

General Assembly Informal Interactive Dialogue on the Responsibility to Protect

Statement by Donald Deya

International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect

08 September 2014

1. Mr. President, Mr. Secretary-General, Excellencies, Esteemed Panelists, Ladies and Gentlemen, I would like to convey my gratitude to you, Mr. President, for the opportunity to speak at this year's interactive dialogue. I would like to thank the Special Adviser for the Prevention of Genocide, Mr. Adama Dieng, for moderating this meeting and the panel of experts for their constructive and insightful remarks.
2. My name is Donald Deya, and I am the Chair of the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect (ICRtoP). The ICRtoP is a global network of over 80 civil society organizations dedicated to advancing the Responsibility to Protect at the local, national, regional and international levels, and to building the institutional capacities for preventing and halting mass atrocity crimes. The Coalition firmly believes that international assistance is an essential element to the fulfillment of each State's Responsibility to Protect and thus welcomes this year's focus on "Fulfilling our Collective Responsibility: International Assistance and RtoP", or Pillar Two.
3. Mr. President, before we turn to Pillar II, I would like to discuss the abysmal and ever-present failure of we, the international community, to protect populations in every corner of the globe. Over the past year, we have watched the death toll in Syria climb to 191,000, while other crises stole our attention. We have looked on as Christians and Muslims—two populations that lived peacefully together in the Central African Republic for decades—perpetrated crimes against humanity and war crimes against one another. We have done virtually nothing at the grotesque news that *ten out of the eleven* crimes against humanity identified by the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court are ongoing in North Korea. Mr. President, if there was ever a more urgent time to recommit ourselves to our Responsibility to Protect populations from these four crimes and violations, it is now. Our commitment made in 2005—and our international conscience—demand it.
4. Mr. President, in his 2014 report, the Secretary-General outlines the three main forms of international assistance: encouragement, capacity-building, and protection assistance, all of which contribute to the construction of a society resilient to atrocity crimes. Recognizing the significant contributions made by Member States, I would like now to reflect on the crucial actions taken by civil society to uphold Pillar II. Civil society organizations from all regions are already providing all three main forms of assistance, with the goal of building inclusive, resilient and transparent societies, and we encourage states to continue to promote a safe and dynamic space for these groups to operate. Examples of such work include:

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INTERNATIONAL COALITION FOR THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT

- Encouraging governments, international actors, and regional and sub-regional organizations to act on their responsibility to protect populations. Civil society organizations indeed often serve as the resources for, and co-facilitators of, mediation efforts to end conflicts.
 - Working closely with governments and other actors to build national, regional or international capacity to prevent RtoP crimes, through measures such as developing relevant legislation, facilitating trainings of officials on atrocity prevention, or collecting and sharing on-the-ground information.
 - Supplying critical protection assistance in emerging or ongoing crises, which can take the form of providing humanitarian aid or support to refugee populations.
6. Furthermore, the Coalition would like to raise the need to recognize the role of women in upholding Pillar II. Space must be provided for women's full and unhindered inclusion in the prevention of and response to atrocity crimes. Advocates of the Responsibility to Protect must ensure that the discourse on RtoP goes beyond just focusing on women as victims of atrocities and includes reflection on the importance of women as actors engaged in upholding RtoP. We would also like to echo the recognition by Member States of the instrumental role of the UN Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect, which provides early warning and assessment to the UN system of the risk of atrocity crimes, and serves as a crucial partner to governments and regional bodies as they seek to enhance their capacity to uphold their protection obligations.
7. In addition, Member States must urge Permanent Members of the Security Council to refrain from using their vetoes in situations of mass atrocities. When resolutions on crises where genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and/or ethnic cleansing are imminent or ongoing come before the Security Council's agenda, Permanent Members must not obstruct united action to protect populations from atrocity crimes.
8. Finally, Mr. President, as was raised in the report, the ICRtoP urges Member States to seriously consider formalizing this dialogue onto the official agenda of the General Assembly. A one-day dialogue—during which Member State interventions are cut short and civil society organizations are given mere seconds to speak—is simply insufficient to demonstrate the strong commitment to RtoP expressed today. The General Assembly has an enduring role to play in the maintenance of international peace and security—and as such, should prioritize the discussion of issues which pose an inherent risk to such maintenance.

Thank you, Mr. President.

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