



General Assembly

Seventy-third session

94th plenary meeting
Thursday, 27 June 2019, 3 p.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Ms. Espinosa Garcés. (Ecuador)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Santos Maraver (Spain), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 168 (continued)

The responsibility to protect and the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity

Report of the Secretary-General (A/73/898)

Mr. Ruidíaz Pérez (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): We would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this debate, and we also welcome the recently published report of the Secretary-General (A/73/898) entitled “Responsibility to protect: lessons learned for prevention”.

We associate ourselves with the statement delivered on behalf of the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P), of which we are a part (see A/73/PV.93).

I would like to recall that from the outset Chile has supported the concept of R2P in the terms established by the Heads of State and Government in paragraphs 138 and 139 of the 2005 World Summit Outcome document. In that regard, we reaffirm our commitment and are gratified by the inclusion of R2P in the formal agenda of the present session of the General Assembly, where we support its inclusion as a permanent item.

The responsibility to protect is based on three mutually supporting and fundamental pillars, which need not be applied in any particular order. In that regard,

we firmly believe that the pillars of the responsibility to protect are so intertwined that, in practice, they cannot be applied sequentially. On the contrary, they form part of an indivisible and non-exclusive whole. We therefore call for the full and consistent implementation of its three pillars, which is necessary if we are to prevent the commission of the greatest evils.

The importance of conflict prevention efforts cannot be overemphasized, as set forth in the first pillar of the responsibility to protect. The role of women in prevention is also critical. In the same vein, the joint and coordinated work of the various institutions and mechanisms of the Organization, including with regional organizations, is essential. Nevertheless, we must not forget the responsibility of States, the first ones called upon to develop policies and actions for the building of peaceful and inclusive, resilient and cohesive societies, with the rule of law, solid institutions and policies oriented towards sustainable development, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals, which contribute to conflict prevention.

Similarly, we support efforts to strengthen the links between the Human Rights Council and the Security Council for early warning and action in situations of risk of atrocities, thereby avoiding additional painful cases of inaction or late response to serious crises. At the same time, we reiterate that collective actions based on the responsibility to protect must go hand in hand with reliable and timely information, so that decisions are accountable, transparent and are guided by a single objective — the ethical imperative to protect individuals

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (<http://documents.un.org>).



and groups from the four atrocity crimes covered under the responsibility to protect. We therefore support the work of the Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide, Mr. Adama Dieng, and the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Responsibility to Protect, Ms. Karen Smith.

In conclusion, we wish to emphasize that the joint work of the United Nations and the strengthening of multilateralism are the most effective tools for maintaining international order, peace and security.

Mr. Lauber (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Switzerland associates itself with the statement delivered this morning by the representative of Denmark on behalf of the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect (see A/73/PV.93).

Switzerland welcomes the inclusion of this important debate on the agenda of the seventy-third session of the General Assembly. As a country that has made the prevention of atrocity crimes one of its foreign policy objectives, we commend the Secretary-General for having focused his report (A/73/898) on the lessons learned in the area of prevention. Switzerland agrees with the report's main points and would like to stress three in particular.

First, we can never emphasize enough how crucial it is for us to manage diversity constructively. Although our own system in Switzerland is by no means perfect, it is precisely the efforts we have made in this area, especially with regard to our linguistic minorities, that have enabled us to live in peace for more than 150 years and to feel that we are all equal citizens. This transcends our cultural differences, which we consider a source of richness rather than an obstacle. We are always happy to share our experiences, be it with regard to federalism, decentralization or respect for linguistic minorities.

Secondly, for the past 15 years, Switzerland has been lending support to processes of addressing the past in various contexts. That experience has shown us the importance of putting in place guarantees of non-recurrence in order to break cycles of violence and establish lasting peace. Those guarantees — a less well-known and less-analysed pillar of transitional justice that is sometimes reduced only to security sector reforms — are precisely what make it possible to best address and eliminate the root causes of violence. They also form a natural link between peace and security, human rights and development.

Thirdly, Switzerland wholeheartedly supports the approach proposed by the Secretary-General, which aims to ensure that a more holistic type of prevention be launched early on. It is for that same reason that we are committed to Global Action Against Mass Atrocity Crimes, whose efforts in that regard focus on the responsibility to protect at the national level and on learning between countries and communities. We remain convinced that, when it comes to the prevention of conflicts and atrocities, we have much to learn from other prevention systems, such as from public health systems and from efforts to prevent natural disasters. In those areas, it has been possible to adopt a more holistic approach and make advances in genuine early prevention. The review of Sustainable Development Goal 16 during the High-level Political Forum next month will also offer an opportunity to place prevention at the centre of our debate and action.

The fight against impunity also has an essential role to play in prevention, in particular through its deterrent effect. It is important to close all loopholes and ensure that those responsible for crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes be brought to justice. National justice systems have the primary responsibility to prosecute and judge those crimes. If that is not possible, however, international criminal justice must play a complementary and critical role. Switzerland therefore continues to promote and support international mechanisms to combat impunity, particularly the International Criminal Court.

Finally, we would like to take this opportunity to thank the Office on Genocide Prevention and the Office on the Responsibility to Protect and its Special Advisers for their efforts to keep the prevention of atrocities on the Organization's agenda.

Mr. Chang Wook-jin (Republic of Korea): Let me start by thanking the President for convening today's meeting and welcoming the inclusion of the item "The responsibility to protect and the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity" on the formal agenda of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session.

I would also like to express my delegation's support for the crucial work of the Secretary-General as well as his Special Advisers on the Prevention of Genocide and on the Responsibility to Protect, Mr. Adama Dieng and Ms. Karen Smith, respectively. I welcome their leadership in advancing mass atrocity prevention and

mainstreaming the responsibility to protect (R2P) within the United Nations system.

My delegation welcomes the Secretary-General's report (A/73/898) entitled "Responsibility to protect: lessons learned for prevention", with its ongoing focus on prevention, following the reports from the two previous years (A/71/1016 and A/72/884). As he highlights in the report, atrocity crimes are preventable when local, national, regional and international actors make full use of the diplomatic tools that we have in a timely and decisive manner. He also points out, however, that there is a widening gap between the 2005 World Summit commitment to R2P and the daily experience of vulnerable populations. We must do more, and we can do more.

In that context, while aligning myself with the statement made by the representative of Denmark on behalf of the Group of Friends of R2P (see A/73/PV.93), I would like to highlight three points with regard to the prevention of mass atrocity crimes, bearing in mind the recommendations from the Secretary-General's report.

First, ensuring accountability and ending impunity for mass atrocity crimes is one of the most effective ways to prevent their recurrence. States have the primary responsibility to hold perpetrators accountable for crimes committed within their jurisdictions. The international community must spare no effort in supporting national accountability efforts through judicial cooperation and capacity-building assistance. Furthermore, my delegation reaffirms its support for the International Criminal Court, which plays a crucial role in our collective efforts to end impunity for genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Secondly, we must make the most of existing mechanisms for translating early warning into early action if we are to succeed in narrowing the gap between our commitments and the suffering of vulnerable populations. We are well aware that the Security Council has sometimes failed to live up to its special responsibility to respond to atrocity crime risks in a timely and decisive manner. In that regard, the Republic of Korea, as a supporter of the code of conduct of the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency group and of the political declaration on the suspension of veto powers in cases of mass atrocity, is of the view that the use of the veto should be limited in situations that require immediate action to respond to mass atrocities.

We also need to make better use of the United Nations human rights systems and strengthen the links between the Human Rights Council and the Security Council. The Universal Periodic Review and special procedures can help identify possible risks early on and facilitate action by national Governments and the international community. Regular Security Council briefings on mass atrocity situations by the High Commissioner for Human Rights can help better incorporate mass atrocity prevention into the Security Council's agenda.

Thirdly, we need to strengthen our comprehensive and coordinated approach to further mainstream R2P across the entire United Nations system and establish greater synergy among the Organization's three pillars. In that connection, the Republic of Korea welcomes the efforts of the Special Advisers on the Prevention of Genocide and on the Responsibility to Protect to mainstream R2P within the United Nations system, including through the Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes. My delegation also reiterates its support for the Human Rights Up Front initiative, which is aimed at bringing the United Nations system together in a mutually supportive way to strengthen the Organization's capacity to prevent serious human rights violations at an early stage and sound the alarm before abuses can escalate into mass atrocity crimes. In addition, we strongly support the Secretary-General's recent initiative to launch the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech.

In conclusion, I take this opportunity to reaffirm the Republic of Korea's commitment to the responsibility to protect. I look forward to working together with other Member States in our collective effort to protect vulnerable people from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

Mr. Lewicki (Poland): Like many other delegations, we welcome the inclusion of today's debate on the responsibility to protect (R2P) into the formal agenda of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. Poland co-sponsored resolution 63/308, the first stand-alone General Assembly resolution on R2P in 2009. We declare our unwavering readiness to support the full implementation of the concept of the responsibility to protect.

We also wish to warmly welcome the appointment of Ms. Karen Smith as the new Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on the Responsibility to Protect.

Poland commends efforts undertaken in this crucial role and supports all actions aimed at mainstreaming the responsibility to protect within the United Nations system. We also would like to express our deep appreciation for the positive role played by the Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide in advancing the responsibility to protect, under the leadership of Under-Secretary-General Adama Dieng.

The latest report of the Secretary-General (A/73/898), entitled “Responsibility to protect: lessons learned for prevention”, reminds us that in 2005 World Summit outcome document, acknowledged by all our political leaders, is as valid now as it was then. Let me reiterate that the responsibility to protect is not an abstract concept. The responsibility to protect means nothing less than saving lives on ground. Let me focus on three issues that we believe are of crucial importance in the context of today’s discussion, namely, respect for international law, conflict prevention and accountability.

First, with regard to international law, we call on all Member States to uphold their obligations under international law, including human rights law, humanitarian law and refugee law. Respect for international law instruments can be a true preventive factor with respect to mass atrocities. Poland addressed this issue last year during our open debate in the Security Council (see S/PV.8262) with the aim of promoting respect for basic rules of international law. Let me reiterate that respect for international law is not a matter of choice; it is a matter of Member States’ complying with their obligations. Last year, we marked the seventieth anniversary of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. We urge those Member States that have not yet ratified the document to do so.

Secondly, with regard to conflict prevention, we believe it is vital that the Security Council better utilize its working methods in order to bring potential mass atrocity situations into the spotlight. Poland organized an Arria Formula meeting last December on raising the effectiveness of atrocity crimes prevention. Examples of tangible actions the Security Council could take to prevent atrocity crimes were abundant in the meeting. We welcomed the information that eight out of 14 United Nations peacekeeping operations include protection of civilians mandates and the fact that the Council has directly referenced R2P in a number of

mandates, namely, in connection with the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali and South Sudan.

Utilizing the right combination of carefully tailored measures reduces the need for further ones. Preventive action should be focused and region- and context-specific. Measures are most effective when they are individualized and focus on addressing specific problems or influencing specific individuals. There is no one-size-fits-all approach. The early recognition of warning signs must, however, be followed by concrete actions to prevent the development of conflict. As such, national and local ownership are critical, and early action is successful only if it enjoys the support of its intended beneficiaries. We support community-level engagement and see a need to further integrated it into our actions.

Thirdly, with regard to accountability, we must not allow those who commit atrocities to go unpunished. Ensuring accountability for mass atrocity of crimes is one of the best ways to prevent their recurrence. It is Member States’ responsibility to investigate and prosecute crimes committed within their jurisdictions. In the long term, there is no peace without justice and without accountability. In that context, let me reaffirm Poland’s support for the International Criminal Court, which remains the key institutional instrument in the battle to end impunity for genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The Security Council, the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council should consider ways to better utilize tools at their disposal to strengthen international accountability for atrocity crimes. Poland, if elected this year to the Human Rights Council, will encourage Member States to strengthen the links between the Human Rights Council and the Security Council for early action and early warning.

In conclusion, we have to renew the commitment of our leaders, made in 2005, to helping States build their capacities to protect their populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, and to assisting those that are under stress before crises and conflicts arise.

Mr. Roscoe (United Kingdom): This debate is an opportunity for us to reaffirm our support for the principles of our responsibility to protect (R2P), as endorsed at the 2005 World Summit. Yet, despite this historic commitment, it is clear as we look across the

world that we are failing in our responsibility. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reports that armed conflict and persecution have led to 70.8 million people being forcibly displaced. Some States Members of the United Nations not only fail to protect their people, they willingly harm them. Our adherence to R2P has therefore never been more important. We must continue to assert that States should protect, not harm, their people. We should anticipate and defuse conflicts before they begin. And, where atrocities occur, we should investigate and hold those responsible accountable. Unlike some, we strongly support the inclusion of this item on the formal agenda of the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session. We also welcome the Secretary-General's reports and the valuable work being done by Special Adviser Adama Dieng and, now, Karen Smith.

Let us remind ourselves what our common undertakings are. Under pillar I, States must uphold their obligations under international human rights law, humanitarian law and refugee law. But there are too many examples of States that fail to do so because they are either unable, but more often unwilling, to meet their responsibilities. Some of those States spoke in the Hall this morning (see A/73/PV.93). Tellingly, they dispute the concept of the responsibility to protect. They do so because its existence is a daily repudiation of their abuses against their own peoples.

In Venezuela, economic devastation, starvation and malnutrition have resulted in the flight of over 3 million Venezuelans to neighbouring countries — the largest migration in Latin American history. In Myanmar, a culture of military impunity left the civilian Government unable to prevent the mass exodus of 700,000 Rohingya refugees who have fled to Bangladesh since 2017, primarily owing to the actions of the Myanmar military. There are a further 244,000 internally displaced persons within Myanmar. The atrocities against the Rohingya and other ethnic minorities constitute ethnic cleansing on an industrial scale and may constitute genocide. And in Syria, whose representative we heard from at length this morning (see A/73/PV.93), the horrifying reports of attacks on schools, hospitals and first responders and the use of barrel bombs in Idlib are chilling examples of the devastating effects on civilians when a State not only fails to uphold its responsibility to protect, but actively breaches its obligations to do so. Russia and the Al-Assad regime must cease those attacks against the Syrian people and respect their

obligations under international human rights law. But we must all — here — redouble our efforts to help those people whose own Governments have abandoned them or actively persecute them.

We should also do more, as the Secretary-General's reform agenda urges us, to focus on the preventative capabilities within the responsibility to protect, pillar II. We know that human rights violations and abuses, if left unchecked, can be both an indicator of, and a first step towards, mass atrocities. We welcome the Secretary-General's assessment that there needs to be a more systematic and structured approach across the United Nations system to information gathering, the assessment of atrocity risks and collective analysis, so that Member States can receive early recommendations for action and prevention. We agree with the Secretary-General that there should be greater use of the Human Rights Council and the Universal Periodic Review process to highlight human rights violations and abuses and to help States respond to them. The Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect continues to play an essential role in mainstreaming R2P within the United Nations and on an international level. We welcome the appointment of Ms. Karen Smith as the new R2P Special Adviser and support her work in partnership with the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide in bringing potential risks of atrocity crimes to the attention of the Security Council.

Mediation also has a key role. Active preventive diplomacy and mediation can help prevent atrocities and reduce tensions and conflict. The United Kingdom has been a strong supporter of the strengthened United Nations mediation capacity. The Secretary-General recently reported that peacebuilding dividends in respect to Mali, Madagascar, Ethiopia, Eritrea and South Sudan were all clearly visible from this work. We encourage States to be alert to the early signs of conflict, engage with communities and civil society and make use of the Secretary-General's good offices and the Mediation Support Unit.

These peacebuilding processes and efforts to prevent conflict also need to be inclusive and diverse. We know that women continue to build peace when formal processes fail. They lobby for peace processes to begin when parties refuse to talk, and implement peace agreements long after international donors have left. We want to see the United Nations, through support from the international community, increase the number of female special envoys nominated by the Secretary-

General, and increase both the number of women nominated for the Standby Team of Senior Mediation Advisers and the number of female candidates selected.

Finally, on the third pillar, accountability and ending impunity are vital for deterring the recurrence of atrocity crimes. States have the primary responsibility to investigate and prosecute crimes committed within their jurisdictions. While international courts and hybrid tribunals can play an important role where States are genuinely unwilling or unable to do so, the United Nations should draw on diverse mechanisms to identify risks and take early action to prevent countries from falling into greater crisis. We will continue to shine a light on appalling violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law in situations such as Syria and Myanmar. There should be no impunity for those who perpetrate such crimes and atrocities.

There were a handful of suggestions in the Hall this morning that the responsibility to protect is somehow discredited. However, those voices are an insignificant minority when set against the voices of support we have heard today. But our words of support need to result in real action. Yesterday, in this Hall, we recommitted ourselves to the Charter of the United Nations — we the peoples. But what good is that if we do not recommit ourselves to the responsibility to protect those peoples? We call on all Member States to do all in their power to prevent and end atrocities against the peoples and to prosecute those responsible for them. We owe this to those who cannot protect themselves.

Mrs. Puerschel (Germany): Allow me to start by reiterating Germany's full commitment to the responsibility to protect (R2P) and underlining the importance of including it in the agenda of the General Assembly.

For us, R2P is in our DNA, and we always carry it with us — whether it be in the deliberations in the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council or the Security Council. In fact, Germany ran for a Security Council seat on a prevention platform to do more for conflict prevention and, importantly, to do more for human rights and international accountability for mass atrocities. We fully believe in “never again”, and are constantly engaging in efforts to foster a culture of historical consciousness in Germany itself, an important part of guaranteeing non-recurrence. Therefore, for us, it is of the utmost importance that the responsibility

to protect be about preventing and national capacity-building. In particular, Germany wants to strengthen the preventive aspect of the concept and pillar II through operational work.

I thank the Chef de Cabinet for her statement this morning (see A/73/PV.93). We hope that the Secretary-General will be able to join us again for this important debate next year. I also thank Special Adviser Karen Smith for her first report, especially for its emphasis on civil society and its mention of civil society as a source of resilience. Of course, Germany fully supports the crucial work of the Special Advisers on the Prevention of Genocide and the Responsibility to Protect and works closely together with them.

We align ourselves with the statements delivered on behalf of the European Union and the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect (see A/73/PV.93). I would like to underline four points specifically.

First, it is important that the Security Council consider mass atrocity crimes and the responsibility to protect in its work. During the German-French presidency of the Council in March and April, we focused on the implementation of humanitarian law, which is a crucial element in ensuring that the responsibility to protect works. For example, our Foreign Minister presided over a debate on sexual violence in conflict (see S/PV.8514), which in some cases may amount of crimes against humanity, war crimes or acts of genocide. In the same vein, our Minister of Justice led an informal meeting of the Security Council on the prosecution of sexual violence in conflict.

Encouraging links between the Human Rights Council and the Security Council is another example. We need regular briefings in the Security Council by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. In that regard, we have been impressed by the input that we have received on Haiti and on the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur.

We will also be launching a humanitarian call for action, together with France, during the high-level week in September. We call for the continuation of this practice. Germany will certainly continue to play its part in mainstreaming human rights into all United Nations bodies.

Secondly, Germany is dedicated to strengthening a rules-based international order, which is effective

only if there is accountability. We therefore strongly support the international criminal justice system, and in particular the International Criminal Court, as a means of providing accountability for perpetrators, but also as a powerful means of deterrence. That is why Germany is also supportive of the ongoing deliberations of the International Law Commission on articles on crimes against humanity with a view to promulgating a draft convention.

We also back other accountability bodies, such as the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011 and the independent international fact-finding mission on Myanmar that was just established. We all for the latter to become operational as soon as possible.

Myanmar brings me to my third point — the role of the United Nations system in preventing mass atrocities. We welcome the release of the Rosenthal report, and call on the Secretary-General to take its conclusions too heart. At the same time, we are encouraged that the United Nations conducted a transparent review of its actions. While the Secretariat needs to rightly look to its intergovernmental bodies to guide it in its actions, the United Nations also needs to be fit for purpose when it comes to mass atrocity prevention. We hope that reform of the Resident Coordinator system will be fruitful in that regard. We would be interested to hear in the near future how Resident Coordinators are prioritizing human rights and mass atrocity prevention in their work. And, of course, the Secretary-General can always bring situations of concern of the Secretariat to the attention of the Security Council under Article 99 of the Charter.

Finally, and as a fourth point, Germany strengthens pillar II of R2P internally as well as in its foreign policy. For example, the Foreign Office is including crisis prevention as a concrete aim that needs to be reached in its general instructions to the heads of our own missions abroad. Furthermore, within the German so-called early warning-early action process, we are developing technological capabilities to monitor crisis and atrocity risk factors in specific countries. Lastly, we also provide funding to civil society organizations to increase local capacities in mass atrocity prevention. For example, just this month we issued funding to the

Auschwitz Institute for Peace and Reconciliation to work on capacity-building in Latin America.

Mr. Margaryan (Armenia): We would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report on the responsibility to protect with a special focus on lessons learned for prevention (A/73/898). The report identifies the principal areas where timely action and constructive engagement can facilitate the prevention of atrocity crimes. Addressing the underlying sources of past atrocity crimes and focusing on truth, justice and reparations is paramount in that regard.

Armenia remains strongly committed to advancing the prevention of mass atrocities and the crime of genocide, as well as identity-based discrimination against all groups and peoples. Countering hate speech as one of the early warning signs, which may lead to the incitement to violence, should be an integral part of the prevention mechanisms. We need to join efforts to develop a workable set of actions with the human rights-based approach in mind to promote tolerance as an essential step on the way to more inclusive societies. In that regard, we welcome the recent initiative of the Secretary-General to launch the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech, which was elaborated by the Special Adviser for the Prevention of Genocide.

Nowadays, we continue to witness the spreading of hate speech, racial and ethnic profiling, the glorification of hate crimes, and the denial and justification of past atrocities, including the crime of genocide. It is especially deplorable when odious policies of denialism, which are an offence to the dignity and memory of the victims of genocide, are led and encouraged by public figures and high State officials. Such denials and justification manifest a flagrant subversion of the fight against impunity for atrocity crimes. They undermine the important efforts of the international community to prevent situations in which the crime of genocide could be committed.

We believe that educational and cultural institutions, together with civil society and faith-based organizations, have a greater role to play in enhancing understanding and informing perceptions and ideas around prevention as a concept. Since 2015, Armenia has hosted the Global Forum Against the Crime of Genocide. The third Global Forum, which took place in December 2018, was organized with the support of the Office on Genocide Prevention and the

Responsibility to Protect and in cooperation with the International Association of Genocide Scholars and was dedicated to prevention through education, culture and memorialization.

Prevention is not and has never been a simple process, as very often neither societies nor international institutions are fully prepared to thoroughly identify early warning signs and assess risks. Armenia attaches great importance to the universal ratification and comprehensive observance of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. And we view education as a tool for contributing to awareness-raising of past genocides and promoting the right to truth.

We have been at the forefront of international efforts to prevent and counter identity-based hate crimes, including the crime of genocide. Armenia has traditionally sponsored resolutions related to this issue, having introduced the first resolution on this subject at the Commission on Human Rights in 1998. Subsequently, the scope and substance of the resolutions introduced at the Human Rights Council on the subject have been fundamentally enriched.

The adoption, in 2015, of resolution 69/323, which designated 9 December as the International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide and of the Prevention of This Crime, was a landmark achievement in that regard. The most recent Human Rights Council resolution on this subject, entitled "Prevention of genocide", which was initiated by Armenia and unanimously adopted by the Human Rights Council in March 2018, draws the attention of the international community to the issue of early warning in situations that can lead to genocide and highlights the importance of education and regional and subregional cooperation for prevention and holding perpetrators accountable. Our priorities in the Human Rights Council include fostering cooperation for the prevention of genocide and mass atrocities and the further development of national and international early-warning mechanisms.

We also acknowledge certain differences of opinion when it comes to the definition and interpretation of the concept of the responsibility to protect, especially given its multidimensional nature. At the same time, that divergence in approaches should not hinder the responsibility and commitment towards the core values, norms and principles that the United Nations is built

upon. The need for open conversation on most serious violations of human rights that can lead to genocide, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity is still very pertinent.

Mr. Flynn (Ireland): We welcome the convening of today's debate. The inclusion of the responsibility to protect on the formal agenda of the General Assembly is indicative of the widespread support for this concept and its continuing importance to our work. The debate today is particularly timely, as we mark the seventieth anniversary of the adoption of the 1949 Geneva Conventions and the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of Security Council resolution 1265 (1999), on the protection of civilians.

Ireland has long been a strong supporter of international human rights bodies and monitoring mechanisms. They form an integral part of the existing early-warning system for potential threats of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. Along with the International Criminal Court, which has a crucial role to play in ensuring accountability for mass atrocity crimes, those monitoring mechanisms are an important tool for prevention.

As we know, 8 of the 14 current United Nations peacekeeping missions, accounting for approximately 95 per cent of all peacekeepers, operate with a protection of civilians mandate. However, we need to ensure that we provide missions with the appropriate capabilities to fulfil those mandates. Just as important are the skills of our peacekeepers. Ireland is active in helping to build that capacity. For example, in the past six months, we provided two sessions of training in the protection of civilians to fellow troop contributors.

In addition, Ireland's new development assistance policy has a particular focus on conflict-affected and fragile States in recognition of the links between crisis and conflict. We are working, for example, with the Auschwitz Institute for Peace and Reconciliation to develop a universal training tool that can be used to build the capacity of security sectors to prevent conflict-related atrocity crimes.

We know that the impact of conflict on women and girls is multifaceted and far-reaching. Ireland is a strong supporter of the women and peace and security agenda, which we see as an integral, indeed essential, part of the conflict-prevention framework. Ireland has just launched its third national action plan on women

and peace and security, within which women's right to equal participation and their important role as leaders and decision-makers in all peacebuilding processes is a particular priority.

Ireland wishes to emphasize the role that regional organizations can play in the prevention of atrocity crimes. The European Union is itself a manifestation of conflict prevention through social, economic and political cooperation. We see the value of national focal points at the national and regional levels and support the appointment by more regional organizations of their own R2P focal points. This year Ireland was also pleased to co-host with the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect the annual lecture on R2P, which was delivered by former Irish Deputy Prime Minister Eamon Gilmore, who is now the European Union's Special Representative for Human Rights.

We recognize and value the work that Ms. Karen Smith, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Responsibility to Protect, has already been undertaking in her short time in that vital role and pledge Ireland's full support in facilitating that work. Similarly, we were pleased to support the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency group's code of conduct, which to date has been endorsed by some 119 countries, as well as the French and Mexican declaration on voluntary restraint in the use of the veto by permanent members of the Security Council. Those initiatives help to reinforce the collective responsibility to prevent mass atrocity crimes.

The proliferation of arms increases the likelihood of atrocity crimes. Ireland has championed action on explosive weapons in populated areas, and we will advance that work at every opportunity.

In conclusion, let me reiterate my thanks to the President for providing this opportunity to reaffirm our shared commitment to the protection of vulnerable populations.

Ms. Khyne (Myanmar): My delegation would like to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive 2019 report, entitled "Responsibility to protect: lessons learned for prevention" (A/73/898).

Myanmar shares with many delegations the concern over the lack of progress and consensus on the concept of the responsibility to protect (R2P) while recognizing the importance of the prevention of atrocity crimes. Although we have been engaged in intensive debates

on the concept for more than a decade, we have yet to agree on how to translate it into practice. There remains a serious divergence among Member States even on the interpretation of the principle of the responsibility to protect.

The Secretary-General's report for this year emphasizes the importance of prevention. My delegation could not agree more. Preventive measures can be in many forms. Any potential cause of possible atrocity crimes should be prevented.

In that regard, I would like to underline the primary responsibility of the State in taking the necessary measures to prevent imminent threats of atrocities. Such measures include, but are not limited to, the peaceful resolution of conflict, strengthening the rule of law, the promotion of human rights, building peace and harmony among citizens and socioeconomic development. Regional organizations and the international community should render assistance or expertise to countries that need to strengthen their domestic capacity in order to fulfil their responsibility.

In that respect, countries should develop the policies and mechanisms best suited to their own situations in order to prevent conflict and ensure the peaceful settlement of disputes. National ownership must be ensured in preventing atrocity crimes.

In applying the concept of R2P, the universally accepted principles of respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of States, the Charter of the United Nations and international law must be upheld. We must not allow the principle of R2P to be abused or hijacked by any particular country or group of countries for their political purposes.

The 2005 World Summit Outcome document clearly states that the application of the responsibility to protect is strictly limited to genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. It is crucial that judging or categorizing a situation as a specific atrocity crime or deciding to invoke R2P must be done based on well-founded, unbiased and factual information and with impartiality, accuracy and objectivity.

Moreover, overemphasizing the role of international legal institutions undermines the role of national institutions. The role of international institutions should complement rather than compete with the duty of the Government and the interests of the people of that particular nation.

Addressing hate speech is an essential measure for preventing tension and conflicts. My delegation therefore welcomes the launching of the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech. The international community and the global network of mainstream and social media should also act responsibly in not promoting hatred and conflict.

The individual State has the primary responsibility to protect and to prevent atrocity crimes. The international community can also assist States in a constructive and positive manner in shouldering their responsibility in good faith. Invoking the concept of R2P for political purposes with ill intent will undermine the core value and purpose of the responsibility to protect.

Ms. Oehri (Liechtenstein): Liechtenstein welcomes the third formal debate of the General Assembly on the responsibility to protect (R2P) and aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Denmark on behalf of the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect (see A/73/PV.93). The agreement on the responsibility to protect is one of the most important achievements of the 2005 World Summit. Liechtenstein continues to be fully committed to the R2P norm and consistently supports measures to further improve its operationalization.

The concept of R2P enjoys broad political support but much remains to be done in practice. The responsibility of each State to protect its population from mass atrocities is uncontested. However, in committing to the R2P norm, we have also collectively agreed on a joint obligation when the authorities are unable or unwilling to live up to that responsibility. R2P can be implemented through a wide range of measures, from diplomatic engagement to more vigorous action, including that taken by the Security Council. As the situations in Myanmar, Syria and Yemen prove, all too often the responsibility to protect continues to be elusive in practice. We have been observing the inability of the Council to do its work with increasing frustration.

In an important commitment to improving the performance of the Security Council, 119 States have signed up to the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency group code of conduct on mass atrocities. They thereby commit to taking measures to end or prevent atrocity crimes when serving on the Council and not to vote against credible draft resolutions put forward to that effect. The code of conduct is an essential political commitment that can change the

political culture in the Council when faced with the risk or occurrence of atrocity crimes. Despite the strong support for the code of conduct, the use of the veto has significantly increased in recent years, in most cases preventing Security Council action in response to mass atrocities.

Liechtenstein supports the strong and active role of the General Assembly, in particular where the Security Council fails to address atrocity crimes in accordance with its mandate pursuant to the Charter of the United Nations. The International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011 is a positive example of the General Assembly's potential in that regard. Liechtenstein is also of the principled view that any veto cast in the Security Council should automatically be discussed in the General Assembly, independent of the subject matter and without prejudice to the outcome of such a discussion. We are pleased to see that such an approach has met with interest among the membership.

Liechtenstein agrees with the Secretary-General that a stronger focus on prevention is necessary. We very much welcome his new strategy against hate speech, which can trigger and sustain a spiral of escalation and violence that may result in atrocity crimes. Under pillar I of the responsibility to protect, States have a clear responsibility to act preventively against such developments. A vocal stance against hate speech by political leaders can send a strong message to that end.

In addition, States must promote and make full use of the rule of law when mass atrocity crimes are committed. Criminal accountability for mass atrocities is of paramount importance in order to break recurring cycles of violence and deter the commission of future crimes. The International Criminal Court can play a direct role in having an impact with respect to preventing mass atrocity crimes from occurring. We will continue to support the Court and its important work, including by promoting the universality of the Rome Statute.

Mr. Bermúdez Álvarez (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation associates itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Denmark on behalf of the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect (see A/73/PV.93).

Uruguay is pleased to be part of the group of countries that requested the inclusion of this item on the agenda of the General Assembly at its current session and advocates that it be incorporated as a permanent item on this organ's programme of work. In the current international context, there is the threat of the most serious crimes against millions of innocent victims. As the main deliberative organ of the Organization, the General Assembly has the inescapable obligation to actively and transparently debate possible alternatives and mechanisms, such as the responsibility to protect, in order to prevent such crimes, which assail our collective conscience.

Uruguay supports pillars I and II on prevention as the most effective way to address the responsibility to protect in the understanding that that is the central axis of this principle. States are primarily responsible for protecting their populations. History shows that no region of the world is immune to the threat of atrocity crimes. Those crimes find fertile ground in environments where inequality and intolerance prevail. All countries must therefore constantly work to strengthen their respective societies by promoting development and human rights. In addition, we must make greater efforts to promote the participation of women as agents of prevention of atrocity crimes.

Uruguay has continued to make progress in promoting equality and eradicating discrimination. Recent examples are the adoption of the new comprehensive law on transgender persons, which provides continuity to and broadens the provisions of Law No. 17,676, which criminalizes acts of hatred, contempt or violence against individuals due to the colour of their skin, their race, religion, national or ethnic origin or sexual orientation or identity.

States must also ensure that perpetrators of atrocity crimes are investigated and prosecuted. In addition to being an act of justice, accountability is effective in preventing such crimes.

States also have at their disposal mechanisms such as regional and global networks specialized in the responsibility to protect and in the prevention of mass atrocity crimes — effective initiatives to provide and strengthen the preventive capacities of States. Uruguay is part of the Global Network of the Responsibility to Protect Focal Points, as well as the Latin American Network for Genocide and Mass Atrocity Prevention.

But, apart from States, the United Nations has a fundamental role to play. The Security Council, on which the Charter of the United Nations confers the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security, must adopt effective measures, including referring cases to the International Criminal Court.

Unfortunately, the Council is often paralysed by the threat of use or use of the veto. My country reaffirms its support for the code of conduct of the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency group and for the initiative of France and Mexico on voluntary abstention from the use of the veto by the permanent members of the Security Council.

I would like to emphasize the importance of peacekeeping operations as one of the main tools for prevention and early warning. In order to implement such missions, it is essential to have properly trained personnel deployed on the ground. Uruguay's National Peace Operations Training Institute offers courses on human rights and the protection of civilians. In that way, our troops and those of other troop-contributing countries are trained, including in the area of early warning. However, it should be noted that, in order for peace operations to be able to carry out such tasks, it is also necessary to provide them with the necessary financial resources.

The Human Rights Council is another key body that the Organization has in order to prevent and respond to mass atrocities. The Universal Periodic Review, in particular, is a very important mechanism for prevention. Uruguay believes that better use should be made of the human rights system and greater cooperation should be encouraged with other United Nations bodies.

My country also supports the essential role of the Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect and its Special Advisers in the prevention efforts of the United Nations.

In conclusion, Uruguay particularly appreciates the role played by another actor that we consider essential: civil society. I would like to take this opportunity to express my country's gratitude to the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect and the other non-governmental organizations for their commendable and dedicated work in defence of life and human dignity.

Mr. Zhang Dianbin (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China listened carefully to Ms. Viotti's statement (see A/73/PV.93) and took note of the Secretary-General's report on the issue of the responsibility to protect (A/73/898). We would like to make the following observations.

Pursuant to international law, Governments have the primary responsibility to protect their citizens, which is a role that is irreplaceable. The international community should abide by the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, fully respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the countries concerned and uphold the fundamental principles that govern international relations, such as non-interference in internal affairs, non-aggression and the peaceful settlement of disputes. The will and leadership of the countries concerned should be fully respected and constructive assistance should be provided to them. All parties should strive to resolve their differences through dialogue, consultation and political negotiation and should prevent conflicts, resolve disputes peacefully, reduce armed conflicts, foster the concept of a common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security and build a community for the shared future of humankind.

Prevention is the key to implementing the responsibility to protect (R2P). We should step up our efforts to focus more on prevention and vigorously address both the symptoms and the root causes of conflict. As stated in the report of the Secretary-General, we should take preventive measures in various fields, including the eradication of extreme poverty and uneven development. We should build inclusive societies, strengthen national capacity-building, resolve problems by political means and fully leverage the role of United Nations agencies and regional and subregional organizations.

Development is a fundamental priority. All countries should prioritize development and work together to promote the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, enhance the capacity of developing countries to achieve their own development and reduce and eradicate poverty at a global level so as to build a foundation for conflict prevention. At the same time, the international community should strive to build a vision of civilization that promotes mutual respect and equality. We should support equality and respect, abandon arrogance and prejudice and promote

openness, tolerance and mutual learning in building an inclusive social culture.

According to the 2005 World Summit Outcome document, the responsibility to protect is strictly limited to four kinds of crimes: genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. That formulation is a balanced compromise negotiated by all countries and a hard-won consensus, which should not be subject to wilful expansion, much less misinterpretation or abuse. Member States have not yet agreed on the definition of and criteria for R2P. Informal discussions, led by Member States, should therefore continue. Consensus should be gradually forged in order to avoid forcing issues onto the agenda of the General Assembly. The persistent promotion and imposition of controversial issues will only harm the common interest of Member States.

China would like to underline once again that the use of force in enforcement measures and the authorization to use force should be considered only when all peaceful measures have been exhausted. It should also be in line with the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations. Military action taken by the international community to protect civilians must be authorized by the Security Council with strict conditions attached and explicit methods of implementation, which should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Mr. Arbeiter (Canada) (*spoke in French*): Canada thanks the President of the General Assembly and the Chef de Cabinet to the Secretary-General for their statements (see A/73/PV.93), as well as Denmark and Qatar for their leadership of the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect.

The responsibility to protect (R2P) is a disarmingly simple idea. It advocates that sovereign States have a responsibility to protect their own populations from four crimes that shock the conscience of humankind: genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing. R2P draws a red line when it comes to atrocity crimes. Today R2P is about prevention. To that end, Canada would like to see the Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect formally mandated to submit an annual report on R2P.

The report of the independent international fact-finding mission on Myanmar highlights the existence of serious human rights violations, including gang rape and sexual slavery. We have repeatedly called for an immediate end to violence and persecution in Myanmar

and for those responsible to be held accountable. The prevention of future atrocity crimes can be meaningful only if the ongoing mass atrocity crimes are addressed first. Accountability is an important tool to that end. That is why Canada's foreign policy priorities include revitalizing the rules-based international order and reaffirming its support for international institutions, such as the International Criminal Court (ICC). We continue to advocate for a Security Council referral of Myanmar to the ICC.

(spoke in English)

Canada welcomes the recent appointment of a new Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect, Ms. Karen Smith of South Africa. The work of the Special Advisers on the Prevention of Genocide and on the Responsibility to Protect to mainstream R2P within the United Nations system is fundamental in order to prevent mass atrocity crimes.

That is why Canada calls for enhancing risk analysis and early-warning mechanisms that include a strong gender lens, but also regular briefings to the Security Council by the United Nations Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, the United Nations Special Adviser on R2P and the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Canada further encourages Security Council members to better utilize the Council's working methods to bring potential mass atrocity situations for consideration as early as possible. Situational awareness briefings and the Arria Formula mechanism must be further used to better incorporate mass atrocity prevention into the Security Council agenda.

We know that women and girls are targeted and experience violence differently from men and boys. They often bear the brunt of the economic and social consequences of atrocities. Discrimination against women and girls and other human rights violations are meaningful indicators of the potential for atrocity crimes. Sexual and gender-based violence in conflict settings can be a constituent element of an act of genocide, a war crime, a crime against humanity or ethnic cleansing. As such, the protection of those at risk of sexual and gender-based violence is also a fundamental responsibility for all States as part of their commitment to R2P.

Going forward, R2P advocates need to embrace the struggle against gender discrimination and inequality

on its own terms. Together, we should recognize the multiple roles of women and girls in the context of genocide and mass atrocities as victims, bystanders, perpetrators, protectors and peacemakers. R2P can achieve its objectives only when the United Nations goals in advancing women and peace and security, and in ending gender discrimination more broadly, are achieved.

Mrs. Azucena (Philippines): The Philippines supported the inclusion of an agenda item on the responsibility to protect (R2P) because we believe in the need for a formal and continuing discussion by the General Assembly of the still evolving concept of the operationalization of R2P.

R2P affirms a State's responsibility to protect its population from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity perpetrated by State or non-State actors or by its own security forces, not just the latter. The first duty of States is the protection of their populations from actual harm and threats to their safety and well-being; that is the basis of State legitimacy. But a State fails in its responsibility to protect as much by failing to use every effective means to protect its population from harm as by abusing it itself. That happens when States give way to terrorism and organized crime instead of combating them.

The Philippine Constitution values the dignity of every person and protects the most vulnerable—women, children and the poor, who are the easiest and most frequent victims of mass atrocity crimes that they cannot flee. And if they can, it is only to be turned away at the borders of places of greater safety across the sea. The Constitution protects the law-abiding who are victims of the lawless, whom it is not the responsibility of States to protect other than according them the most basic rights of the accused after they have submitted to the authority of the State. We must ensure that, in identifying vulnerable populations, making a criminal career choice does not set one apart as vulnerable to anything but inexorable law enforcement.

Prevention is at the core of R2P. There is therefore a need to strengthen national institutions for good governance, especially in fighting organized crime and terrorism, and the imperative of a strong national defence against genocide-prone foreign State and non-State actors. There is also a need to reform democracy to prevent the capture of government by

violent groups such as intolerant mass movements and forms of organized crime such as the drug trade.

We support the Secretary-General in putting prevention at the centre of the United Nations peace and security reform agenda. But part of prevention is discouraging the misuse of the concept of R2P for political purposes to justify foreign intervention in domestic law enforcement. That discredits it and invites the view that it is objective collusion with the evil that the State seeks to stamp out.

The road to hell resounds with the footfalls of the sanctimonious. Hence any application of the R2P principle must be in strict accordance with the parameters of the 2005 World Summit Outcome document. Any unreasonable expansion of the concept would only undermine it and dent its credibility.

We agree with the need to strengthen early-warning mechanisms to ensure that they lead to early action. But early warning does not include holding back the basic State function of stopping crime. The challenge for R2P is to balance consistency and predictability in the rule of law, with an appreciation of the uniqueness of each case.

But in every case, we must acknowledge the universality of the norms of right and wrong. These remain opposites. While one might disagree about what is right, let alone perfect, in all circumstances and practical in some, there can be no doubt about what is wrong and the necessity to fight it in every case. We cannot accept moral relativism. We cannot accept that there is no such thing as good and evil, but — like beauty and ugliness being in the mind of the beholder — the dichotomy is resolved by what is convenient for the actor. Moral relativism is the greatest evil.

Our assessment of each possible case of failure of the responsibility to protect must be impartial and evidence-based, free from politics and double standards. It excludes the selective use of the veto by the Security Council permanent five in possible R2P situations, in tragic revivals of colonial influence.

We also support the Secretary-General's call to strengthen the role of women in atrocity crimes prevention. Women are at the forefront of our peace processes; they are the easiest targets and victims of conflict and the first to recognize that conflicts are futile and an excuse for savagery.

States are encouraged to sign, ratify and implement basic instruments of international law on this subject, including the Rome Statute. But the commitment to protect and advance human rights, including the right to be safe equally from criminality and abusive State authority, survives and far exceeds the obligation to remain in agencies that were designed for their enforcement but that have compromised themselves in that task. Bonds are sacred, but institutions are merely the people who occupy them.

By 2009, the Philippines had already enacted into law Republic Act 9851, also known as the Philippine Act on Crimes against International Humanitarian Law, Genocide and Other Crimes against Humanity. It proceeds on the principle that the most serious crimes of concern to the international community as a whole must not go unpunished and that their effective prosecution must be ensured by taking measures at the national level.

The Secretary-General's report (A/73/898) states that today's crises require strengthened international cooperation and multilateral institutions. It is our view that today's crises equally require trust and respect for sovereignty, not the assertion of the multilateral over sovereign States. Now that the United Nations is under siege from rising protectionist sentiment and hostility to multilateralism, it becomes even more imperative to respect the sovereign principle; one can work with it or even around it, but never against it. That undermines the international order, as we have seen when States are made to fail by multilateral action.

R2P is not a licence to intervene in domestic internal affairs. Therefore, the focus of this annual debate should be on coming up with a shared, common understanding of the operationalization of R2P and not jumping off from the misguided assumption that we already have that shared, common understanding.

Mr. Komárek (Czech Republic): The Czech Republic aligns itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the European Union and the Group of Friends on the Responsibility to Protect.

As we already heard today, the responsibility to protect is based on three mutually supporting and non-sequential pillars: the responsibility of States to protect their citizens, the shared responsibility of the international community to provide States with assistance in implementing that responsibility, and even the taking of decisive action where all other efforts fail.

While a large part of our discussions is focused on the third pillar, the essence of our efforts, as suggested by the Secretary-General in his recent report (A/73/898), should be focused on the first two pillars, which are based on prevention and international cooperation. We are convinced that the work starts at the national level with ensuring the full and equal participation of all.

Whenever people are left voiceless, whenever their voices are ignored or twisted, discontent and grievances grow. That is why the Czech Republic, as a member of the Human Rights Council, is a driving force behind the resolution on equal participation in political and public affairs. Furthermore, in his report, the Secretary-General rightly stresses the need to include women in early-warning as well as preventive measures. In this context, a thorough implementation of the women and peace and security agenda becomes a matter of urgency.

The Human Rights Council is a body with a particularly strong potential for effective early action and an early-warning function. While the Universal Periodic Review and treaty bodies play a crucial part in assessing national risks and resilience, the special procedures mandate-holders play an irreplaceable role in early warning and the prevention of mass atrocities. The Czech Republic supports the efforts to strengthen the preventive role of the Council and its efficiency, which we believe will further elevate its role and credibility.

Last year marked the seventieth anniversary of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. We would like to urge all States that have not yet ratified or acceded to the Convention to do so. In the Czech Republic, we reflected the Convention in our legislation, which actually provides an even stronger level of protection from genocide by also listing among the protected groups “class, or other similar groups of people”.

We can all agree that impunity for the crime of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity encourages their reoccurrence. It is States that have the primary responsibility to investigate and prosecute crimes within their jurisdiction, and such national efforts should be encouraged and assisted by all other Member States. At the international level, the International Criminal Court remains the most important institution in the battle to end impunity for genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. The Czech Republic

continues to support the International Criminal Court and other international criminal tribunals in their work and their role as a deterrent of atrocity crimes.

Finally, we would like to use this opportunity to welcome the inclusion of the responsibility to protect in the formal agenda of the seventy-third session of the General Assembly and to voice our hope that during the next session of General Assembly, the responsibility to protect will finally receive the status of a standing item on the agenda of the General Assembly, a status it rightly deserves.

Mr. Raum (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): My delegation aligns itself with the statements made by the observer of the European Union and by the representative of Denmark on behalf of the Group of Friends on the Responsibility to Protect (see A/73/PV.93). We support the French-Mexican initiative on the use of the veto and have signed on to the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency group code of conduct.

Luxembourg welcomes the report of the Secretary-General (A/73/898) and commends the work done by the Offices of Under-Secretary-General Adama Dieng and of the Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect. Their work in the areas of analysis and early warning is essential and should be supported both within the United Nations and on the ground.

My country's commitment to the operationalization of the norm of the responsibility to protect (R2P) began with the adoption of the World Summit Outcome document and is reflected in our unreserved support for R2P in the various formal and informal multilateral forums, including, most importantly, in the General Assembly and during open debates of the Security Council. We welcome the standing inclusion of the item on the Assembly's agenda and urge the adoption of a resolution affirming the universal commitment to the vital norm of the responsibility of all States to protect their populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

Given the importance that my country and all members of the Assembly attach to the Universal Periodic Review of the Human Rights Council, we also advocate for the integration of a prevention approach to atrocity crimes in the context of the Review.

The role of special procedure mandate-holders is particularly dear to us. Along with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights,

special-procedures independent experts provide high-quality information to the Human Rights Council and often sound the alarm on criminal atrocity situations. We encourage the Security Council to hold regular briefings by the High Commissioner and by representatives of commissions of inquiry or fact-finding missions mandated by the Human Rights Council.

Our informal commitments include the activities of our national focal point in the Global Network of R2P Focal Points, with the support of the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, whose commitment and resolve we commend. In that context, we encourage all countries to designate a staff member in their Administration as a focal point. Luxembourg also participates in the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect in New York and in Geneva.

Atrocity crimes perpetrated in today's conflicts are avoidable, and it is the responsibility of Member States to prevent them, including through decisive action against hate speech. If States are not able to fulfil this responsibility, it is their duty to request assistance under the second pillar of the norm of R2P. Only as a last resort should the third pillar of the norm come into play and the international community intervene. Recent history has taught us that the rhetoric we have heard against the third pillar of R2P chiefly protects authoritarian regimes that are prepared to carry out genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.

Moreover, it has been established that impunity encourages recurrence. Here my delegation wishes to reiterate its unconditional support for the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011 and the independent international fact-finding mission on Myanmar.

Fourteen years after the 2005 World Summit and with 10 years to go on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Luxembourg reiterates its resolute commitment to the responsibility to protect and to a multilateral effective system with the United Nations at its heart, with the goal of safeguarding human dignity and an international order that is based on the rule of law.

Mr. Moriko (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate the President of the General Assembly on the convening of this meeting

and the outstanding leadership of our work. Allow me also to congratulate Secretary-General António Guterres on the high quality of his enlightening report on the responsibility to protect (A/73/898). I wish to reiterate my delegation's readiness to contribute to the success of this meeting.

Côte d'Ivoire aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Denmark on behalf of the Group of Friends on the Responsibility to Protect (see A/73/PV.93).

The holding of this meeting on the responsibility to protect (R2P) proves once again the United Nations commitment to ensuring that our peoples will live in a good world, a world of peace and serenity. Unfortunately, we cannot but note that the responsibility to protect, which became a norm of public international law through its adoption in 2005 during the World Summit by the States Members of the United Nations, has been unable to put an end to war crimes and crimes against humanity or to ease the many hotbeds of tension throughout our planet.

The threat of armed clashes, genocide and ethnic cleansing, often met with complete indifference by the international community, are the daily lot characterizing many of the issues inscribed on the agenda of the United Nations. We must therefore use this meeting as a call to action to avert tragedies such as those that have been seen in certain parts of the world. Indeed, recent history has taught us, unfortunately, that on many occasions States have not been able to protect their populations or have been passive witnesses to, or even active actors in, grave and unacceptable violations of international human rights and humanitarian law.

Following the Summit in 2005, the General Assembly unanimously adopted in 2009 resolution 63/308, entitled "The responsibility to protect", with the goal of effectively fighting such tragedies. Nevertheless, we cannot but note that the implementation of the R2P concept has given rise to divergent views in the United Nations owing to the differences that could emerge between this idea and the principle of non-interference into the domestic affairs of States. Such differences require us to continue our discussions so as to arrive at a specific definition of the precise criteria for impartial and objective decision-making mechanisms, so that we can avoid all speculation in case of resort to this concept.

We must stress that the sovereignty of States entails respect for their international commitments, including

respect for and the safeguarding of international human rights law, and its corollary, the responsibility to protect civilians.

By becoming a member of the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect in 2012, Côte d'Ivoire reaffirmed its commitment to respect for this principle and reiterated its willingness to support all actions aimed at its implementation through good-offices missions and peacekeeping operations.

I wish also to recall that during the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire, the Security Council, through resolution 1975 (2011) of 30 March 2011, because of the atrocities committed, ordered, *inter alia*, a military intervention to protect civilians and property. Given our difficult past, my delegation is of the view that prevention is an essential means of averting the commission of the worst kind of atrocities that have been seen in our world.

In that respect, the international community should be proactive and prioritize the fight against hate speech and the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons. The United Nations must therefore rely more on early-warning mechanisms and ramp up cooperation with regional and subregional organizations and civil society. Cooperation with such organizations will make it possible to identify and address their needs in terms of leaders' capacity-building and financial support, so as to make them more operational on the ground.

In West Africa, the Economic Community of West African States has a number of mechanisms for conflict prevention and the protection of peoples, in particular, the early-warning mechanism of the Mediation and Security Council, the Office of the Special Representative and the Council of the Wise, as well as the special mediators. Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that the existence of these mechanisms, despite the fact that they are vital, has not always been able to prevent conflicts, with tragic consequences. The resort to force is the final alternative for achieving peace and saving lives when the State that has the primary responsibility to protect is not able to do so.

I wish to note that today the trend is to shrink the budget of United Nations peacekeeping operations, which, needless to say, remain a vital tool for the United Nations and whose operationalization has allowed the international community to implement the responsibility to protect and save many lives. Let us keep in mind the fact that beyond the budgetary

constraints facing the United Nations, no sacrifice is too great to preserve humankind from mass atrocities.

Ms. Cerrato (Honduras) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to express my country's satisfaction at the holding, once again, of a formal debate on the responsibility to protect and the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity — a unique opportunity for the States Members of the United Nations to promote dialogue on actions to implement the responsibility to protect, in line with the 2005 World Summit outcome document.

My country welcomes the report of Secretary-General António Guterres entitled "Responsibility to protect: lessons learned for prevention" (A/73/898). It reflects the need to identify lessons learned and positive examples of prevention in order to make progress in the implementation of its strategy on the responsibility to protect, which rests on its three pillars.

Honduras believes that it is necessary to strengthen international cooperation in order to respond to the great challenges currently facing developing countries, giving priority to respect for international human rights, international humanitarian law and the rights of refugees and migrants. Similarly, the responsibility to protect must go hand in hand with efforts to achieve genuine sustainable peace, which is intended to contribute to the strengthening of international peace and security by ensuring the full participation of women and young people in all spheres of society, particularly in prevention and peacebuilding.

For my country, the responsibility to protect is a priority and, although much remains to be done, in recent years joint actions have been carried out by the public sector, including the National Congress, the Ministries of Human Rights, Security and Defence, academia and civil society. The State of Honduras has made significant progress in this area, with the adoption in 2017 of a new criminal code that, pursuant to approved norms, defines the penalties for the crimes of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity, and establishes in detail the type of penalty applicable to each of these types of crimes against the international community.

I would also like to stress that Honduras is a member of and an active participant in the Latin American Network for Genocide and Mass Atrocity Prevention, an initiative focused on the development of public policies at the regional level in the area of human rights and

the fight against discrimination, with a special focus on the prevention of atrocities. My country has also incorporated the issue of genocide and the prevention of mass atrocities into the training curriculum for public servants and members of the armed forces of Honduras. In addition, we have published educational material focused on the prevention of discrimination. Furthermore, the public servants of the Ministry of Human Rights and other governmental institutions have benefited from training in the subject by the Auschwitz Institute for Peace and Reconciliation, for which we are grateful.

In conclusion, my country is committed to the Rome Statute and — together with the relevant bodies at the national, regional and international levels — to continuing to make progress in the system for the prevention of these atrocity crimes and the responsibility to protect the population of Honduras.

Mr. Mike (Hungary): At the outset, I would like to thank the President for convening this formal debate. It is my honour to speak on behalf of Hungary. While we align ourselves with the statements delivered on behalf of the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) and the European Union (see A/73/PV.93), I wish to make a few observations in my national capacity.

We welcome the Secretary-General's latest report (A/73/898) and the inclusion of R2P in this session's formal agenda. Hungary supports its inclusion as a standing item on the Assembly's agenda and the adoption of a new resolution to reaffirm our commitment to the principle.

Hungary shares the growing concerns of the Secretary-General with regard to the negative tendencies towards increasing numbers of victims of atrocity crimes. We have to strengthen the United Nations response by adopting specific measures to improve the Organization's internal coordination in the area of R2P. That is why Hungary is strongly committed to supporting the work of the Special Advisers on the Prevention of Genocide and the Responsibility to Protect. We welcome efforts to mainstream R2P within the United Nations system, including through the framework of analysis for atrocity crimes.

Hungary also deems it especially important that States put more emphasis on prevention through various measures, including early warning, political mediation, empowering victims of crimes, enhancing domestic and international capacities for ending impunity and

finding new ways to ensure more effective compliance with international humanitarian law.

As an active member of the Group of Friends of R2P, both in New York and in Geneva, Hungary is fully committed to raising awareness of the issue at the national and international levels. Hungary hosts the Budapest Centre for the International Prevention of Genocide and Mass Atrocities, which is dedicated to assisting in building a global architecture for the prevention of atrocity crimes, focuses its activities on education and the dissemination of the culture of dialogue. The Centre has joined the European Union-funded Words are Stones campaign in order to take an active part in combating hate speech occurring online. The Centre will take the lead in organizing a training course for young people involved in social media to increase awareness of cyberbullying among the youth in Hungary. Hungary is also committed to strengthening the Global Network of R2P Focal Points in order to draw greater attention to our R2P actions. We encourage all actors to appoint their focal points and join that very important community.

We are of the view that the existing human rights mechanisms, together with the Human Rights Up Front initiative, can effectively contribute to timely action. Hungary strongly supports utilizing the prevention mechanisms of the Human Rights Council and, as a current member, one of our priorities is to work towards the prevention of these atrocities by focusing special attention on the protection and promotion of human rights.

Finally yet importantly, Hungary has been organizing the Budapest Human Rights Forum for 11 years now, bringing together Government representatives and civil society. Hungary also established a human rights working group in 2012 with the purpose of monitoring respect for human rights in Hungary.

We believe that actions should be taken at both the national and international levels. We therefore support the work of the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011 and the International Criminal Court to end impunity and bring perpetrators to justice. As an active member of the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency group, Hungary advocates voluntarily refraining from the use

of the veto in cases of mass atrocities, and encourages all Member States that have not yet done so to sign the code of conduct.

In conclusion, our ultimate goal should be to ensure peaceful and secure living conditions for everyone in their homelands without any possibility of being victims of atrocity crimes. We share the opinion that stronger political will is needed to make R2P a living reality. We can assure the Assembly that our country has that will and we will continue to encourage others to implement the principle of R2P.

Mr. Kim (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): At the outset, I am confident that the discussion of the agenda item on the responsibility to protect (R2P) and the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity will be held in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and bring about good results under the President's leadership.

The delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea would like to take this opportunity to clarify its position with regard to the agenda item as follows.

First, the issue of protecting people from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity falls entirely under the sovereignty of the States concerned. R2P is a product of humanitarian intervention, which has been rejected by the international community in the past. State sovereignty is sacred and inviolable. Respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States and non-interference in their internal affairs are cornerstones of international relations. R2P violations of our principles are nothing more than an excuse to justify interference in the internal affairs of the small and big countries.

Secondly, genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity can be attributed not to States that do not have adequate ability to protect their people, but rather to the flagrant infringement of State sovereignty. The interference of Western countries in States' internal affairs creates upheavals such as arms conflicts, terrorism, genocide and mass destruction, which are long-standing in Middle Eastern and African countries, including Syria, Iraq, Libya and so on. As reality shows, it is a self-evident truth that developing countries will fall victim to R2P.

If the United Nations, which is mandated to establish a fair international order based on sovereign

equality, turns a blind eye to that reality and continues to tolerate the false claims of Western countries, that will obviously trigger more miserable outcomes. The United Nations should no longer tolerate the sinister schemes of Western countries that are pursuing political, economic and military interventions in other countries under the pretext of R2P.

In conclusion, the delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea hereby stresses that, in international relations, the principle of the respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States and non-interference in their internal affairs should be strictly upheld and the issue of R2P should be dealt with in keeping with the common demands and interests of all Member States.

Mr. Okaiteye (Ghana): Let me join previous speakers in congratulating the Secretary-General on the quality of his report (A/73/898) on the responsibility to protect (R2P). Ghana aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect (see A/73/PV.93) and is encouraged by the focus of the report on lessons learned and taking stock of experience in prevention, including the role of individual Member States and the international community, which adequately reflects the concerns Ghana shares with others regarding the approach to the implementation of R2P.

We just commemorated the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Rwandan genocide with a solemn ceremony in this Hall. It was a moment that reminded us of how the international community failed to protect thousands of people in that country from genocide and mass atrocities. It also brought back haunting memories of similar crimes against humanity committed elsewhere across the globe, even in the course of our own lifetime. This debate, therefore, is important and provides a forum for Member States to learn from other experiences in the implementation of R2P.

My delegation continues to endorse the position that the pace of implementation can be improved through strengthened mechanisms for accountability across the legal, moral and political spheres, together with clearly defined relationships among the three phases of the principle. Ghana will also continue to advocate for consensus-building in the transformation of conflict resolution, including the ongoing processes of building resilient communities, resilient nations and

resilient regional communities in support of a resilient global community.

In the multilateral setting, Ghana shares the concerns raised in the report about the troubling decline in international commitment to multilateralism, which is affecting efforts to prevent atrocity crimes, and calls for a more collaborative effort towards eliminating this canker of atrocity crimes. In that connection, Ghana encourages members of the Security Council to utilize the Council's working methods in bringing potential mass atrocity situations into the Council for consideration as early as possible. We also encourage frequent briefings from the Secretary-General's Special Advisers on the Prevention of Genocide and the Responsibility to Protect regarding early warning situations where populations are at risk of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. The victims of such crimes deserve better and we, the international community, must not turn our backs on them.

It is gratifying to note that the report commends the efforts being made by the African Union (AU) in the development of legal and institutional frameworks to protect populations from serious crimes, as spelled out in the responsibility to protect. It is worth mentioning that the Constitutive Act of the AU specifically affirms the right to intervene in respect of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity, which hinges on the responsibility to protect. These are the practical measures that Ghana is calling for in the protection of the vulnerable against such heinous crimes. Never again should the international community sit and watch innocent populations being annihilated without any protection. In calling for such protection, Ghana is mindful of States' sovereignty, but this sovereignty also comes with a responsibility. In cases in which States fail to uphold that responsibility, the vulnerable must be protected by the international community through international law.

It is in this context that Ghana continues to work very closely with the delegations of like-minded States to protect and promote both national and regional ownership of R2P, with the support of the joint Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect, the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect and other partners. Ghana calls on Member States that have yet to appoint national R2P focal points to do so and join the growing Global Network of R2P Focal

Points. Ghana also wishes to commend the 61 Member States and two regional organizations — the European Union and the Organization of American States — that have appointed R2P focal points to date and are building their national and collective capacities to prevent mass atrocity crimes.

In conclusion, my delegation wishes to call on Member States to declare their support for R2P to allow for all views to be considered in the preparation of the report and outcome of this debate. Finally, Ghana wishes to echo its statement made during the previous debate (see A/72/PV.99), namely, that the combined effect of the responsibility to protect, the responsibility while protecting and the responsibility to remember should help us to make progress in building resilience.

Mr. Siddig (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): Membership of the United Nations remains the ultimate symbol of State independence and sovereignty. It is the stamp of approval in the community of nations. The United Nations is also the principal international forum for cooperative action to achieve three fundamental objectives: State-building, nation-building and economic development. The United Nations is therefore the main arena to protect State sovereignty and not to give it up.

We take note of the Secretary General's report (A/73/898) on the responsibility to protect (R2P) and the noteworthy paragraphs therein. In a dangerous world, which is characterized by inequality in power and resources, sovereignty for many States is the best line of defence and sometimes the only one. However, sovereignty is more than just a functional principle in international relations. For many States and peoples, it is recognition of equality in status and dignity with other States and peoples, as well as protection for their unique identity and national freedom, in addition to emphasizing their right to self-determination.

The concept of sovereignty as a responsibility must not be interpreted as the possibility for any party to intervene as long as the State is still standing and able to exercise its authority and fulfil its obligations towards its citizens. Paragraph 7 of Article 2 of the Charter of the United Nations deals explicitly with non-interference and does not include any clear reference to humanitarian exception, as some would call it. It is illegitimate to intervene in the internal affairs of States based on international instruments and resolutions adopted by the General Assembly. Non-interference

has a legal basis in international customary law through many international, regional and bilateral instruments that emphasize the prohibition of interference by a State in the affairs of other States. Non-interference is also ensured by general principles of law agreed by civilized nations, as well as international organizations and previous judicial judgments issued by international courts such as the International Court of Justice. Opinions of senior jurists as well as paragraphs 138 and 139 of the 2005 World Summit Outcome document, along with paragraphs 121 to 131, in which States committed to improving and promoting human rights, do not contain any explicit authorization or agreement pertaining to the second or third pillar. All that warns us against the threat of legalizing the right to interfere, however good the intentions.

Efforts among States and the international community must be concerted to eliminate the root causes of internal conflicts. The required interference, if we can call it that, means providing support to meet the needs and political shortcomings, such as establishing democracy and capacity-building; confidence-building measures among communities and different groups; and dealing with economic deprivation and a lack of economic opportunities. Over the past three decades there has been a dire need to decisively address the causes of environmental deterioration, which has become directly responsible for the outbreak of internal conflicts. Assistance must include development aid and cooperation in order to address inequality in the distribution of resources and opportunities; encouraging economic growth and opportunities; improving terms of trade and allowing more goods from developing economies to foreign markets; encouraging the necessary economic and structural reform; and providing technical support in order to strengthen regulatory instruments and institutions.

Eliminating the root causes may also mean enhancing legal protection and legal institutions. That must include supporting efforts to strengthen the rule of law and protect the independence and transparency of the legal apparatus.

We must clearly state that the direct support mentioned in the report from the international community, especially the United Nations, to civil society organizations in States without the prior knowledge of or coordination with their Governments, notwithstanding the important role of those organizations in the area of prevention, is very dangerous

and can be politicized and serve purposes and agendas that have nothing to do with the basic and noble goal of protecting civilians. It is observed from experience and practice that certain organizations undertake political exploitation in order to internationalize certain internal issues by exaggerating some incidents or fabricating others. Caution is therefore required because that may increase tensions and have a negative impact on achieving prevention.

The concept of R2P is a noble objective that States undertake as a fundamental responsibility. It must not be exploited as a political tool for attaining narrow interests, causing suffering to civilians and legalizing practices that contravene the principles of the Charter, whose seventy-fifth anniversary we celebrated yesterday, as well as international law. The primary responsibility of a State is to protect its people from genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing, as well as incitement to perpetrate those crimes. However, we cannot agree to grant some States a blank cheque to intervene politically and militarily in the internal affairs of States.

It is worth noting that there is no consensus on the R2P concept. There remain concerns regarding its definition, scope and implementation. We therefore believe that more informal consultations, research, analysis of causes and repercussions are needed.

Promoting the sovereignty of States and improving the capability of the international community to decisively respond when States are extensively violating human rights and failing to protect their citizens are two noble and fundamental objectives that need to be reconciled. That requires further study and analysis, as well as innovative solutions, under the umbrella of international law.

Mr. Cooreman (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): Belgium associates itself with the statements made by the observer of the European Union and by the representative of Denmark on behalf of the Group of Friends on the Responsibility to Protect (see A/73/PV.93).

Belgium welcomes the convening of this formal debate on the responsibility to protect. Last year, for the first plenary debate in almost 10 years, many Member States took the floor. The exchanges were very useful, first, to identify the various tools at our disposal to specifically implement the responsibility to protect at the national and international levels and, secondly, to

better understand the differences in approach that can sometimes exist among us on this issue.

Allow me to welcome the presence today of Ms. Karen Smith, the new Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Responsibility to Protect. She can count on Belgium's full support. We welcome the fact that, since the beginning of her term, she has conducted extensive consultations, in particular at the regional level, with all stakeholders on this issue. We recognize that some trust may have been eroded over time. However, we are also convinced that we cannot remain silent if there is a risk of atrocities. This conceptual debate should not prevent us from working to operationalize the concept of responsibility to protect.

The goal is first and foremost to respect the commitments that we all made during the 2005 World Summit. These cannot remain just wishful thinking when each day peoples continue to be the victims of atrocity crimes. This is why we must continue this dialogue and adopt concrete measures when required. It is in this spirit that this year my country calls once again for the topic of the responsibility to protect to be permanently inscribed on the agenda of the Assembly.

I wish to commend the most recent report of the Secretary-General on the responsibility to protect (A/73/898). The focus on the primary responsibility of States to protect their peoples is timely and should, we hope, eliminate any ambiguity on the subject. State sovereignty is indeed no obstacle to the responsibility to protect. On the contrary, these are two mutually reinforcing concepts. The report thus rightly stresses areas of action in which States have a key role to play.

In that respect, the review of the progress made on Sustainable Development Goal 16 during the next session of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, which will begin in a few days, will offer an excellent opportunity for States to share their best practices and experiences in the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies by ensuring access for all to justice and by establishing effective, responsible and open institutions at all levels.

At the national level, the contributions of focal points on R2P and the support provided by regional organizations and civil society in building capacities to prevent mass atrocities are undeniable. Belgium has actively participated in the ninth meeting of focal points organized by the European Union in Brussels

last May, and we encourage those States and regional organizations that have yet to do so to join this network.

Beyond the primary role to be played by States, the report also recalled the commitment made in 2005 under which the international community must intervene when national authorities are not able to fulfil their responsibility to protect, or when they are clearly not protecting their peoples.

As a member of the Security Council since 1 January, Belgium is particularly focused on the Council using the many tools at its disposal to act, both formally and informally, in the prevention of atrocities. As concerns early-warning systems, we also are of the view that the Security Council must be periodically informed, in an independent matter, about situations that could lead to atrocity crimes. We are convinced that the Special Advisers on the Prevention of Genocide and the Responsibility to Protect also can bring added value on board in this context.

We also call for better coordination between the deliberations of and the decisions taken by the Security Council in New York and the United Nations mechanisms and bodies in Geneva, including the High Commissioner and the Human Rights Council. While each has a specific mandate and works in respect of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, their functional interaction must be enhanced so as to ramp up the institutional capacity of the United Nations in the area of conflict prevention.

We must recognize that human rights violations can contribute to, or be at the root of, a conflict, as reflected in the approach that is based on the three pillars. We must also work to prevent the commission of new atrocity crimes. While the fight against impunity is first and foremost the responsibility of each State, the Security Council must bolster its support for national legal procedures and hybrid mechanisms, as well as for the International Criminal Court, in particular for those cases that it referred to the Court.

We pay tribute to the role played by the General Assembly in the creation of the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011, as well as by the Human Rights Council in the establishment of the independent international fact-

finding mission on Myanmar, following the inaction of the Council in those cases.

Finally, when the Council establishes that a situation involving mass atrocities exists, it must not let disagreements between its permanent members lead to inaction. That is why Belgium supports the French-Mexican initiative to restrict the right to veto in cases of atrocity crimes and has adhered to the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency group code of conduct. We are pleased to see the level of support for these complementary initiatives continue to grow; it is a sign that the Council can no longer ignore.

We have made undeniable progress since 2005, but it remains insufficient. Today Belgium calls on all States Members of the United Nations to overcome their differences and to individually and collectively implement our responsibility to protect.

Ms. Van Baak (Netherlands): Let me first thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (A/73/898).

For the second consecutive year, this debate on the responsibility to protect (R2P) is included in the formal agenda of the General Assembly. To ensure a continuous, constructive and sustainable dialogue, R2P should be made a standing agenda item.

I especially would like to welcome Ms. Karen Smith as the new Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on the Responsibility to Protect, a role she has carried out actively since her appointment.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands also aligns itself with the joint statement delivered by the representative of Denmark on behalf of the Group of Friends on the Responsibility to Protect, and with the statement made by the observer of the European Union (see A/73/PV.93).

I would like to touch upon three points: prevention, accountability and a different approach.

First, on prevention, when we talk about our responsibility to protect populations from atrocity crimes, much attention has, perhaps unfairly, been put on the intervention aspect: how the international community should act when such atrocities have already been committed. However, the core aim of our responsibility to protect is preventing such cruelties from happening in the first place.

In this regard, I should like to emphasize the crucial role of the Human Rights Council and of all the tools

at its disposal. Regular sessions, special procedures, treaty bodies and the Universal Periodic Review help to document patterns of human rights violations that might escalate into mass atrocities. They provide us with early-warning signs on which the High Commissioner can brief the Human Rights Council and the Security Council when necessary.

This valuable and essential interaction between New York and Geneva needs a boost. The Security Council should not ignore the possibility of being adequately informed, and, moreover, it should not think twice about taking timely and decisive action. Early warnings must be answered with early action.

Where the commission of atrocity crimes could not be prevented, the Security Council has to uphold its responsibility to alleviate the suffering of the peoples in conflict. This brings me to my second point: accountability. We have to face reality. Despite public attention and outrage over the many cases of the most heinous crimes in the past, war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide and ethnic cleansing still occur. The horrible crimes committed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham are but one example. What we can and must do is hold the perpetrators of such crimes accountable.

As the host nation to the International Criminal Court, the Netherlands relentlessly advocates for ensuring accountability and upholding international criminal law. Fact-finding, evidence-gathering, investigation, attribution and, eventually, prosecution are crucial processes in laying the groundwork for present and future accountability. We need to end cycles of impunity, thereby preventing recurrence. Collective support for and cooperation with United Nations accountability mechanisms are preconditions.

Lastly, I will say something about a new approach to R2P.

Atrocity prevention does not stand on its own. The core aim of the R2P principle transcends its label. Prevention and protection of populations from the most serious human rights violations touch on many different areas of Government policy. If our response is to work effectively, we need to understand the synergy between R2P and related agendas, such as women and peace and security, the protection of civilians, peacekeeping and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. With regard to the latter, sustainable development will not be achieved if we do not uphold the norms that safeguard

humanity and respect all universal human rights. That requires a human-rights based approach in the way we govern.

Efforts should be made not only by Member States, domestically and collectively, but also within the United Nations system itself. For example, the Human Rights Up Front initiative, which is also mentioned by the Secretary-General in his latest report on R2P, is of great value in strengthening a United Nations system-wide, cross-pillar approach to mass atrocity prevention. We support the call for more efficient and inclusive United Nations and Member State engagement, also involving local, national and regional organizations. Enhancing United Nations inter-agency coordination, as well as cooperation with regional actors and civil society, is fundamental to developing a comprehensive and context-specific prevention framework.

Today's reality demands the strongest commitment to the responsibility to protect. In order to save lives, the international community must respond adequately. We have the eyes, the ears and all means and mechanisms to identify early warning signs. Collective political will is the missing ingredient. We need to choose to act, prioritize the prevention of mass atrocities and practice what we preach.

Mr. Al-Maawda (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to thank the President for convening this meeting. Let me also express my deep appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report (A/73/898), which contains important conclusions and recommendations, as well as an evaluation of the efforts of the international community to put an end to atrocities and to ensure the obligation of Member States towards accountability and the rule of law.

I also commend the important role of the Group of Friends on the Responsibility to Protect (R2P), which we have the honour to co-chair with Denmark. We associate ourselves with the statement delivered today on behalf of the Group (see A/73/PV.93).

This third formal General Assembly meeting on R2P and the inclusion of R2P on its agenda reflect the progress in the international community's endorsement of that principle and its determination to prevent the crimes of genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing. We commend the role of the General Assembly in developing the principle of R2P in accordance with the resolutions that have been adopted to ensure accountability for the perpetrators

of atrocities, as reflected in the creation of the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011, as well as the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar.

We believe that the commitment to implementing paragraphs 138 and 139 of the 2005 World Summit Outcome document is critically important to preventing atrocities by relying on the three pillars of this principle, with the aim of assisting States in shouldering their responsibility to protect their population, the responsibility of the international community to provide assistance and the options available to respond to the needs of protection in a timely and decisive manner. It is therefore necessary for prevention to take the lead in multilateral international efforts to prevent atrocities.

Despite the progress made in operationalizing the principle of R2P, there is still an increasing need to bolster the commitment to protecting the vulnerable and to translating early warning into decisive action, as part of the principle of prevention. It is also necessary for national and international efforts to come together in order to address the causes that contribute to those atrocities, through respect for human rights, the rule of law, social justice and the prevention of hate speech, fighting extremism and achieving development. In that respect, I note the important role of the United Nations Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The successes achieved in operationalizing the principle of R2P require ending all kinds of discrimination based on gender, as well as involving women and organizations of the international community in the early-warning process, while using peacebuilding to create more coherent and inclusive societies. We take this opportunity to express our appreciation for all efforts undertaken by the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect.

In keeping with the State of Qatar's commitment to international cooperation for achieving collective security and with our policies and ongoing efforts to curb grave violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, we have continued to work as an effective member of the Group of Friends of R2P in order to bolster this noble principle.

The focal point appointed by the Government of the State of Qatar for R2P has continued to

effectively coordinate with its counterparts in the States members of the Group. In that connection, in April 2017 Doha hosted the seventh annual meeting of the Global Network of R2P Focal Points. In January 2017, Doha also hosted a meeting to take up the issue of accountability as a means to prevent atrocities, as well as the role of R2P in combating violent extremism, in cooperation with the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, the participation of the States members of the Gulf Cooperation Council and the joint Office of the United Nations Special Advisers on the Prevention of Genocide and on R2P, as well as the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force and a number of governmental organizations. In that context, the Center for Conflict and Humanitarian Studies at the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies has undertaken an important role in bolstering the principle of R2P and respecting humanitarian law and human rights.

In conclusion, this formal meeting of the General Assembly sends a very clear message that the international community is determined to protect civilians, confront atrocities decisively, end impunity and hold those responsible for such crimes accountable. The State of Qatar will continue to cooperate with the international community to ensure respect for international law and human rights as well as maintenance of international peace and security.

Mrs. Vives Balmaña (Andorra) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the President for convening these meetings on the responsibility to protect. I also welcome the publication of the report of the Secretary-General entitled “Responsibility to protect: lessons learned for prevention” (A/73/898), as well as its analysis, conclusions and recommendations aimed at influencing the implementation of the outcome of the 2005 World Summit based on experience acquired since then.

In the face of crimes of atrocity, the range of issues to be considered is broad. The responsibility to protect against the most serious crimes means that accountability and the exercise of justice as reparation are unavoidable keys to responding to the victims of these crimes. Accordingly, at the international community level, the role played by the International Criminal Court is of indispensable value.

As in so many other aspects, there are opposing forces in this area. On the one hand, as the report reminds us, important institutional and strategic advances are being made by States, at the regional

level and in civil society. On the other hand, despite the need for the international community to be prepared to respond to such challenges, multilateralism can be weakened by a lack of commitment. Undoubtedly, the international community must be strengthened so as to prevent atrocious crimes. At the United Nations, Andorra has supported and continues to support the French-Mexican initiative to refrain from using the veto in the Security Council in such cases, as well as the code of conduct of the Accountability, Coherency and Transparency group.

In this regard, we would like concretely to emphasize the value of education in prevention. In order to achieve societies capable of creating and managing imaginations and relationships, of developing themselves with respect to and in recognition of the potential of each individual and in training them for world citizenship, it is necessary to have focus on the educational dimension, so that it is appropriate and adapted to circumstances and that it has an impact on values. Education is one of the earliest forms of prevention as it can guarantee values-based attitudes and behaviours as well as a critical sense in conflict situations. Through UNESCO, the United Nations agency for education and culture, working with all Member States, the Organization has a wide range of resources that can be applied not only for students in the school setting but throughout life. As for my country, Andorra, we give, as part of our policy of international cooperation, our financial support to actions that promote and develop education.

The report of the Secretary-General also highlights how regional organizations play a role in spreading political ideas that lead to good practices. One example is the programme being developed by the Council of Europe, “Education for democratic citizenship”, which is an initiative sponsored by Andorra and falls within the framework of Sustainable Development Goal 4.7, which focuses on education for global citizenship. This programme considers values, attitudes, skills and critical understanding, while teaching conflict resolution and the art of mediation starting from childhood. Through inclusive education, the necessary skills for the appreciation of the richness of diversity are taught so that hate speech is seen as totally unacceptable.

If cultural heritages are respected and valued, no one can claim superiority over others. In this regard, the Secretary-General’s Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech is very timely and necessary. To achieve these objectives, the root causes of such atrocities as

discrimination and inequality must be identified. Knowing how they occur and, no less important, how they are perceived, provide the guidelines for creating specific programmes and call for the active participation of communities, so that none is left out.

States, and indeed the whole world, count on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals as a practical guide to shaping their policies. Although innovation is often more easily associated with science- and technology-related objectives, innovative social initiatives are necessary for developing mechanisms and attitudes that foster such values as solidarity and cooperation, for incorporating constructive relationships and facilitating reconciliation. These approaches will be solid if they are based on well-tested foundation of human rights, which is a pillar of the United Nations. It is up to none other than us.

Mrs. Koçyiğit Grba (Turkey): At a time when atrocities committed in various corners of the world persist in causing unprecedented human suffering, it is essential for the international community to continue to address the issue of preventing the occurrence of such crimes. In this respect, we welcome the inclusion of agenda item 168, “The responsibility to protect and the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity”, on the formal agenda of the General Assembly again this session.

We thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive annual report on the responsibility to protect, this year entitled “Responsibility to protect: lessons learned for prevention” (A/73/898), which constitutes a solid basis for our deliberations today. We also welcome the appointment of Ms. Karen Smith as the new Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on the Responsibility to Protect.

At the 2005 World Summit, Member States made a landmark commitment on their responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. The Secretary-General’s report highlights the growing gap between our words of commitment and the experience of protecting vulnerable populations around the world. It is clear that civilians are the ones that pay the highest price when Member States fail to uphold their responsibility to protect. In order to prevent and alleviate this immense human suffering, the international community needs to

consider efficient ways and means to narrow the gap between its commitments and actions.

In his report, the Secretary-General elaborates on the role of the individual States and the engagement of the international community in response to the occurrence or risk or occurrence of atrocity crimes by taking timely and sustained action. We appreciate his recommendations and conclusions to this end.

In this context, the report cites guarantees of non-recurrence, which involves addressing historic cases of atrocity crimes, as one of the principal areas to focus on to facilitate prevention of such crimes. We believe that in order to establish the truth and build mutual understanding, cases should be studied, taking into account all their aspects, including their legal dimension and historical background. In so doing, it is essential that we proceed through dialogue, on the basis of the cooperation and engagement of all parties, including with the help of such platforms as joint historical commissions. As rightly stated in the report, we should respect diversity and peacefulness by emphasizing different perspectives.

We also find it important that addressing hate speech is included in the report as the first example of an early action. Countering hate speech and bringing perpetrators of hate crimes to justice is a collective responsibility of States, communities and the private sector. We acknowledge the development of the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech that was launched last week by the Secretary-General as an important step forward and support his active stance on this issue.

The responsibility to protect has yet to be considered an established norm of international law, and its scope and implementation need to be defined and refined. The efforts in that regard should not be carried out in a way that reinterprets or renegotiates the well-established principles of international law and the existing legal framework. Crimes of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity are well-defined legal concepts. We should implement the relevant legal framework faithfully and consistently. We should also bear in mind that the concept of the responsibility to protect seeks to establish a delicate balance between safeguarding the humanitarian concerns of the international community while respecting the principle of national sovereignty. Pursuing a non-selective approach vis-à-vis the

implementation of the concept is relevant if we are to achieve the widest possible consensus among the membership on this important issue.

We welcome the Secretary-General's approach, which has a central focus on prevention. Indeed, prevention is one of the most effective instruments in our toolbox. Turkey believes that preventive policies and mediation efforts should play a more prominent role. In that understanding, Turkey pioneers mediation efforts not only in the United Nations but also through regional and bilateral initiatives. When efforts aimed at prevention do not succeed, United Nations organs, including the Security Council, must remain ready to assume their responsibilities as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. We hope that the discussions on the responsibility to protect and its implementation will also contribute to the efforts aimed at restraining the use of the veto in the Security Council where crimes against humanity and the crime of genocide are concerned.

Before concluding, I would like to underscore that ensuring accountability for crimes that have been committed should also be an indispensable component of our discussions. Accountability is essential not only to avoiding impunity and delivering justice but also to preventing the recurrence of atrocities in the future.

Mr. Camilleri (Malta): In 2005, we all agreed that something must be done in order to protect populations from genocide, ethnic cleansing, crimes against humanity and war crimes. However, despite that commitment, thousands of people are still victims of atrocities committed by their own Governments, the very same Governments that are responsible for their protection. Malta welcomes the inclusion of the responsibility to protect on the formal agenda of the General Assembly and hopes that these discussions will allow us to continue to build on what has been achieved so far. We also welcome the appointment of Ms. Karen Smith as the new Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Responsibility to Protect and thank Mr. Adama Dieng for his work as Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide.

Malta fully aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier today by the observer of the European Union (see A/73/PV.93) and would like to make a few comments in its national capacity.

In recent years we have seen reports of attacks on schools, medical facilities, civilian infrastructure and the use of chemical weapons. Such actions are

completely unacceptable and constitute a serious violation of international law and international humanitarian law. As we have seen far too often throughout history, the effects of war loom long after the fighting has ended. It can take years to rebuild infrastructure; it can take decades for the environment to regenerate; and it can take generations for wounds that result from the deliberate targeting of ethnic groups to heal. Ensuring accountability for atrocity crimes is of fundamental importance.

Every year, thousands of people in different parts of the world are forced to leave their homes and embark on dangerous journeys in the hope of finding normality and dignity. It is our duty to help and protect people who feel the need to undertake such journeys in the hope of finding a peaceful and secure place for their families. However, in doing so, we cannot forget the root causes that are forcing them to take such drastic action or the social and economic strain that forced displacement can have on regional stability and international security.

In his report (A/73/898), the Secretary-General underlines the importance of having effective early warning and early action systems, while a recent World Bank report shows that for every dollar spent on prevention, up to \$7 can be saved in the long term. Civil society, regional and subregional organizations have a crucial role to play in that regard and closer cooperation with the United Nations can help to identify risks at a much earlier stage.

To ensure that existing tools for action are not encumbered with bureaucracy and hindered by rhetoric, a more proactive approach is warranted. While States have the fundamental responsibility for protecting their own citizens, the international community cannot afford to look the other way when faced with genocide, ethnic cleansing, crimes against humanity and war crimes. In failing to show a determined and united front, we will fail not only our forefathers, who strived to ensure that we did not relive the atrocities that they had to witness, but also future generations, who will wonder how we managed to say so much, yet stand so still when faced with such horrific events.

Ms. Prizreni (Albania): Albania aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union (see A/73/PV.93). I would like to add the following remarks in my national capacity.

Albania congratulates the General Assembly on its widespread support for the principle of the

responsibility to protect (R2P) and on having a formal plenary meeting on the responsibility to protect and the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, reaffirming that there is a great need to address the increasing number of contemporary atrocity situations around the world. I would also like to reiterate what I said on behalf of my delegation at last year's meeting (see A/72/PV.105), namely, that R2P should be a standing item on the General Assembly agenda.

Albania would also like to encourage the members of the Security Council to have an open debate on the responsibility to protect, as well as to include the issue in the briefings of the Special Advisers to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide and on the Responsibility to Protect with regard to early warning of situations where populations are at risk of war crimes, genocide, ethnic cleansing or crimes against humanity. Albania also call for the appropriate use of diplomatic and other means to implement R2P and early prevention.

Furthermore, my country welcomes the eleventh report of the Secretary-General on R2P (A/73/898) and its focus on prevention. We consider it a call to the international community to do more to help States as they address weaknesses in their capacity to prevent atrocities, including through assistance for more effective holistic prevention policies.

Albania is a supporter of R2P and the implementation of its three pillars and its operationalization. We appointed a focal point for R2P within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Albania. The role provides for the promotion of R2P at the national level and support for international cooperation through participation in the Global Network of R2P Focal Points. The focal point also shares information and coordinates the institutions on conceptual issues of the three pillars of the responsibility to protect and its challenges, such as State responsibility and prevention, within the national context. Furthermore, the focal point assesses the requirement for the development of a national plan of action on R2P, including with regard to awareness, risk assessment, capacity-building, early warning, monitoring and the identification of institutional structures to implement R2P in practice and ensure early prevention and of the capacities needed at a central level to prevent mass atrocities and their role in early prevention.

Albania also recognizes the added value of women in conflict prevention. In September 2018, the Albanian Government therefore adopted its first national action plan for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). The action plan aims to integrate the gender perspective into our national, foreign and security policies, providing a comprehensive legal framework to promote and increase women's participation in political and public life, as well as in the security sector.

Attention has been paid to mainstreaming a gender-sensitive approach in the training of civil, police and military personnel, with a special focus on prevention. In that regard, I would also like to praise the spirit of the first two Albanian female peacekeepers in South Sudan, Viola Hoxha and Valentina Korbi, who believe that their mission is to help others in facilitating the establishment of contacts with the local female population, developing their capacities and making them relevant to society.

Human Rights Council resolution A/HRC/38/18 recognizes the contribution that the Human Rights Council makes to the prevention of human rights violations, including through dialogue and cooperation and by responding promptly to human rights emergencies. Furthermore, the resolution emphasizes that development, peace and security and human rights are interlinked and mutually reinforcing. In other words, it emphasizes that long-term peace and sustainable development are not possible where human rights are violated, particularly without the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 16. In that regard, the further strengthening of links between the Human Rights Council and the Security Council regarding early warning and early action are very necessary. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the chairs of fact-finding missions and commissions of inquiry should participate in Security Council briefings, as required.

To that end, I would like to emphasize the conclusion of the Secretary-General's report with regard to the fact that, in upholding their primary responsibility to protect, States can implement measures to strengthen their national resilience to atrocities. We can assist each other in implementing initiatives aimed at reducing atrocity risks and we all can do more to consistently translate early warning into early preventive action.

Mr. Colaço Pinto Machado (Portugal): It is with great pleasure that I address the General Assembly on behalf of Portugal on this topic of the utmost importance as a universal principle to all States.

We are fully aligned with the statement delivered this morning by the observer of the European Union (see A/73/PV.93), and I would like to add some remarks in my national capacity.

Let me first thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/73/898) and praise his commitment to advancing the responsibility to protect (R2P). Portugal embraces the collective responsibility to support States in implementing initiatives to reduce the risk of atrocity crimes and to translate early warning into early preventive action.

We also take this opportunity to reaffirm our full support for the United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect, and welcome the appointment of Ms. Karen Smith as the new Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on R2P.

The responsibility to protect cannot be understood only as an international issue where the responsibility belongs to the international community. In fact, the primary role of prevention and protection of the population against atrocity crimes belongs to States.

Portugal views the responsibility to protect as a humanitarian commitment of States towards their peoples and the international community. The effectiveness of the principle is dependent primarily on the political will to prevent, to raise awareness, to promote debate and to find solutions to ongoing atrocity crimes.

Emphasis should be placed on early prevention action. That includes addressing socioeconomic inequalities, promoting the rule of law, ensuring access to education, ensuring strong democratic institutions and the sharing of political power, addressing ethnic mistrust and violence, implementing economic policies focused on sustainable development and preserving natural resources and their fair use.

The Security Council has a critical role in enforcing the responsibility to protect in situations where prevention has failed and the population is already in danger. In such cases, the Security Council has in principle a responsibility to act, including by authorizing the use of force under Chapter VII of the

Charter of the United Nations and the relevant rules of international humanitarian law.

However, there are no clear guidelines for such situations. Governments have agreed to discuss the issue on a case-by-case basis. That favours inconsistency. In certain situations R2P is not invoked despite evidence of atrocity crimes being committed and the Government authorities being unwilling or unable to act. Such inconsistency ultimately weakens the relevance of the responsibility to protect and its tools.

One way to make the responsibility to protect more effective would be to further explore and reinforce its interconnection with the responsibility of States for internationally wrongful acts. The responsibility to protect their population is an obligation of States under international law, which results from human rights conventions and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. An act or omission of a State in the fulfilment of those obligations is a wrongful act that entails the State's international responsibility with all related legal consequences.

In our view, highlighting and enhancing the connection between R2P and the responsibility of States would bring more clarity and enforcement to the responsibility of States to protect. Adopting the 2001 articles on responsibility of States for internationally wrongful acts as an international convention would certainly contribute to that goal.

The United Nations has an important role to play in developing R2P and its tools to prevent and act in situations where atrocity crimes are being committed. However, we should not forget that the primary responsibility rests with States.

Mr. Bin Momen (Bangladesh): Let me begin by thanking the President through you, Sir, for convening this important plenary meeting today, which marks the third General Assembly debate on the responsibility to protect (R2P). We align our statement with the statement made this morning by the representative of Denmark on behalf of the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect (see A/73/PV.93). We welcome the appointment of Ms. Karen Smith as Special Adviser on R2P and appreciate the efforts of Mr. Adama Dieng, Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide.

Bangladesh welcomes the inclusion of the responsibility to protect and the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against

humanity on the formal agenda of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session and support its inclusion as a standing item on the General Assembly agenda.

The discussions this morning were indicative of the possible synergies and complementarities among the United Nations humanitarian response, sustainable development agenda, peacekeeping and sustaining peace initiatives towards atrocity prevention. There is evident scope for better utilizing the various human rights institutional mechanisms for supporting evidence-based risk assessment, early warning and mitigation measures.

As a troop-contributing country, Bangladesh underscores the importance of clear and achievable mandates for the protection of civilians by peacekeeping missions and the provision of the corresponding resources and capacity. We would like to report that Bangladesh is participating in five of the eight current United Nations missions that have a protection of civilians mandate. We also maintain our in-principle support for a possible suspension of the veto in the case of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing or crimes against humanity.

Bangladesh has always been supportive of the Secretary-General's clear-sighted approach to place atrocity prevention as the centrepiece of his prevention agenda, elaborated in his reports. We agree with the Secretary-General that the Security Council should collectively reflect on its role in atrocity prevention. We also appreciate the suggested roles of the international community that the Secretary-General has mentioned in his 2019 report (A/73/898) on addressing hate speech, providing support to national authorities in strengthening their capacity to prevent atrocity crimes, humanitarian action to help address the indirect effect of atrocity crimes, engagement with religious leaders and actors and providing support to local human rights organizations and to women's and youth groups, et cetera.

There is a debate about whether it is possible to effectively implement the principles of responsibility to protect in view of the suffering of millions of people from atrocity crimes. As we take stock of prevention of atrocity crime since global leaders adopted this principle in 2005, we have not seen much success in prevention of genocides, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. I would like to emphasize that the failure of our R2P is not in its principles, but in

the States that unwilling to live up to their commitment to civilian protection. The plight of the Rohingya in Myanmar is a case in point.

There is no denying that what has happened, namely, the violence against Rohingya population, is not new; neither was it a surprise. It is abundantly clear that international crimes were committed in Myanmar. Rohingya Muslims have been killed, tortured, raped, burned alive and humiliated solely because of who they are. The international community has been in agreement that the targeted ethnic cleansing of the Rohingya in fact took place. Indeed, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights labelled it as a textbook example of ethnic cleansing.

With the availability of technological and other resources, early warning is rarely the problem. However, United Nations mechanisms in Myanmar could not provide early warning, as the problem was even bigger. Surprisingly, it was not the lack of warning, but the lack of a timely response that was the problem. Very recently, we have come to know in detail from the Rosenthal report why and where the United Nations failed.

We strongly suggest that accountability for the crimes that have been committed is necessary. I urge the international community, in particular the Security Council, to consider different accountability options. The world needs to show that it is not ready to tolerate such barbaric acts. Unfortunately, we have not yet seen any determined commitment of the international community to compel Myanmar to admit its responsibility to protect populations from atrocity crimes in Myanmar, nor have we seen any serious efforts of countries that matter to come forward with support as mentioned in Pillar Two of the R2P principles.

There has been a great deal of talk, as there always is, condemning actions, making expectations clear, expressing alarm, welcoming cooperation and so on. We all know the Government of Myanmar failed in all aspects. It failed to protect its own people. It failed to implement fully the recommendations of the Rakhine Advisory Commission's road map. It failed to totally cooperate at the bilateral level or with the international community, the Special Rapporteur, the Secretary-General's Special Envoy and the United Nations Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar.

On the other hand, we all collectively failed to act in a timely and decisive manner. We helplessly observed the Rohingya fleeing persecution and atrocity crimes. Without the bold leadership demonstrated by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina — also popularly known as the Mother of Humanity for her generosity — these persecuted people had nowhere to turn. In this regard, let me read from the report entitled “A Brief and Independent Inquiry into the Involvement of the United Nations in Myanmar from 2010 to 2018” by Mr. Gert Rosenthal, which has been shared with the Assembly:

“It must also be said that the collective membership of the United Nations, represented by the Security Council, bears part of that responsibility, by not providing enough support to the Secretariat when such backing was and continues to be essential. If there is one single action that might have altered the course of events in Myanmar it would have been the timely and impartial presence in Rakhine state of some type of United Nations observatory that would offer a measure of confidence to the oppressed minorities that their basic human rights would be respected, and that the root causes that led to their forced emigration would be addressed by the national authorities.”

Despite our failure to prevent atrocities in Myanmar, we firmly believe that we still have the opportunity to compensate. Moving forward, the international community, led by the United Nations, while needing to recommit to its goals of atrocity prevention, may look into the possibility of exploring the remaining options in pillar III of the R2P principles.

Let me reaffirm our commitment in this Hall and before the Assembly that despite clear and visible social and economic constraints and the environmental impact that the influx of Rohingya has been placing on the Cox’s Bazar area and the host communities in Bangladesh, we will continue to protect and support them until their voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable return to Myanmar. We must not fail the Rohingya population. The solution to this problem lies first and foremost in the Myanmar authorities, who will have to resolve it by creating conditions conducive for the Rohingya population to return home in safety.

The international community also has a responsibility to protect this population from the risk of further atrocity crimes. Under present conditions, returning to Myanmar will put the Rohingya population

at risk of further crimes. However, accepting the current status quo would be a victory for those who planned and carried out the attacks in the first place. We must not accept either of these scenarios.

Mr. Kadiri (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): First of all, I would like to thank the President for organizing this formal debate of the General Assembly on the responsibility to protect, the third since 2009. Indeed, the inclusion of the responsibility to protect on the official agenda of the United Nations over the past two years reflects the strong interest of Member States in sharing ideas and good practices in this area, including the collective power to improve the international community’s capacity to prevent genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing.

My delegation takes note of the latest report of the Secretary-General (A/73/898), entitled “Responsibility to protect: lessons learned for prevention”, which pays particular attention to prevention and early warning and action, and recognizes that the responsibility to protect is a key element of this important process.

It is clear that the international community has come a long way in the field of protection, both in terms of peacekeeping, respect for and promotion of human rights, democracy and the rule of law, and in terms of preventing atrocities. Accordingly, this debate offers Member States an important opportunity to share their experiences, good practices and effective strategies to prevent atrocities. In addition, it is important to reiterate that the responsibility to protect involves the State and its institutions. The various components of society must have a code of ethics aimed at promoting tolerance and coexistence and promoting intercultural and interreligious dialogue. Allow me to point out that nearly one third of Member States, including the Kingdom of Morocco, have appointed a national focal point on the responsibility to protect, making this global network the largest governmental network dedicated to the prevention of mass atrocities.

I would now like to express my delegation’s view on the following points. First, we recall the intersecting relationship between the three pillars of the responsibility to protect and reiterate that the third is primarily the responsibility of States. Nevertheless, it must be noted that in times of conflict, the capacities of these States may be insufficient or even non-existent. In these cases, the international community can support them by building their capacities by providing them with

the necessary means to protect their own populations. This can be achieved, in particular, by strengthening legal instruments and consolidating democracy and the rule of law. Capacity-building for technical assistance is indeed an important preventive measure.

Secondly, States are required to fulfil their obligations to combat impunity, as well as to conduct full investigations and prosecute anyone responsible for mass atrocity crimes in order to prevent their recurrence. In this sense, national accountability efforts must be encouraged and supported, in particular by strengthening judicial cooperation among States.

Thirdly, we encourage the various United Nations bodies to make better use of the instruments at their disposal, to act in a timely and decisive manner to prevent mass atrocities and strengthen international accountability. Important mechanisms such as the Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) are well placed to support prevention efforts. We encourage Member States to make better use of the UPR process as a preventive mechanism.

Finally, we believe that it would be desirable to favour a preventive approach in order to assess

threats and coordinate actions while avoiding any degradation of the situation in question. The preventive dimension can be developed through capacity-building in the countries concerned, respect for the rule of law, ensuring good governance, entrenching the culture of human rights and setting up early-warning mechanisms to detect pre-conflict situations and avoid their transformation into open and deadly confrontations.

In conclusion, the Kingdom of Morocco shares the Secretary-General's firm conviction that the responsibility to protect necessarily implies the strengthening of democracy and the rule of law as well as the implementation of provisions of international humanitarian law and human rights law. Morocco supports the Secretary-General in his efforts aimed at promoting peace, security, conflict prevention and the peaceful settlement of disputes, as well as the development and respect for human rights.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): We have heard the last speaker in the debate for this meeting. We shall hear the remaining speakers tomorrow morning at 10 a.m. here in the Hall.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.