



THE PRESIDENT
OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

15 August 2017

Excellency,

I have the honour to invite you to an informal interactive dialogue of the General Assembly on the Responsibility to Protect, which I will convene on Wednesday, 6 September 2017, from 10:00 am to 1:00pm and from 3:00 pm to 6:00 pm in Conference Room 4, United Nations Headquarters, New York.

Since 2009, the Secretary-General has prepared annual reports on different aspects of the responsibility to protect. This year, the General Assembly will consider the first report of the current Secretary-General on the responsibility to protect, which is the ninth report on this topic overall. The advance unedited version of the report (A/71/1016 - S/2017/556), entitled "*The responsibility to protect and accountability for prevention*," has been circulated to Member States and it reflects on key elements of legal, political and moral accountability for implementation in each of the three pillars of the responsibility to protect.

A concept note for the meeting is enclosed and the programme of the meeting will be circulated in due course.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Thomson'.

Peter Thomson

All Permanent Representatives and
Permanent Observers to the United Nations
New York

**General Assembly informal interactive dialogue on the Report of the
Secretary-General on the Responsibility to Protect
The responsibility to protect and accountability for prevention**

**United Nations Headquarters, Conference Room 4
6 September 2016 – New York**

Concept Note

Background

At the 2005 World Summit¹, Member States expressed a commitment to the responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity (“atrocities crimes”). The General Assembly further reaffirmed this role during its sixty-third session². In keeping with these decisions, and building on previous meetings over the past decade, the General Assembly will hold its annual informal interactive dialogue on the responsibility to protect on 6 September 2017.

Since 2009, the Secretary-General has prepared nine annual reports on different aspects of the responsibility to protect. In 2009, the Secretary-General presented a comprehensive strategy to operationalize the principle, including a three pillar strategy for its implementation, in his report on “Implementing the responsibility to protect” (A/63/677). Subsequent reports focused on early warning and assessment, in 2010 (A/64/864); the role of regional and sub-regional arrangements, in 2011 (A/65/877); timely and decisive response, in 2012 (A/66/874); State responsibility and prevention, in 2013 (A/67/929); international assistance and the responsibility to protect, in 2014 (A/68/947); the vital and enduring commitment to the responsibility to protect, in 2015 (A/69/981); and mobilizing collective action: the next decade of the responsibility to protect, in 2016 (A/70/999). Each of these reports has been discussed by the General Assembly during an informal interactive dialogue. The dialogues have featured broad participation by Member States, representatives of regional organizations and civil society. This year, the General Assembly will consider the first report of the current Secretary-General on the responsibility to protect, which is the ninth report on this topic overall.

The report (A/71/1016 -S/2017/556), entitled “The responsibility to protect and accountability for prevention,” reflects on key elements of legal, political and moral accountability for implementation in each of the three pillars of the responsibility to protect. It acknowledges the existing gap between our stated commitment to the responsibility to protect and the daily reality confronted by populations exposed to

¹ A/RES/60/1, paragraphs 138 and 139.

² A/RES/63/308

the risk of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. Although the responsibility to protect is a relatively well established principle, it is vulnerable to imperfect implementation unless those actors responsible for its implementation can be held accountable for their action or inaction. Therefore, one of the principal ways to close this gap is to strengthen accountability for the implementation of the responsibility to protect and by ensuring rigorous and open scrutiny of practice, based on agreed principles.

The report outlines practical steps that can be taken by Member States, intergovernmental bodies and the United Nations system to strengthen accountability. It analysis the relationship between the legal, moral and political responsibilities associated with the responsibility to protect and different forms of accountability.

The 2017 report of the Secretary-General on the responsibility to protect also identifies a number of steps that can be taken to strengthen accountability for atrocity crimes prevention at the national level, to enhance the role of intergovernmental bodies and to improve the accountability of the United Nations system.

The 6 September 2017 General Assembly dialogue will contribute to clarifying the legal, political and moral dimensions of accountability under the responsibility to protect principle and contribute positively to its implementation. The dialogue will built on three thematic events held in April-May 2017 in contribution to the preparation of the report of the Secretary-General.

Purpose

The 6 September 2017 dialogue has several purposes. First, it will provide a forum for Member States to assess the existing gap between commitment to the responsibility to protect and implementation of the principle, as well as to discuss measures conducive to close it. Second, it will constitute an opportunity to exchange views and perspectives on venues and lines of accountability in the implementation of each of the three pillars. Third, the dialogue will suggest next steps to accelerate implementation and accountability for prevention. Fourth, the dialogue will help underscore the need for a renewed faith in collective action and an improved capacity to coordinate an effective atrocity prevention collective agenda.

Expected outcomes

The fact that genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity continue to be committed constitutes a stark reminder of the need for continued dialogue by the General Assembly on how to prevent these crimes. As in previous years, the 2017 informal dialogue on the responsibility to protect offers an

opportunity for re-affirmation of the individual and collective responsibility to protect, and for further discussion on how to bolster and accelerate efforts for effective implementation of the principle.

The dialogue is intended to emphasize the value of a collective and preventive approach to protecting populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, as well as their incitement. It will also help to reaffirm the important role of the General Assembly in advancing the principle of the responsibility to protect.

List of Speakers

There will be an established list of speakers. Delegations wishing to speak are kindly requested to inscribe to the list of speakers through the General Assembly Affairs Branch. Please consult the journal for details.

Delegations will be requested to limit their statements or interventions to a maximum of three minutes.

Please note that the meeting may not have simultaneous interpretation available.