in a structural way, and the Netherlands looks forward to a constructive consideration of putting R2P on the Formal agenda.

Thank you.