



# General Assembly

Seventy-fifth session

**64<sup>th</sup>** plenary meeting  
Monday, 17 May 2021, 10 a.m.  
New York

Official Records

*President:* Mr. Bozkir ..... (Turkey)

*The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.*

## Agenda item 135

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

#### Report of the Secretary-General (A/75/863)

#### Draft resolution (A/75/L.82)

**The President:** I will make my opening statement from the rostrum.

In this seventy-fifth year of the United Nations, we often reflect on the history of the Organization. In doing so, it is critical that we learn from our past failures, such as in Rwanda and Srebrenica. Those were places of collective failures — the kinds of tragedies that the United Nations was created to prevent. Even many decades after the creation of the United Nations, there is still a clear gap between the existing obligations of Member States on international humanitarian law and human rights law and the reality for populations at risk of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

The responsibility to protect agenda, which was unanimously adopted at the World Summit in 2005, provides the international community with a critical tool for building peace, prioritizing prevention and protecting populations. Of course, the responsibility to protect is not a one-size-fits-all solution. The worst forms of crimes continue to be committed with far-reaching and enduring ramifications. Today, more

than 80 million of the people whom we are duty-bound to serve are forcibly displaced. I met with some of them when I visited Hatay, on the Syrian border, last month. Next week I will travel to Cox's Bazar to hear from refugees there and from the host country that has generously opened its arms to them.

In the past year alone, vulnerable populations have been exposed to heightened risks of serious human rights violations and other crimes behind the veil of the coronavirus disease pandemic. There has been a marked increase in stigmatization and hate speech at a time when we should be demonstrating solidarity against that shared challenge. That intolerance has persisted throughout the pandemic, with a particularly worrying trend of increased incitement and violence aimed at national, ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities. Let us not forget that our responsibility to others is in effect a responsibility to ourselves and to the community of humankind of which we are part. Throughout the coronavirus pandemic, we have seen the importance of protection and prevention in a different form, and have understood that by protecting others, we ultimately protect ourselves and the community at large.

I call on all Member States to take measures to protect their populations, while paying particular attention to the challenges facing the most vulnerable groups and the marginalized. The General Assembly will continue working for the universal implementation of human rights. Right now, we need the political will of all Member States if we are to stop atrocities from taking place. All States must assist one another, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations,

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>).

21-12110 (E)



Accessible document

Please recycle



international law and the responsibility to protect, when national authorities manifestly fail in their protection responsibilities.

I also want to take this opportunity to echo the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire. The flagrant disregard for international humanitarian law and human rights law by both State and non-State actors is beyond the pale. The weaponization of food, sexual and gender-based violence, the deliberate targeting of schools and hospitals and the destruction of religious sites are unacceptable. At a time of universal suffering, such things are unimaginably cruel, and yet they continue. There is no backstop. It is our responsibility to protect civilians, stop hate speech when it is first uttered, protect and uphold the rights of every individual without distinction, condemn incitement, harassment and violence against individuals or communities, take timely and effective steps to protect communities that are under the threat of mass atrocities, prevent future acts of genocide and ensure accountability and justice.

I am very grateful to the Assembly and wish everyone the best in our endeavours today and tomorrow.

In accordance with rule 70 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, I now give the floor to Ambassador Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti, Chef de Cabinet of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, to make a statement on behalf of the Secretary-General.

**Ms. Viotti:** I welcome today's formal debate in the General Assembly on the responsibility to protect and the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. Over the years, this forum has enhanced our shared understanding and sharpened strategies for preventing atrocity crimes and protecting vulnerable populations. Yet it is clear that much remains to be done to fulfil the promise made in the 2005 World Summit outcome document regarding the protection of those in need and under threat (resolution 60/1). The coronavirus disease pandemic has further exacerbated the perils facing the most vulnerable and marginalized populations around the world, while revealing and aggravating existing inequalities in patterns of discrimination. Women, minorities, older persons, young people, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, migrants and refugees have suffered disproportionately. This year's debate is taking place when the need for strengthened efforts

to prevent genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity is stronger than ever.

An assault on human rights around the globe continues to gather force. Violations and impunity for past crimes persist. Hate speech, incitement, exclusion and discrimination are growing, fuelled by a dramatic rise in disinformation and misinformation. Against that backdrop, last year we marked the fifteenth anniversary of the Assembly's unanimous adoption of commitments on the responsibility to protect. Member States accepted three interlinked responsibilities, set out in clear terms in the World Summit outcome document. First, States accepted that they have the primary responsibility to protect their populations. Secondly, they established the international community's parallel commitment to assisting States in discharging that primary responsibility. Thirdly, they declared the international community's responsibility to protect when States manifestly fail to protect their own populations, including taking collective action through the United Nations and in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

As the Secretary-General emphasized in his 2020 statement, "human protection begins with prevention". His 2020 call to action for human rights recognizes that link and provides a framework for putting human rights and the people-centred approach at the core of our work. Prevention is the cornerstone of the agenda for the responsibility to protect and is at the heart of the mission of the United Nations to address the drivers of conflict, reduce human suffering, ensure equality for women and girls, counter racism and discrimination and protect minorities, indigenous peoples and other at-risk and vulnerable groups.

Successive reports of the Secretary-General on the responsibility to protect have reflected on opportunities to strengthen national and international strategies for prevention and protection. That has included a focus on the role of regional and subregional organizations, lessons learned, best practices, accountability, the role of women in atrocity prevention and the values of diversity and inclusion, as well as mechanisms for strengthening early warning and conflict prevention.

This year, the report of the Secretary-General (A/75/863) focuses on the role of the United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect in operationalizing the principle and advancing the prevention of atrocities. The Office, in coordination

with other United Nations entities, supports Member States, grassroots and civil-society actors and regional and subregional organizations in assessing and addressing existing vulnerabilities in order to mitigate the risk of atrocity crimes. Prioritizing prevention and early action enables the consideration of a wider range of preventive measures and sustainable cooperation at all levels. We must continue to work to overcome differences, forge mutual understanding and establish stronger support for the responsibility to protect as a key tool of protection and prevention. Let us send a strong signal of our collective commitment to prioritizing the protection of those at risk of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, in accordance with the solemn pledge adopted in 2005.

**The President:** I thank Ms. Viotti for her statement on behalf of the Secretary-General.

I now give the floor to the representative of Croatia to introduce draft resolution A/75/L.82.

**Mr. Šimonović (Croatia):** I thank Ms. Viotti for her inspirational remarks and for her commitment to the prevention of atrocity crimes and the protection of populations.

I have the honour and privilege to introduce draft resolution A/75/L.82, entitled “The responsibility to protect and the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity”. It is being submitted on behalf the core group of countries, consisting of Belgium, Botswana, Costa Rica, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Guatemala, Luxembourg, Morocco, Qatar, the Republic of Korea, Romania, Rwanda and my own country, Croatia. In addition to the sponsors listed in document A/75/L.82, as well as additional sponsors, 76 Member States have so far become sponsors of the draft resolution before the Assembly.

The responsibility to protect (R2P) was unanimously adopted at the World Summit in 2005, the largest gathering of Heads of State and Government in history. Paragraph 139 of the World Summit outcome document (resolution 60/1) commits States to continued consideration of the responsibility to protect within the General Assembly. That commitment was reiterated in the Assembly’s 2009 resolution on R2P (resolution 63/308), adopted following the first formal debate on the subject earlier that year. Between 2010 and 2017, the General Assembly held eight informal interactive dialogues on the topic. From the seventy-second session

onwards, the members of the General Assembly have overwhelmingly supported the inclusion of R2P on its agenda, and formal debates were held in 2018 and 2019. The 2020 formal debate had to be postponed because of circumstances related to the coronavirus disease pandemic.

The Secretary-General, concerned about the scale of atrocity crimes, encouraged the General Assembly to put R2P on the Assembly’s agenda in his reports of August 2017 (A/71/1016), entitled “Implementing the responsibility to protect: accountability for prevention”, and June 2018 (A/72/884), entitled “Responsibility to protect: From early warning to early action”. The aim of this short and procedural draft resolution is to do just that — to include R2P on the annual agenda of the General Assembly, as well as to request the Secretary-General to report annually to the Assembly on the subject. The Secretary-General should include in his future reports assessments of the implementation of the recommendations contained in his previous reports, as well as assessments of the risk of atrocity crimes and the responses of United Nations actors. The recommendations of the report should provide clear, action-oriented guidance on how to improve the prevention of atrocity crimes.

We believe that having R2P on the Assembly’s annual agenda, as well as mandatory annual reports by the Secretary-General, will help to further the dialogue among Member States on how to prevent genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and ethnic cleansing more efficiently. This draft resolution ensures that we will benefit from the formalization and regularization of reports and discussions. However, it does not preclude complementing formal discussions with additional informal exchanges, when useful. In that way, we can combine a serious, structured dialogue with flexibility.

I hope that the draft resolution will help us to improve prevention. It provides opportunities for a serious and structured dialogue on how to achieve that. It is what the peoples of the world expect from us. Its successful adoption will therefore send a very powerful message of hope. The presentation of the draft resolution at the informal consultations on 20 April and our numerous bilateral conversations have confirmed Member States’ great interest in having R2P on the General Assembly’s annual agenda, as well as mandated annual reports by the Secretary-General. Delegations have had ample time to put forward proposals, and all those that did

so during the informal consultations on 20 April were consulted in order to find the broadest possible agreement on the text, which the high number of cross-regional sponsors of the draft resolution reflects.

The prevention of atrocity crimes is one of the main tasks of the United Nations, reflecting the core values of its Charter. I therefore invite all delegations to support and vote in favour of draft resolution A/75/L.82.

**Mr. Carazo** (Costa Rica): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of Argentina, Australia, Bangladesh, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Canada, Chile, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, the European Union, Finland, France, Germany, Ghana, Guatemala, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Mali, Marshall Islands, Mexico, Morocco, Mozambique, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Panama, Peru, Qatar, the Republic of Korea, Rwanda, Romania, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Sudan, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tanzania, the United Kingdom, the United States, Uruguay and my own country, Costa Rica. They are all members of the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect, which is chaired by Botswana, Costa Rica and Denmark.

Today marks the twelfth year that the General Assembly is gathering to discuss how to implement the responsibility to protect and the fourth time in the format of a formal debate. This year's debate is taking place at an unprecedented time amid a deadly global pandemic, unparalleled in terms of human displacement and escalating levels of conflict and violence, as well as violations of international humanitarian law and human rights violations and abuses. The coronavirus disease pandemic has reinforced the fact that global problems require multilateral solutions and international law must be upheld.

Today's debate is important for reaffirming our collective commitment to the responsibility to protect and to improving our responses to populations at risk of atrocities. One way of doing that is by supporting draft resolution A/75/L.82, on the responsibility to protect and the prevention of genocide and war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, which the Assembly is considering today. We call on all Member States to vote in its favour when we take action on it.

Last year we celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the unanimous adoption of the concept of the

responsibility to protect at the 2005 World Summit. Since then, important progress has been achieved by Member States and other stakeholders, including civil society, in advancing the prevention of atrocities at the local, national, regional and international levels. International, regional and domestic actors have successfully created frameworks to identify triggers and risks, developed early-warning mechanisms and began to institutionalize prevention mechanisms and partnerships for atrocity prevention. Important intergovernmental networks, such as the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect in New York and Geneva and the Global Network of R2P Focal Points, continue to grow.

Within multilateral forums, the responsibility to protect continues to serve as a powerful call mobilizing action to prevent atrocities and address risks in specific country situations. Numerous Security Council, Human Rights Council and General Assembly resolutions now include references to States' responsibility to protect their populations. Last July, the Human Rights Council adopted resolution 44/14, its first thematic resolution on the responsibility to protect, thereby reflecting the growing institutionalization of the responsibility to protect and the attention to it across the United Nations system. Several Human Rights Council-mandated special rapporteurs and investigative mechanisms have used the Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes, developed by the United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect, to assess structural risk factors, particularly pervasive human rights violations that could result in atrocity crimes.

More recently, stakeholders have increasingly explored important linkages with other related agendas, including peacekeeping, peacebuilding, the protection of civilians, women and peace and security, sustaining peace, the Sustainable Development Goals, children and armed conflict, and youth and peace and security. Those United Nations protection agendas are complementary and mutually reinforcing, and their effective implementation contributes to upholding the responsibility to protect, and vice versa. In that context, we strongly support an inclusive approach to preventing atrocities. One such approach recognizes the critical role that women and young people can play in this area in early warning, peacebuilding, peacekeeping, capacity-building and the building of a more cohesive, tolerant and resilient society. Furthermore, we recognize that atrocities often include conflict-related sexual



violence. We welcomed last year's report on the role of women and the responsibility to protect (A/74/964), as well as the efforts by the United Nations, especially the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. Concrete steps should be taken to end all forms of gender inequality and related discrimination and violence and to empower women and girls as agents of change.

While we highlight the valuable progress that has been made, we must all recognize that the international community continues to fall short in upholding its collective responsibility to protect. Despite national and global efforts to better protect populations, as you mentioned earlier today, Mr. President, more than 80 million people are currently displaced as a result of conflict, persecution and atrocities and continue to require protection. When atrocity situations emerge or are ongoing, it is incumbent on multilateral institutions, notably the Security Council and Member States, to take timely and decisive action. That can include diplomatic measures, targeted sanctions and the review or suspension of military and trade agreements, among other measures. We call on all members of the Security Council to respond to and address the risk or the actual commission of mass atrocities, noting in that context the support that many Member States have voiced for the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency group's code of conduct and the French-Mexican initiative on veto restraint.

When the international community fails to prevent the commission of atrocities, we have to ensure that their perpetrators are held accountable. That is needed not only as a measure of justice for the victims but also in order to uphold international norms, prevent the recurrence of such crimes and encourage long-term peace and reconciliation. More often than not, structural impunity is a direct cause of and contributor to the commission of atrocity crimes. Impunity must be addressed comprehensively, including by measures that promote truth while seeking redress, reform and reconciliation for survivors and victims. Combating impunity and promoting justice and accountability are therefore key components of the responsibility to protect. We urge Member States to comply with their international legal obligations and to duly investigate and prosecute persons responsible for atrocity crimes. We encourage them to strengthen judicial cooperation in that regard. Domestic prosecution, based on universal jurisdiction, plays an important part in the fight

against impunity. Fact-finding missions, investigative mechanisms, commissions of inquiry and hybrid and international courts and tribunals, including the International Criminal Court, provide complementary avenues for ensuring accountability when and where options under domestic law prove insufficient.

Noting the topic of this year's report of the Secretary-General on the responsibility to protect (A/75/863), we would like to affirm our full support for the United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect. We encourage the Secretary-General's two Special Advisers on the Prevention of Genocide and on the Responsibility to Protect, respectively, to use their leadership roles to advance mass atrocity prevention, particularly in the current crises around the world. That includes ensuring constructive engagement and open dialogue with Member States while sharing their specialized expertise, raising awareness about the causes and dynamics of atrocity crimes and identifying measures that can be taken to prevent them.

We encourage the Office to update the Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes and develop additional technical guidance. We welcome the Office's statements on specific situations, thematic briefings and country analyses at various meetings, as well as the support that the Office provides to Member States and regional organizations. We urge the Special Advisers to strengthen those efforts and share their analysis with the wider United Nations membership and regularly provide the necessary early-warning assessments and recommendations on how to prevent atrocities, including to the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council.

We recognize that the pandemic has triggered increasing levels of hate speech and incitement to violence, which can heighten the risk of mass atrocities. We welcome the Office's release of the *Guidance Note on Addressing and Countering COVID-19 related Hate Speech*, under the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech, providing a pragmatic focus on upstream prevention in that regard. We also recognize the important role that national and international civil society can play in supporting the further advancement and implementation of the responsibility to protect. In particular, we would like to thank the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect for its invaluable work as secretariat of the Group of Friends, both in New York and in Geneva.

In conclusion, we reiterate our call to all Member States to support the draft resolution under consideration today. Its adoption will enable us to continue discussing how best to realize the historic pledge we made in 2005.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of the European Union, in its capacity as observer.

**Ms. Ekmektzoglou (European Union):** I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States.

At the 2005 World Summit, the States Members of the United Nations agreed unanimously on the international community's responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. It is a primary responsibility of individual Member States, but at the same time one that is shared by all of us. Progress has been made since then. However, much remains to be done and in the current global context, some of that progress risks being reversed. Today millions of people belonging to ethnic or religious groups are forcibly displaced, fleeing violence that targets them and that is often tolerated or, worse, orchestrated by State actors. In other cases, the systematic incarceration and repression of people belonging to certain ethnic or religious communities, as well as attacks on their cultural heritage, increasingly target their identity and can consequently constitute a threat to their right to exist as a group.

The European Union therefore welcomes this fourth formal debate on the responsibility to protect (R2P). As the world is undergoing a period of transformation through the coronavirus disease pandemic and the global response to it, we need a strengthened multilateralism that can deliver first and foremost for people in the most vulnerable situations, including those potentially threatened by atrocity crimes. As the Secretary-General's most recent report on the responsibility to protect (A/75/863) notes, the pandemic has exacerbated existing vulnerabilities and created new protection challenges. Conduct — such as stigmatization, hate speech, xenophobia, violence against minorities and violations and abuses of human rights in general — that creates conditions conducive to the perpetration of atrocities is on the rise. Moreover, increasing gender inequality is in itself linked to greater risks of increased patterns of violence and atrocity crimes. While we recover from the pandemic and aim to

build stronger and more resilient societies, continuing to operationalize the responsibility to protect also means tackling the underlying causes that can provide fertile ground for growing atrocity mindsets.

Prioritizing prevention, which the Secretary-General has termed as critical as ever, requires a holistic approach and a renewed emphasis on strengthening the global protection of human rights. Through the Action Plan for Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024, for example, we in the European Union work to combat intolerance, harassment and violence based on ethnic origin, religion or belief. The European Union's Framework Decision on combating racism and xenophobia criminalizes public incitement to violence and hatred, including online.

Just as strengthening the protection of and respect for human rights is critical as part of preventing atrocity crime, so too are gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. Working for the cause of women and peace and security, including by advocating for women's more meaningful participation in peace processes, United Nations peace operations and EU missions and operations, is one of the priorities of the EU-United Nations Strategic Partnership on Crisis Management.

We also have to learn from our past and act while we can. We cannot let geopolitical divisions be obstacles to the protection of people who testify to possible war crimes and crimes against humanity, extrajudicial killings or other serious human rights violations and abuses. Effective legal tools, policies and structures and the advancement of transitional justice can contribute to the prevention of mass atrocities. The European Network of contact points in respect of persons responsible for genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes contributes to ensuring close cooperation among national authorities when investigating and prosecuting genocide, crimes against humanity, ethnic cleansing and war crimes.

The EU also stands ready to assist countries regarding accountability for atrocity crimes, in line with the responsibility to protect. In that context, the EU's member States stress the important role and contribution of the International Criminal Court (ICC) as a key institution of international criminal justice. We actively promote the universality of the Rome Statute, and through our support for the ICC foster capacities for accountability and reconciliation, which are key

elements in ensuring the non-recurrence of crimes. We encourage the Security Council to carefully consider the possibility that the Rome Statute of the ICC offers of referring situations to the Prosecutor.

The responsibility to protect forms an integral part of EU foreign and security policy. As we said, prevention is a key priority. The EU and its member States use conflict-analysis tools and the EU early-warning system to identify R2P issues and work for early action. The EU's R2P and atrocity-prevention toolkit offers practical guidance on atrocity prevention to EU delegations, missions and operations and represents a concrete step towards integrating R2P into relevant activities on the ground. The EU supports the strengthening of early-warning and prevention mechanisms within the United Nations system and stands ready to provide support in that regard.

EU member States have also designated special focal points to advance the implementation of R2P in capitals and across administrations. The EU continues to be a strong supporter of the work of the two Special Advisers of the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide and the Responsibility to Protect and supports their joint Office politically but also very concretely, through financial assistance. We work closely with the Office, including to ensure capacity-training for EU delegations and EU member States. We welcome the report, as it provides a helpful summary of the important capacity-building done by the Office. We call on the Office and both Special Advisers to strengthen their efforts to assist United Nations members and United Nations organs with timely and concrete advice on emerging atrocity risks and recommendations on how to address them.

More than 15 years after the World Summit, the challenges of preventing atrocity crises remain real and present. It is incumbent on all of us, as the international community, to protect the peoples of the world. In that respect, we welcome initiatives aimed at ensuring that the Security Council is able to effectively prevent or act in situations of mass atrocities, including the French-Mexican initiative on the use of the veto in cases of mass atrocities. The EU and its member States, working together with the United Nations and partners around the globe, will continue to support effective and operational action on R2P at the United Nations. We therefore welcome draft resolution A/75/L.82, on the responsibility to protect and the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes

against humanity, which the Assembly is considering today. All the EU member States have sponsored it, and we call on all Member States to vote in favour when action is taken on it.

The European Union, born like the United Nations from the ashes of the Second World War, has the protection of people from such atrocities as its *raison d'être*. That is why we believe that until the day comes when we are collectively satisfied that we have achieved full protection from atrocity crimes for the people of the world, the General Assembly should continue considering R2P and its implementation as a standing item on its agenda.

**Mr. Hermann** (Denmark): It is my honour to speak on behalf of the Nordic countries — Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and of course my own country, Denmark.

Let me begin by saying that we reaffirm our firm commitment to the responsibility to protect (R2P) and to the implementation of its three pillars. We welcome today's debate as an opportunity to take stock of our ongoing efforts to implement the promise we all made in 2005. It is important that we in the Assembly exchange best practices on a regular basis but also discuss the challenges that we encounter in the context. This year, our debate is taking place at a time when protesters in various parts of the world are calling out to us for the implementation of R2P. We can see R2P being discussed on social media and painted on streets and signs during demonstrations. Each individual State has the responsibility to protect its population from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. As stressed in the World Summit outcome document (resolution 60/1), the international community, through the United Nations, has a responsibility to help protect populations from such crimes should their national authorities manifestly fail to do so.

This year's report of the Secretary-General (A/75/863) focuses on the role and work of the United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect. The report provides numerous examples from all regions on the important capacity-building work of the Office, as it shares its specialized expertise. The Nordic countries welcome the report and affirm their full support to the Office. We urge the Secretary-General's two Special Advisers on the Prevention of Genocide and the Responsibility to

Protect, and their Office, to strengthen their efforts to continue providing Member States and United Nations organs with concrete and timely advice on how to implement the responsibility to protect and its three pillars. That includes assessments of country situations and applies both to early warnings of atrocity crimes and effective means of response when they occur. We also encourage regular updates from the Office about its key initiatives regarding hate speech, the responsibility of social-media companies and the role of religious leaders and actors.

Practical examples will help increase our understanding on how to more effectively translate the R2P principle into concrete action and provide us with new opportunities to collaborate. This year's report reiterates the recommendation to consider an atrocity-prevention dimension in the Human Rights Council's mandate, as well as in its Universal Periodic Review. We support the recommendation and encourage the integration of R2P into international reports to human rights mechanisms, as well as into other interactions with the Geneva-based United Nations mechanisms. In that regard, we welcomed last week's first intersessional on R2P at the Human Rights Council, as it provided an opportunity to discuss how the responsibility to protect can be implemented through national human rights efforts and how the Human Rights Council matters in that context. We call for further steps in that direction.

The report rightly stresses the important role of accountability. We should recall that States have the primary responsibility to investigate and prosecute international crimes committed within their jurisdiction. The Nordic Governments also strongly support the International Criminal Court as our most important institutional development in the fight against impunity for genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. Ending impunity for atrocity crimes is key to realizing our commitment to the responsibility to protect.

We, the Nordic countries, are very aware that more can and should be done to protect populations at risk of atrocity crimes. As we hold our debate, in many countries men, women and children are suffering unimaginable atrocities, crimes that may pose a threat to international peace and security. When national authorities manifestly fail to protect their populations, we call on the Security Council to exercise its special role under the Charter of the United Nations and to take timely and decisive action to prevent or end atrocity

crimes. The Security Council members should regularly consult with the United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect and employ the United Nations Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes to help identify the upstream drivers of atrocity risks. Similarly, the Human Rights Council should strengthen the implementation of its prevention mandate so that we collectively improve our capacity to identify and address situations in countries in which atrocity crimes may be committed in the future.

At the end of today's debate, we will take action on draft resolution A/75/L.82, on R2P. We call on all States to support it, as its adoption will strengthen the Assembly's consideration of the responsibility to protect, as foreseen in the World Summit outcome document of 2005. As sponsors of the draft resolution, we firmly believe that it is part of the Assembly's responsibility to discuss once a year how we can deliver on our collective responsibility to protect our populations against atrocity crimes and how we can better deliver on our promise to "we the peoples".

**Mrs. Buenrostro Massieu** (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of France and my own country, Mexico.

States have the primary responsibility to protect their populations from genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing. That is not a question of political will but rather an obligation under international law, and therefore no action by the Security Council can replace that inherent obligation of sovereign States.

We welcome the report of the Secretary-General (A/75/863) and reiterate our full support for his two Special Advisers on the Prevention of Genocide and the Responsibility to Protect, respectively. Our collective priority must be to focus on putting into practice the political commitments on which the responsibility to protect is based, in full respect for international law, particularly the Charter of the United Nations. France and Mexico would like to highlight four priority areas in that regard.

First, we must strengthen our capacity for prevention. That can be done through a comprehensive and coherent approach, including the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the promotion of peacekeeping operations, the protection of civilians, the promotion of human rights and the protection of children in armed conflicts. It is crucial



to ensure women and young people's full participation in our prevention efforts. We must also redouble our efforts to prevent and eliminate sexual and gender-based violence as a weapon of war. Early-warning mechanisms play a key role in identifying risks and triggers. We must continue to strengthen them and promote the sharing of best practices.

Secondly, we must increase the preventive capacities of regional and subregional organizations, which play a crucial role in preventing atrocity crimes. For that reason, we must strengthen partnerships among the United Nations, the African Union, the European Union and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, as well as links with subregional organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States and the Latin American Network for Genocide and Mass Atrocity Prevention.

Thirdly, beyond early warnings, we need early action. It is not enough to receive early warnings on imminent crises if they are not followed by action. For that reason, in 2014 the Governments of Mexico and France put forward the French-Mexican initiative on suspending the use of the veto in the Security Council in cases of mass atrocities. We firmly believe that the use of the veto is not a privilege but an international responsibility. Our initiative seeks a voluntary collective pledge by the five permanent members of the Security Council not to use the veto in cases of crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity and large-scale war crimes, so that the Security Council can take effective action. The initiative is already supported by 105 States. We would like to take this opportunity to encourage all States that have not yet done so, especially the other permanent members of the Security Council, to join the initiative.

Fourthly, Mexico and France fully support all efforts to end impunity at the national and international levels. We must ensure accountability for perpetrators and justice for their victims. We encourage all States to support and cooperate with fact-finding missions and commissions of inquiry for mass atrocity crimes, as well as with instruments of international criminal justice. We also reiterate our call to all States to adhere to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and to cooperate with the Court.

*Ms. Kadare (Albania), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

Genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and ethnic cleansing do not occur spontaneously or by accident. Such crimes require rigorous organization and planning, which involve considerable resources, personnel and effective control of territory. Furthermore, they are usually perpetrated in environments marked by pressing examples of social, economic and political instability, such as armed conflicts, humanitarian emergencies or authoritarian regimes. There are specific conditions and elements that increase the likelihood of those acts, including hate speech, systematic discrimination, structural inequality and gross human rights violations — all are notorious warning signs.

We can therefore affirm that all mass atrocities are preventable. It is clear that protecting populations from such crimes is an individual and collective obligation under international law. It is also a moral duty. No responsibility is greater than the responsibility to protect the peoples of the world. The Assembly can continue to count on the full and unwavering support of Mexico and France, including as responsible members of the Security Council.

**Mr. Auväärt (Estonia):** I have the honour to speak on behalf of Latvia, Lithuania and my own country, Estonia. We align ourselves with the statement made earlier today by the representative of the European Union, in its capacity as observer.

We welcome the annual General Assembly debate on the responsibility to protect (R2P). Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have supported the principle of the responsibility to protect since its adoption at the 2005 World Summit, and we would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm our commitment today. We thank the Secretary-General for his latest report on the responsibility to protect (A/75/863), which provides an overview of how R2P is being operationalized through the prevention, early-warning and response work of the United Nations. We thank the Special Advisers on the Prevention of Genocide and the Responsibility to Protect and the Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect for their important work.

We recognize the progress that has been achieved in operationalizing the R2P concept in the past 15 years. The Secretary-General's report shows the measures that have been taken to strengthen resilience to atrocity crimes at the national and regional levels. At the same time, we acknowledge that there are ongoing challenges such as the negative effects of the coronavirus disease

pandemic on societies, including on their most vulnerable populations. In that regard, we fully support the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire.

The Baltic States are staunch supporters of the rules-based international order, based on respecting and promoting international law, including human rights law and international humanitarian law, democracy, the rule of law and the fight against impunity. We reaffirm that the primary responsibility to protect their populations belongs to individual States. Sadly, we continue to see negative trends in the implementation of that responsibility. Atrocity crimes are committed in many parts of the world, often without accountability, and we are especially concerned about the deliberate attacks we see on civilians, civilian infrastructure, journalists, humanitarian and medical personnel and infrastructure in conflict. The international community, States and organizations alike, have to step up their efforts to protect populations against atrocities. In doing so, they have to ensure that prevention remains at the core of that agenda. The prevention of violence and, ultimately, of the worst atrocities is closely linked to the protection of human rights, adherence to the rule of law and good governance. It is also connected to the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 16, on promoting just, peaceful and inclusive societies. That includes strong national institutions and transparent and accountable political leadership.

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania stand behind the Secretary-General's call to action for human rights, which puts human rights considerations at the centre of protection and prevention efforts. Regional and international human rights mechanisms, as well as the Human Rights Council, can provide useful support and guidance to Member States. We welcomed the dedicated intersessional discussion held in the Human Rights Council last week to mark the fifteenth anniversary of R2P. Populations are best protected through a whole-of-society approach. A strong and diverse civil society and pluralist media and journalists can make positive contributions to developing early-warning and response systems by raising public awareness about human rights violations and crimes against humanity and helping to foster resilient societies. We welcome the prioritization and strengthening of the role of women in atrocity prevention by the Office on Genocide Prevention. We all need to do more of that. It is also vital to ensure that all of these actors can voice their

concerns, communicate and cooperate with the United Nations without fear of reprisals.

The Security Council has a vital responsibility in the prevention of atrocity crimes, and there are times when it does not live up to that crucial responsibility. If we are to protect populations everywhere more effectively, greater support is needed for initiatives designed to deter the use of the veto, especially in cases of atrocity crimes. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania strongly support the mutually reinforcing initiatives of France and Mexico to voluntarily limit the use of the veto in the Security Council in situations involving mass atrocity crimes and the code of conduct of the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency group regarding Security Council action against genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. We are encouraged by major support for those important initiatives and call on States that have not yet joined them to do so.

The prevention and prosecution of atrocity crimes are also linked to the mandate of the International Criminal Court, which Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania fully support. Furthermore, accountability mechanisms, 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, the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar and other commissions of inquiry and fact-finding missions play an important role in collecting evidence and uncovering crimes. We also note national initiatives to hold regimes accountable for serious crimes under universal jurisdiction. In order to enhance the protection of all populations, we call on States that have not yet done so to join key international instruments, including the human rights instruments, the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

Finally, as we have mentioned in this Hall on previous occasions, we are of the view that the implementation of the responsibility to protect should be a standing item on the General Assembly agenda, providing an opportunity to take stock of this important topic and hold a dialogue among Member States on it. Such deliberations are best informed by annual reports I on R2P by the Secretary-General. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania fully support draft resolution A/75/L.82,

under consideration today, and encourage all States represented here to do the same.

**Mr. Prieto Tica** (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We appreciate the organization of today's debate on the responsibility to protect (R2P), as well as the clear statements made by the various speakers. We also commend the work of the Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect in addressing this serious issue.

Peru reiterates its commitment to consolidating the principle of the responsibility to protect. Since the 2005 World Summit, Peru has actively promoted the principle both at home, through national policies and mechanisms, and at the international level. In stressing the importance of the principle of R2P in ensuring respect for people's fundamental freedoms and rights, based on the premise that the principle is designed not to undermine but rather to strengthen State sovereignty, our delegation supports the adoption of draft resolution A/75/L.82, which was introduced today. We believe it will promote the development and creation of consensus on the principle of R2P, among other things by requesting that the Secretary-General include the item on the General Assembly's annual agenda and report annually to the Assembly on the implementation of measures to prevent genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. As mentioned in the Secretary-General's most recent report (A/75/863), preventing those scourges is a global challenge and an ongoing obligation. Furthermore, considering that the coronavirus disease pandemic has multiplied the risk factors that could lead to atrocities, it will be ever more crucial to intensify our efforts to promote and preserve universal human rights.

My country affirms its full commitment to international humanitarian law and international human rights law. We are a party to key instruments in both of those areas and our authorities ensure their implementation. We constantly strive to provide training in those areas for our armed forces and police force and to adopt various initiatives to ensure that Peru's troops conduct themselves appropriately when deployed in peacekeeping missions.

We also recognize that to achieve the Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, we must promote peaceful, just and inclusive societies, where there is no fear of violence, in any form or manifestation, including the worst of them — atrocity

crimes. We are also profoundly dismayed and disturbed by the impunity with which international humanitarian law is violated in today's world and emphasize that the international community, especially the Security Council, has an obligation to unite and take action to end the suffering of millions in various regions of the world. In that regard, Peru supports the French-Mexican initiative to limit the use of the veto in cases of mass atrocities and the code of conduct of the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency group, of which we are a member.

We also take due note of the recommendations in the report of the Secretary-General. We consider it important to take advantage of the contributions that the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide and the Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect can make to the work of United Nations intergovernmental organs, especially the Security Council and the Human Rights Council. In that regard, we believe it is essential to allocate sufficient financial and human resources for evaluating the prevention of and response to atrocity crimes, without prejudice to the promotion of accountability mechanisms and support for the work of the International Criminal Court.

Finally, we strongly support the potential inclusion of the prevention of atrocities in the mandates of the Human Rights Council, where relevant, as well as in the national reports to be prepared in the framework of the Universal Periodic Review and in the work of regional human rights institutions.

**Mr. Manalo** (Philippines): The Philippines has consistently supported the inclusion of an agenda item on the responsibility to protect (R2P) because we believe in the need for ensuring the General Assembly's formal and continuing consideration of the concept of R2P. It is in that spirit that we endorse today's short procedural draft resolution (A/75/L.82) on including the item on the Assembly's agenda and requesting that the Secretary-General report annually to the Assembly on the subject.

As we have emphasized in previous statements, the responsibility to protect should never be used as a licence or pretext to intervene in domestic and internal affairs or undermine the sovereignty of States. We therefore need to shift the focus of some of our discussions towards reaching a shared and common understanding of R2P, especially in terms of translating the principle into multilateral or collective action. Nevertheless, we

believe that two elements of the draft resolution on the table will move that process forward.

By including R2P on the annual agenda, we will have the occasion to revisit the shared commitments of our leaders made at the 2005 World Summit, in line with the three-pronged agenda that we have been mandated to advance. Regarding the protection responsibilities of the State, we can explore anew the parameters of our leaders' unanimous affirmation in the outcome document of the Summit (resolution 60/1) that

“each individual State has the responsibility to protect its populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity”.

As for international assistance and capacity-building, we can affirm the agreement that the international community should assist States in exercising that responsibility and building their protection capacities for a timely and decisive response. We should work towards a common understanding of our leaders' confirmation that when a State is “manifestly failing” to protect its population from the four specified crimes and violations, the international community should take collective action in a timely and decisive manner through the Security Council and in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

It is also time to take stock of what has been achieved since 2005. What actual progress has been made in relation to the groundbreaking 2009 report of the Secretary-General on implementing the responsibility to protect (A/63/677)? By requesting the Secretary-General to report annually on R2P, the time may have come for us to move away from thematic reports and focus instead on progress across aspects of our mandate over time. This year's report of the Secretary-General on R2P (A/75/863), which focuses on the initiatives undertaken by the United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect to advance the protection of vulnerable populations, could be a starting point for such an approach. The report highlights the continuing gap between the 2005 commitment to the responsibility to protect and the reality of populations exposed to the risk and commission of atrocity crimes, as well as recommended courses of action. Moving forward, and in relation to the report's recommendations, I would like to outline the following views.

First, there is no question that a State's first duty is to protect its people from actual harm and threats to

their safety and well-being — after all, that is the basis of State legitimacy. As a constitutional democracy that values the dignity of every person and protects the most vulnerable, the Philippines understands sovereignty as responsibility. R2P is therefore best implemented by strengthening national institutions for good governance, as well as preventing the capture of Government by violent groups such as intolerant mass movements and forms of organized crime such as the drug trade.

Secondly, the multilateral assessment of possible cases of failure to protect must be impartial and evidence-based. The application of the R2P principle must be in accordance with the parameters of the 2005 World Summit outcome document and the Charter. In future, we may also have to consider norms for accountability in undertaking collective or multilateral R2P action.

Thirdly, trust and respect for sovereignty are essential if we are to advance the operationalization of the prevention mandates of the relevant United Nations entities as set out in the report, as well as the implementation of prevention activities at the regional and State level and the provision of technical assistance by the United Nations and other partners to help States uphold the responsibility to protect.

**Mrs. Baeriswyl** (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): In 2018, the Secretary-General said,

“At this time of extreme challenges, we must not abandon the responsibility to protect or leave it in a state of suspended animation, finely articulated in words but breached time and again in practice” (see A/72/PV.99).

His words could not be truer today. In the context of the coronavirus disease pandemic and a resurgence of violence, the impact on conflict and human rights only underscores the importance of Member States' responsibility to protect. Switzerland welcomes the inclusion of this important debate on the responsibility to protect on the agenda of the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly. We thank the Secretary-General for his report on the ongoing efforts to implement the responsibility to protect (A/75/863). Switzerland expresses its full support for the adoption of draft resolution A/75/L.82, which aims to institutionalize the responsibility to protect within the United Nations system. I would like to highlight the following four elements.



First, Switzerland affirms the importance of the United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect, as well as its Special Advisers. The Office is doing remarkable work with limited resources to advance the concept and implementation of the responsibility to protect — a complex mandate full of challenges. Switzerland appreciates the long-standing collaboration with the Office, including the joint preparation of the fourth international conference organized under the Global Action Against Mass Atrocity Crimes initiative. The November meeting will be dedicated to the prevention of incitement to hatred and discrimination.

Secondly, Switzerland reiterates its call to make full use of the prevention potential of the Security Council to move from early warning to early action. As coordinator of the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency group in the Council, Switzerland urges all Member States to commit to our code of conduct. The code calls on Council members, elected and permanent, to refrain from voting against any draft resolution that seeks to prevent or end mass atrocities.

Thirdly, in order to build national resilience, we must tackle the root causes of conflicts and related atrocities, as well as putting guarantees of non-recurrence in place. In that regard, Switzerland calls for ensuring the implementation of the conclusions of the 2018 joint study on the contribution of transitional justice as part of the report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence (A/HRC/37/65).

Switzerland would also like to underline the fundamental role and contribution of civil society. Women, young people and human rights defenders contribute to the prevention of atrocities by identifying and monitoring risks and early warnings.

Lastly, Switzerland remains firmly committed to respect for international humanitarian law and the fight against impunity for the most serious crimes. The States parties to the Rome Statute have adopted an amendment proposed by my country aimed at expanding the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court over the war crime of the starvation of civilians in internal armed conflicts. We call on all States parties to ratify the amendment. Such crimes are particularly relevant in armed conflicts today and every ratification makes a concrete contribution to the prevention of atrocities and to the implementation of the responsibility to protect.

**Mr. Nagy (Slovakia):** At the outset, I would like to thank the President for convening this plenary meeting and for his introductory remarks. I would also like to thank Ms. Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti, Chef de Cabinet of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, for her statement.

Slovakia aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of the European Union, in its capacity as observer, as well as the statement by the representative of Costa Rica on behalf of members of the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect.

My delegation supports draft resolution A/75/L.82, to be considered by the Assembly later today. We firmly believe that the Assembly plays an important role in helping to strengthen consensus on the responsibility to protect (R2P) and promoting the development of the concept and of the understanding among all States Members of the United Nations of their individual and collective responsibility to protect all people from crimes against humanity. We hope that the adoption of today's draft resolution will enable Member States to avoid unnecessary procedural discussions that could detract from the consideration of the substance of this important agenda item.

Slovakia welcomes the twelfth report of the Secretary-General on this subject (A/75/863), which focuses on the gender dimensions of atrocity prevention and R2P. We fully concur that inclusiveness must be at the core of the prevention agenda and an integral part of the concept of R2P. That must include the meaningful participation of women and their protection and rights.

In 2005, every Member State made a political commitment to the principle of the responsibility to protect. However, we have seen far too often how the actions of the international community and Member States fall short of adequately deterring or preventing atrocity crimes. More needs to be done to address the preventive aspect of R2P in that regard, in line with the Secretary-General's prevention agenda. After all, there is overall agreement that prevention is at the core of the responsibility to protect. Beyond that, achieving universal access to justice and non-selective accountability is key if we want to ensure the protection of all individuals and groups against discrimination, exclusion and other human rights violations. In that context, I would like to recall the role of the International Criminal Court as an independent and impartial judicial body, stepping in where national

jurisdictions are unable or unwilling to address the issue of accountability. In that capacity, it serves as a deterrent and a guarantor of the non-recurrence of mass atrocities, while bringing justice to victims of the gravest crimes under international law. We therefore call on all Member States that have not yet done so to ratify the Rome Statute and its amendments, thereby helping to achieve its universality.

Lastly, I would like to underline that applying the principles of good governance to States' security sectors can ensure that the rights of individuals are respected and perpetrators brought to justice. Enhancing national capacities and building democratic and accountable institutions are therefore key in pursuing resilient systems that can prevent atrocities early on.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate our commitment to the implementation of all the pillars of the responsibility to protect. Only united action can effectively prevent atrocities and protect innocent populations. Slovakia will vote in favour of draft resolution A/75/L.82 and calls on other Member States to do the same.

**Mr. Rae** (Canada) (*spoke in French*): Canada associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Costa Rica on behalf of the members of the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect.

We are pleased to be a sponsor of draft resolution A/75/L.82, on the responsibility to protect (R2P), and I encourage all Member States to vote in favour of it.

(*spoke in English*)

Twenty years ago, the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty published its final report, entitled "The Responsibility to Protect". The Commission framed sovereignty not as an absolute right, but as a responsibility to be upheld. It set out the responsibilities that we have as an international community to prevent and protect populations from the gravest of crimes. That report laid the groundwork for the Assembly's momentous and — let us be reminded — unanimous agreement to the responsibility to protect at the 2005 World Summit. Since then, I think we have all deepened our understanding of what we call R2P.

We have learned, through both our successes and our failures, about the many tools that we have at our disposal to prevent and respond to atrocity crimes. Yet there are those who continue to promote the notion that

R2P is solely about the use of military force or that it flies in the face of the principle of sovereignty set out in the Charter of the United Nations. The principle has been used and sometimes abused to justify such action, but I would argue that the notion is false for two reasons — first because it wilfully ignores the R2P principle's emphasis on prevention, as well as the wide array of responsive measures under the framework that are both peaceful and non-coercive. Secondly, it subverts our collective agreement, made together in the Assembly and reaffirmed by the Security Council and the Human Rights Council, that peaceful, preventive measures should come as a first resort and, as the representative of the Philippines pointed out, that the primary responsibility to protect lies with the State itself.

While we have deepened our understanding of R2P, we continue to struggle, to cite the words of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty's report, in moving "from polemics and often paralysis towards action". That struggle, that dilemma is still something we face today. Let us remember that as we speak, courageous protesters in Myanmar are braving bullets and mass arrests following an illegal coup by a military junta bent on brutally repressing their right to democracy. In the face of deadly violence, the people of Myanmar are pleading for the international community to live up to its commitment to R2P. That is why Canada argues that we must use all of our available tools to prevent further violence and atrocities against civilians in Myanmar and show them that we are not turning our backs on them.

(*spoke in French*)

Indeed, we must ensure that those responsible for such violations are held accountable for their actions. I am thinking in particular of the people of Syria, who have suffered numerous atrocities during the civil war. For the past 10 years the Security Council has failed the Syrian people.

(*spoke in English*)

Each veto cast has only ratcheted up the violence and prolonged the suffering of Syrian civilians. The use and the threat of use of the veto in the Security Council regarding Syria and other situations where atrocity crimes are being perpetrated is shameful and, I believe, may be contrary to obligations under the Charter of the United Nations and international law. I must emphasize that Canada is firmly in favour of the

statement by the representative of Mexico and reaffirms the importance of the Franco-Mexican initiative on limiting the use of the veto when dealing with atrocity crimes. But while the enablers of the regime in Syria may shield the perpetrators of atrocities, justice for the gravest of international crimes, including torture and sexual violence, will not be denied. The International Court of Justice, the International Criminal Court and the work of independent fact-finding mechanisms and commissions of inquiry are all crucial tools in our pursuit of accountability in Syria, Myanmar and beyond.

We should plan for accountability from the very first days of our response to any crisis. Accountability contributes to prevention, and prevention is and has always been the most important dimension of R2P. The Peacebuilding Commission, which I had the honour to chair last year, and the Peacebuilding Fund can be catalytic forces for prevention if they are empowered and sufficiently funded to do their work. Civil society, local media, journalists, indigenous leaders and women peacebuilders and human rights defenders are also powerful agents of prevention. Today, on the International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia, it is important to realize that all of us must be included in ensuring our rights and the need to be protected, and we must rely heavily on representatives of civil society to enable us to do the job we must do.

That work is even more important as we address the effects of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. The pandemic has magnified and revealed vulnerabilities in all societies. In societies that are divided or facing conflict and insecurity, the pandemic could heighten risk factors that lead to atrocity crimes. We face in the pandemic a powerful test of our collective commitment to human rights, inclusion and, most importantly, solidarity. By promoting and preserving universal human rights and building open and inclusive societies, we will not only build back better from COVID-19. We can also address the risk factors that may lead to atrocity crimes in the first place.

*(spoke in French)*

That is the essence of the responsibility to protect. We hope that the General Assembly will continue its consideration of this important principle, and we will play an active part in implementing it.

*(spoke in English)*

When the Charter was adopted, those present affirmed the principle that it was essential to replace the rule of force and the rule of violence with the rule of law. That is still our job — replacing violence and force with law and justice — and that is a task that we have to apply ourselves to today with more vigour than ever.

**Mr. Wickremasinghe** (United Kingdom): I would like to start by thanking the Secretary-General for his report on advancing atrocity prevention (A/75/863). We would also like to take this opportunity to confirm our support for the Special Advisers on the Prevention of Genocide and on the Responsibility to Protect and their Office for bringing atrocity situations to the attention of the United Nations and helping strengthen the national resilience of States through technical assistance and capacity-building. As we consider the scope of the principle of the right to protect, we want to raise a number of situations of concern that in our view underline the importance of upholding the responsibility to protect.

Since the military coup in Myanmar, the risk of atrocities there has significantly increased. Particularly in remote ethnic areas, there has been widespread violence perpetrated by the military, with more than 800 deaths to date. The military's campaign of violence has increased in ethnic areas, with recent air strikes in Kayin and Kachin states. It has killed and displaced people in many communities and has affected access to hospitals and schools. Together with the other leaders of the Group of Seven, the United Kingdom has called on the military and security forces to immediately end their violence and restore power to the democratically elected Government. All who have been arbitrarily detained must be released. Those responsible for violations and abuses of human rights must be held accountable. The United Kingdom supports all efforts to resolve the crisis peacefully, including by all who advocate for democracy in Myanmar, the region and elsewhere.

We have also seen a decade of appalling atrocities in Syria. The Al-Assad regime's horrific attacks on civilians, and its use of chemical weapons no fewer than 32 times, are utterly deplorable. The United Kingdom has condemned those abhorrent acts in no uncertain terms, and we strongly support efforts to hold the perpetrators of war crimes and crimes against humanity to account. More than half a million people

have been killed. Tens of thousands have been detained and tortured in the most horrific ways. The United Kingdom is providing more than £14 million in support of Syrian and international efforts to gather evidence of human rights abuses and violations and address the impact that has had on victims. We are committed to supporting United Nations efforts to resolve the Syrian crisis. It is essential for the United Nations to know what is happening on the ground. We therefore strongly support the resumption of United Nations field visits working safely around the coronavirus disease and creatively with Governments, civil society, human rights organizations, women, religious leaders and other key stakeholders to secure clear and verifiable information.

Lastly, I want to take this opportunity to underline the United Kingdom's strong support for international criminal justice and accountability, which is a fundamental element of its foreign policy. In this respect, we support the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency (ACT) group's code of conduct, promoted by Liechtenstein — a commitment made by more than 120 Member States — to back timely and decisive action by the Security Council aimed at preventing or ending the commission of genocide, crimes against humanity or war crimes. The ACT group has made a specific commitment to refraining from voting against any credible draft resolution in the Security Council intended to prevent or halt mass atrocities, and United Kingdom has allied itself with the group.

**Ms. Al-Thani** (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank the President for convening this formal meeting on the responsibility to protect, which stresses the General Assembly's central role in protecting civilians and addressing mass atrocities. We also want to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his valuable report this year (A/75/863) on the responsibility to protect. We reiterate our full support for the Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect, and align ourselves with the statement of the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect.

This formal debate is taking place at a time when international multilateral action is needed more than ever, owing to the unprecedented effects of the coronavirus disease pandemic and to growing numbers of armed conflicts, displaced persons, human rights violations and atrocities, all of which call for more determined and consistent measures on the part of the

international community as it assumes its responsibility to protect civilians.

We commend and appreciate the progress that has been made in enhancing understanding of the principle of the responsibility to protect and the important role played by the General Assembly in promoting it, in line with its responsibility and resolutions aimed at ensuring the protection of civilians and bringing the perpetrators of mass atrocities to justice. However, especially given the challenges posed by the pandemic, we urgently need collective action to take more steps to strengthen prevention and early-warning mechanisms and tackle the issues driving the perpetration of such atrocities and crimes. That must be realized with respect for human rights and the rule of law while preventing hate speech, addressing extremism and achieving development.

The prevention of mass atrocities in the current international environment is both an individual and collective responsibility of States under the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant provisions of international humanitarian law, international human rights law and international refugee law. Consequently, we have a great responsibility to fulfil our commitment to protecting populations exposed to atrocity crimes, rendering the principle of the responsibility to protect vital and irreplaceable.

Draft resolution A/75/L.82, which is before the General Assembly today, reflects our commitment to protecting those who are subjected to atrocity crimes and to putting an end to genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. For those reasons, the State of Qatar feels proud to be a sponsor of the draft resolution.

In this context, the Security Council, as mandated by the Charter, has a special responsibility to prevent atrocity crimes by refraining from the use of the veto. That is supported by a majority of Member States where cases involving such atrocities are concerned. Qatar's commitment to the responsibility to protect is in line with its belief in international cooperation for establishing collective security and respecting international law, as well as its firm policy promoting international peace and security. Based on that commitment, the State of Qatar continues to develop the principle as an active member and co-Chair for three years of the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect.

In conclusion, the holding of this formal debate in the Assembly and the adoption of draft resolution



A/75/L.82 affirm the determination of the international community to protect civilians, address mass atrocities, hold their perpetrators accountable and end impunity. The State of Qatar will continue its efforts to ensure respect for human rights and other international conventions and to promote peace and security in the world.

**Mr. Lam Padilla** (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are grateful for the holding of this plenary meeting through the good offices of the President to address the responsibility to protect (R2P), an issue that Guatemala considers extremely important. The annual debate is taking place in the context of an international situation that requires revisiting the security and human rights norm established pursuant to resolution 60/1 at the 2005 World Summit to help protect populations against genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

Every State has the primary responsibility to protect its own people and prevent the commission of atrocities such as we have witnessed in the past. That precept is what specifically shapes the genesis and relevance of the responsibility to protect as it must be upheld today and is supported by the fundamental goal of the Charter of the United Nations — to save future generations from the scourge of war and promote peace among peoples and nations. We recognize that realizing a world free of atrocities will be possible only by making incremental changes at the national, regional and international levels, based on the international human rights system.

Seventy-three years after the publication of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the responsibility to protect must be affirmed as the only way to defend populations against mass atrocities. It must therefore be strengthened, particularly considering the recent hotspots of tension around the world where similar trends are apparent and that in a worst-case scenario could lead to the commission of new crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing.

I would like to remind the Assembly that Guatemala, with the support of 67 Member States, introduced resolution 63/308, which was adopted by consensus and is deemed to be of vital importance, as it sought the General Assembly's continued consideration of the responsibility to protect. And since 2006 my country has been a member of the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect, whose purpose is to underscore the importance of the principle of the

prevention of atrocities linked to United Nations agendas, particularly those of the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council.

At the national level, the responsibility to protect is a principle enshrined in our Constitution. The State of Guatemala was established to protect the individual and the family, and its ultimate goal is the realization of the common good. In that regard, in order to support the protection of civilians, Guatemala is honoured to be a country that contributes to United Nations peacekeeping. My delegation reiterates the call for upholding obligations under international human rights law, international law and international refugee law, as they are intrinsically linked to the protection of civilians. Furthermore, Guatemala is proud to be part of the code-of-conduct initiative aimed at preventing the use of the veto in the Security Council in cases of genocide and crimes against humanity, and we urge other States to join it. Guatemala recognizes that the principle of the responsibility to protect is complemented by the concept of sustainable peace, as it prioritizes respect and support for human rights, based on a preventive approach, with the aim of avoiding confrontations.

We have taken note of the Secretary-General's report (A/75/863) and concur with its emphasis on the importance of support for and prioritization of the prevention of atrocities at all levels. Regional organizations have an important role to play in that regard. In addition, my delegation would like to stress the contributions of Global Network of R2P Focal Points. We also welcome the coordinated efforts and work of the Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect. We must take advantage of the input generated by the Special Advisers, which can be of great value to the work of the United Nations intergovernmental bodies, including the Security Council and the Human Rights Council. We urge States that have not yet done so to consider ratifying the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

In conclusion, we urge all Member States to support draft resolution A/75/L.82. Its adoption will ensure that the United Nations as an organization will continue to consider the issue of the responsibility to protect and report annually to Member States on its progress.

**Ms. Alateibi** (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank the

President for holding this important meeting, which could not take place last year owing to the coronavirus disease pandemic. The pandemic, which we are still dealing with, has brought rapid changes to the nature of the challenges facing the international community, and has demonstrated our global inequalities and gaps in the international framework. But it has nonetheless reaffirmed our common humanity, as emphasized in the final outcome document adopted at the 2005 World Summit (resolution 60/1). It is a commitment that the United Arab Emirates and many other countries have reiterated.

The United Arab Emirates believes that sovereignty entails responsibilities. Every sovereign State has the responsibility to protect its people from genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing. When an individual State is unable to exercise its basic responsibility to protect its own people, it must call on its regional partners, the United Nations and other Member States for support and assistance. However, if it refuses to accept that basic responsibility to protect and seek assistance, the international community must take collective measures through the Security Council, ensuring that they are carried out pursuant to the Charter of the United Nations and international law. In that regard, we stress that there should be no intervention or military action to implement the responsibility to protect except as a last resort.

We emphasize that the ability of the Security Council to effectively address genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity is not only pivotal to its duty to implement its mandate regarding the maintenance of international peace and security; it is also a basic element in the international community's ability to assume its responsibility to protect. For that reason, the United Arab Emirates supports the initiative led by France and Mexico on refraining from the use of the veto in cases involving mass atrocities. We are also a signatory to the code of conduct of the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency group.

In that regard, as we reiterate our candidacy for a seat in the Security Council for the period from 2022 to 2023, we want to once again stress our commitment to supporting the Security Council in taking decisive and timely measures in order to stop mass atrocities, crimes against humanity and war crimes. The responsibility to protect requires the tools needed to strengthen protection, such as strong and effective early-warning mechanisms. Early-warning signs must be evaluated,

and more importantly, ways must be found to resolve the root causes of conflicts. That requires working to address hate speech, promote peaceful coexistence, launch media and awareness campaigns and reduce religious and cultural tensions, including by establishing partnerships with religious leaders and protecting the rights of minorities and the most vulnerable people. A culture of peace must also be encouraged, while promoting integration. In that context, the United Arab Emirates welcomes the report of the Secretary-General (A/75/863) on the responsibility to protect. As the report says, it is very important to ensure a gender perspective in order to improve our understanding of the causes and dynamics of atrocity crimes as well as to help in implementing the responsibility to protect. In that regard, I would like to make a number of points and recommendations.

First, it is essential to encourage the participation of women in all protection activities in order to ensure the effective implementation of the responsibility to protect in the areas of early warning, accountability, peacekeeping and peacebuilding. The United Arab Emirates has always stressed the importance of women's full, equal and purposeful participation in such efforts. We are working to promote the women and peace and security agenda as one of the cornerstones of our foreign policy, something that we enhanced when we launched our first national action plan pursuant to Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security.

Accordingly, the United Arab Emirates supports the Secretary-General's call for promoting gender parity and women's effective and serious participation, and for enabling them to take on a leading role in the prevention of atrocities and in peacekeeping operations. To that end, the United Arab Emirates will continue its partnership with UN-Women in support of Sheikha Fatima Bint Mubarak's initiative on empowering women in the areas of peace and security, through which we are training Arab, African and Asian female students so that they can be better represented in the security sector. The United Arab Emirates also intends to sign an agreement with the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs on implementing projects based on increasing women's effective participation and enabling them to assume leading roles.

Secondly, we believe that gender-related elements must be taken into account when addressing a lack of gender parity in the context of tackling the root causes of

conflicts and implementing the responsibility to protect alongside the prevention of atrocity crimes, particularly when dealing with sexual and gender-based violence.

Lastly, we call once again for moving the dialogue on this issue to regional and national arenas, where the responsibility to protect has to be implemented effectively and must be addressed at the national level. National and regional solutions are the best means to that end as they involve best practices and lessons learned that can be disseminated widely.

**Mr. Beleffi** (San Marino): I would first like to thank the President for convening this important meeting and the Secretary-General for his report (A/75/863) and efforts with regard to mass atrocity crimes. We have before us today a new and important draft resolution (A/75/L.82) on the responsibility to protect, which has been sponsored by many countries, including my own. San Marino believes that the responsibility to protect and the prioritization of atrocity crimes remain critical, and that we should keep this item on our agenda.

Despite our efforts in many areas of the world, vulnerable populations continue to face threats of mass atrocities. The Republic of San Marino is deeply concerned about the ongoing crises in Ethiopia, Syria, Yemen, Myanmar and elsewhere. We firmly believe that prevention can play a vital role in stopping atrocity crimes, and we would like to express our support for the work of the Special Advisers on the Prevention of Genocide and on the Responsibility to Protect. We encourage them to share their accurate analyses of developing crises promptly with the wider United Nations membership, providing early warnings and recommendations on preventing atrocities within the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council. I would also like to express San Marino's support for mechanisms such as commissions of inquiry and fact-finding missions that help to collect evidence of atrocities and play a fundamental role in holding perpetrators accountable. Accountability is certainly another important factor in preventing and stopping such crimes. San Marino reaffirms its full commitment to the principles underpinning the norms of the responsibility to protect and to obligations under human rights and humanitarian law, such as the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, the Rome Statute and the Geneva Conventions.

San Marino reaffirms its full support for the International Criminal Court, whose work is crucial in the fight against impunity for genocide and crimes against humanity. It represents one of the core elements of the implementation of the responsibility to protect. Through its work the Court fosters accountability and thereby promotes prevention and reconciliation. San Marino also reiterates its support for such initiatives as the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency group's code of conduct regarding Security Council action against genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity, and the Franco-Mexican declaration whereby the Council's permanent members would voluntarily refrain from the use of the veto.

The Government of San Marino is deeply disturbed by and firmly condemns the growing number of deliberate attacks on schools, hospitals and places of worship. We are very worried about the weaponization of food and of sexual and gender-based violence, which regrettably has become more frequent. We also firmly condemn attacks on peacekeepers, journalists, humanitarian workers, human rights defenders and peacekeepers. Those stakeholders and civil-society actors can play an important role in reconciliation, prevention and early-warning mechanisms and should therefore be supported and protected. San Marino believes that hate speech and incitement to discrimination and violence are both early-warning indicators and triggers of atrocity crimes. In the past year we have seen an alarming increase in such cases. San Marino is therefore fully and actively committed to combating hate speech while protecting freedom of expression.

In many cases, we have failed to prevent and halt mass atrocity crimes. As a result, we are witnessing violence, human suffering and unprecedented refugee crises. The coronavirus disease pandemic has made such situations even worse. Fragile societies are now weaker and more divided, and in many cases respect for human rights has lessened. Such complex situations can create further challenges and spark factors that could result in mass atrocity crimes. We must therefore redouble our efforts to preserve human rights and prevent atrocities.

Lastly, we firmly believe that poverty and instability, together with a lack of respect for the rule of law and humanitarian rights, are a trigger for atrocity crimes. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is the most effective means at our disposal to prevent

crises, build a better, fairer and sustainable future for all, promote peaceful and inclusive societies and, ultimately, to prevent human suffering and atrocity crimes. San Marino is fully committed to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

**Mr. Cho Hyun** (Republic of Korea): Let me start by thanking the President for convening the fourth formal General Assembly debate on the responsibility to protect (R2P). I would also like to express my delegation's strong support for the crucial work of the Secretary-General, as well as that of his Special Advisers on the Prevention of Genocide and on the Responsibility to Protect. My delegation appreciates their leadership in advancing the prevention of mass atrocities and mainstreaming R2P within the United Nations system, and we welcome the Secretary-General's report (A/75/863), with its ongoing focus on prevention.

Today we are considering draft resolution A/75/L.82, on the responsibility to protect and the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. As a member of the core group that initiated the draft resolution, my country encourages all Member States to support it. We believe that it will help to further dialogue on ways to strengthen the prevention of atrocity crimes, as well as to ensure the predictability, clarity and transparency of our work.

As the Secretary-General's report highlights this year, there continues to be a widening gap between the 2005 World Summit commitment to the responsibility to protect and the reality of populations exposed to the risk or commission of atrocity crimes. Moreover, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has complicated the challenges we are facing, exacerbating existing vulnerabilities and creating new ones. In that context, while aligning myself with the statement made by the representative of Costa Rica on behalf of the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect, I would like to highlight the following points in my national capacity.

First, my delegation emphasizes the importance of prioritizing accountability for atrocity crimes and ending impunity in order to prevent their recurrence. States have the primary responsibility to investigate and prosecute crimes committed within their jurisdiction, and the international community should spare no effort in supporting national efforts through

judicial cooperation and capacity-building assistance. My delegation further acknowledges that international tribunals and hybrid courts can provide complementary avenues for enabling accountability, and we reaffirm our support for the International Criminal Court.

Secondly, the Security Council must strengthen its efforts to respond to and address the risk or commission of mass atrocities. We have witnessed how the political dynamic in the Security Council sometimes makes it difficult for it to take timely and decisive action. In that regard, my delegation encourages Member States to continue their support for the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency group's code of conduct and the French-Mexican initiative on veto restraint, limiting the use of the veto in situations that require immediate action in order to prevent or respond to mass atrocities.

Furthermore, as a sponsor of the first thematic resolution on R2P adopted by the Human Rights Council last July (resolution 44/14), we emphasize the need to make better use of the United Nations human rights system and to strengthen the links between the Security Council and the Human Rights Council. The Universal Periodic Review and the Special Procedures play essential roles in providing early warnings and facilitating action by national Governments and the international community. Regular briefings of the Security Council by the High Commissioner for Human Rights can help to better incorporate mass atrocity prevention into the Security Council's agenda.

Thirdly, noting that peacekeeping remains one of the most effective United Nations tools for protecting civilians from atrocity crimes, my delegation strongly supports the role of peacekeeping operations in facilitating a protective environment for the most vulnerable populations, including women and children. We emphasize the importance of providing peacekeepers with adequate predeployment training to enhance their civilian-protection capabilities in areas such as gender-equality education and ways to strengthen strategic communications at the local level. We also want to highlight the crucial role of components of the protection-of-civilians mandate, including women's and child protection advisers and human rights teams, who we believe should be provided with adequate resources. We look forward to furthering our discussions on the protection of civilians at the upcoming peacekeeping ministerial meeting to be held in Seoul in December.



Finally, the Secretary-General's report prioritizes addressing and countering hate speech, which my delegation strongly supports. The pandemic has recently provoked an alarming increase in hate speech. We recognize that atrocity crimes are often preceded by hate speech and that incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence can be an early-warning indicator. My delegation therefore welcomed the release last year of the *United Nations Guidance Note on Addressing and Countering COVID-19 related Hate Speech* as part of the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech. We also encourage Member States to address the issue of hate speech in collaboration with all relevant actors, including technology and social-media companies, while also protecting freedom of expression and civil liberties.

In conclusion, I would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm the Republic of Korea's commitment to the responsibility to protect. I look forward to working together with the United Nations and the international community as we collectively strive to protect vulnerable people from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

**Mr. Tun** (Myanmar): First of all, I would like to thank the President for convening this very important debate on the responsibility to protect (R2P). I also welcome this year's report of the Secretary-General, focusing on advancing the prevention of atrocities (A/75/863). My delegation appreciates the recommendations in the report. I take note of the ongoing efforts by the Special Advisers on the Prevention of Genocide and on the Responsibility to Protect and by their Office in support of national, regional and international efforts to advance atrocity prevention and contribute to the implementation of the responsibility to protect.

The primary responsibility for protecting people rests with States, and the international community should support States in fulfilling that task. I believe that those two pillars of the R2P principle are universally accepted. The third pillar is based on the premise that where national authorities are manifestly failing to protect their populations, collective action must be taken in a timely and decisive manner. We are of the view that the scope and application of that pillar represent a cause for concern. The challenge lies in upholding the principle of R2P while preventing its misuse.

Despite that challenge, however, the international community and the United Nations cannot shy away from upholding the responsibility to protect populations from the heinous crimes of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. The 2005 World Summit outcome document (resolution 60/1) states explicitly that timely and decisive action is to be carried out

“through the Security Council, in accordance with the Charter, including Chapter VII, on a case-by-case basis and in cooperation with relevant regional organizations as appropriate”.

We all share the view that it is not the job of the United Nations to replace the State in protecting people. However, when the people of a nation are helpless in the face of one of those four heinous crimes, the international community, through the Security Council and in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, must help to lay a foundation so that the State can reassure its population regarding its responsibility by responding in a timely and decisive manner.

I understand that today's debate is thematic rather than country-specific. However, I find it extremely hard not to relate the relevance of the topic to what has been happening in my country, Myanmar. Since 1 February, the Myanmar military has been conducting a systematic and targeted campaign of attacks on our civilian population. In order to confront those atrocities, hundreds of thousands of ordinary Myanmar citizens have been bravely engaging in peaceful protests and calling desperately for a restoration of democracy in our country. Yet even as we seek to protect our democracy, defend our liberty and preserve our humanity, the military is attacking us in our streets, our houses, our schools, our hospitals, our villages and our places of worship, among others.

To date, the military has extrajudicially, arbitrarily and summarily executed more than 800 innocent civilians. It has tortured hundreds more and subjected them to cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment and punishment. Using live ammunition and assault weapons, the military is even now attacking the civilian population with extreme brutality and without discrimination. The victims of those crimes against humanity include not only anti-military protesters but also children, innocent bystanders and people staying peacefully inside their own homes. Recently, in Mindat, in Chin state, the military attacked the

town with helicopters and heavy artillery, shelling it indiscriminately and disproportionately, even using civilians as human shields.

In a brazen strike against democratic principles, the military's systematic and targeted attacks on the civilian population have claimed victims who include democratically elected civilian political leaders, their supporters and civil activists. Civilians in Myanmar are being detained without charges and without any due process rights. Many of them have died in the custody of the security forces. As a direct result of those atrocities, a wave of civilians have been forced to leave their homes to seek safety in other parts of the country or abroad. The horrifying atrocities and violence committed by the security forces against civilians are well documented and widely reported. The National Unity Government has handed more than 500,000 pieces of documentary evidence to the relevant United Nations human rights bodies concerning the crimes against humanity being committed by the military against the civilian population of Myanmar.

The military is violating fundamental and peremptory norms of international law on a daily basis. The world sees every day that the military's conduct confirms that it has no intention of abiding by its obligations under international law. The military, including its high command, which operates under the name of the State Administrative Council, has no legitimacy. In a world governed by the rule of law, it cannot legitimately represent Myanmar. It does not act for the people or the country. It acts only for itself and in opposition to the people of Myanmar and their democratically elected representatives. The National Unity Government is composed of the democratically elected leaders of Myanmar and representatives of the ethnic groups in the country. It enjoys the widespread support of the civilian population in its efforts to restore democracy, protect human rights and support humanitarian assistance in Myanmar.

On behalf of the people of Myanmar and the National Unity Government, I wish to express my sincere appreciation to all the Member States, United Nations organs and organizations that have strongly condemned the military coup, denounced the continued brutality committed by the military junta and stood with the people of Myanmar at this challenging time. However, the calls of the international community, including the Security Council, have been met with total disregard by the military junta. On 27 March, Armed Forces Day,

the security forces murdered more than 130 unarmed civilians across the country in a single day, making it a day of terror and shame.

We, the people of Myanmar, need international support. We are looking to the Security Council and the United Nations as a whole for a strong, decisive, unified and timely response to this horrible situation. The international community and the United Nations have a responsibility to protect the people of Myanmar. I thank the Permanent Representative of Canada and the representative of the United Kingdom for their strong words about Myanmar earlier. In line with the principle that a State has the responsibility to protect its own people from crimes against humanity, the National Unity Government, together with the people of Myanmar, has taken all possible ways and means to defend them from the military's inhumane and brutal acts. We urge that the international community adhere to that principle and assume its responsibility to protect the people of Myanmar from the possible crimes against humanity committed by the military.

In taking timely and decisive action under the principle of R2P, we should not rule out an intervention under Article 42 of the Charter. However, that is not the only tool available to the United Nations and the Security Council. The Secretary-General, through his 13 annual reports to the General Assembly, including that on a timely and decisive response (A/66/874), has offered a number of tools for implementation. Today, on behalf of the National Unity Government and the people of Myanmar, I wish to appeal to the States Members of the United Nations and the Security Council in particular to take the following actions immediately.

I am asking them first to protect the people of Myanmar from crimes against humanity committed by the military; second, to declare no-fly zones in relevant areas to avoid further bloodshed caused by the military air strikes; third, to impose targeted, coordinated and tougher sanctions against the military and its businesses; fourth, to impose a global arms embargo on the military; fifth, to freeze the financial assets of the military and individual members of the regime, as well as cutting off financial inflows into the military; sixth, to suspend foreign direct investment until a democratically elected Government is restored in Myanmar; seventh, to provide humanitarian assistance to people in need and provide shelter on humanitarian grounds to people seeking refuge in neighbouring countries and elsewhere; eighth, to hold those

responsible for atrocity crimes accountable; and finally, ninth, to recognize the National Unity Government as the legitimate Government of the people of Myanmar.

In conclusion, since the coup of 1 February, through street art, protest placards, candlelit vigils and social media, the people of Myanmar have been calling for the responsibility to protect, saying “we need R2P”. In the face of the inhumane cruelty and constant threat posed by the military, the people of Myanmar feel helpless. This is not a fight between two warring parties, but rather the entire population versus a brutal, well-armed military that is determined to use all possible means to silence our people into submission. We hope that the Security Council and the international community will uphold their responsibility to protect the people of Myanmar and act accordingly without further delay.

**The Acting President:** I thank the representative of Myanmar very much for his powerful remarks.

**Mrs. Rugwabiza (Rwanda):** Rwanda aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Costa Rica on behalf of the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect, to which Rwanda belongs.

It is fitting that we are gathered here once again to discuss the responsibility to protect and the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. The coronavirus disease pandemic has exacerbated the threats to international peace and security. In fragile societies, the pandemic has increased risk factors that could lead to mass atrocity crimes. In that context, the responsibility to protect remains a timely topic amid a number of worrisome global trends that demand that we learn lessons and take bold steps and decisions on prevention.

In the light of those worrisome global trends, Rwanda expresses its full support for the work of the Special Advisers on the Prevention of Genocide and on the Responsibility to Protect. We urge the Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect to always provide timely information on country-specific situations as well as thematic briefings, including analyses of developing crises, with the wider United Nations membership, as well as recommendations on atrocity prevention. Rwanda is a sponsor of draft resolution A/75/L.82, on the responsibility to protect and the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity under consideration. We therefore welcome it and strongly

encourage all Member States to vote in favour of it when action is taken on the draft resolution.

Rwanda has frequently emphasized that we cannot just sit and debate theories and principles when innocent civilians are being massacred with the support of the Government authorities and forces supposed to protect them. The same Governments enabling mass atrocity crimes draw their legitimacy from the first obligation of every sovereign State, which is to protect its citizens. We are not speaking here of Governments that lack the capacity or forces to protect the security of their people or ensure the integrity of their territory, but Governments that deliberately use State forces or enable militias to commit mass atrocities, ethnic cleansing or genocide against their own people, in part or entirely.

The General Assembly is an assembly of “We the peoples”, per the Charter of the United Nations, and therefore cannot remain silent when atrocity crimes are being committed and the organ responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security fails to act to prevent, stop or hold those responsible to account, often due to narrow tactical interests and geostrategic competition that take precedence over the core responsibility to protect. Prevention starts with breaking the deafening silence and indifference that has too often characterized our Assembly when mass atrocities are committed. A debate in the Assembly about such situations is both our duty and our responsibility.

Prioritizing prevention remains as critical as ever. When they are allowed to occur, mass atrocities destroy the social fabric of a country and its people. We in Rwanda are very well placed to know that. We also need to keep in mind their far-reaching consequences, which often spill over into other countries and have a destabilizing impact on entire regions for future generations. In Rwanda, our post-conflict nation-building experience has required us to develop ongoing solutions specific to our own context, building strong and trusted institutions from scratch. Today those institutions are the guarantors of peace and security and inclusive governance so that we can fight all forms of discrimination. They ensure equality among all Rwandans, both in terms of opportunities and accountability. That is the most effective form of prevention.

With regard to the report of the Secretary-General released earlier this month (A/75/863), I want to reiterate that Rwanda supports the emphasis on preventive

action, which is more desirable than responding only after crises have erupted. Preventive measures should be an integral part of regional, national and international mechanisms to avoid atrocity crimes. At the national level, strengthening the rule of law is an integral element of prevention. In addition, it is vital that post-conflict States invest in efforts aimed at sustaining peace such as justice and reconciliation. We also endorse the Secretary-General's recommendations, including with regard to combating hate speech and incitement, in line with international human rights law and the implementation of the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech, including in the digital space. Rwanda knows first-hand the devastating impact that hate speech can cause if left unchecked. I would now like to conclude by emphasizing three points.

First, regarding hate speech and dehumanization, atrocity crimes are often preceded by incitement to commit them. We call on Member States to implement the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech, as well as established laws that prevent and criminalize hate speech, inflammatory rhetoric, genocide denial and incitement to violence.

Secondly, regarding accountability, holding perpetrators of atrocity crimes to account is critically important and contributes effectively to prevention by acting as a deterrent of future atrocities.

Thirdly and finally, as a top troop- and police-contributing country, Rwanda knows that peacekeeping, when done right, helps to create an environment favourable to the prevention of atrocity crimes and political solutions to conflict. Rwanda's commitment to United Nations peacekeeping and the protection of civilians, wherever we are called to serve, is informed by the bitter lessons learned from our own history and the failure of the United Nations to prevent or stop the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi. That happened almost 50 years after the United Nations was established with the aim of saving future generations from the scourge of war. This year, as we mark the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly and seventy-five years of the United Nations, let it be remembered as one where the Assembly of the people decided to no longer be silent in the face of crimes against humanity, ethnic cleansing, war crimes and genocide. I would like to conclude my statement by quoting His Excellency Mr. Paul Kagame, President of Rwanda.

"We cannot turn the clock back, nor can we undo the harm caused, but we have the power to determine the future and ensure that what happened never happens again."

**Ms. De Souza Schmitz (Brazil):** I would like to thank the Secretary-General, as well as the Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect, for the insightful report on the activities of the United Nations aimed at preventing genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and ethnic cleansing (A/75/863). I also want to welcome the Secretariat's initiative to consult Member States on their preferences for the theme of this year's report. The report of the Secretary-General once again demonstrates the long-term benefits of focusing on prevention in efforts related to the responsibility to protect (R2P). It also highlights how the coronavirus disease pandemic has exacerbated existing vulnerabilities, thereby increasing the risk of serious human rights violations. As the report points out, the call for a global ceasefire, which Brazil welcomed and endorsed, did not put a stop to hostilities or prevent the dire consequences for the populations concerned.

Once tension escalates to armed conflict, it creates a vicious cycle that is hard to break. When violence becomes the preferred answer, respect for the law and for institutions becomes elusive. When lawlessness is the rule, it creates a breeding ground for genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and ethnic cleansing. That is why prevention, which forms the basis for the first and second pillars of the implementation of R2P, should be our top priority. There are many ways to strengthen the prevention of such crimes, as the Secretary-General's report details. It correctly focuses on domestic measures and capacity-building activities, which should be at the core of R2P implementation. From the start, R2P has always focused on individual States' responsibility to protect their own populations and the role of the international community in supporting those efforts. It involves working constantly to develop structural policies that contribute to more peaceful, inclusive and tolerant societies.

The responsible implementation of R2P demands legal clarity and precision. There should be no room for selectivity or ambiguity. Brazil notes with concern that the Secretary-General's report once again uses the term "atrocity crimes" as a synonym for the horrendous acts associated with R2P. What is even more concerning is that the report attempts to introduce a definition for atrocity crimes that has been neither discussed



nor agreed on among Member States. As Brazil has pointed out in previous statements, we as Member States and the United Nations as a whole should avoid the temptation to expand imprecise concepts. The term “atrocities crimes” is defined neither in international law nor in multilateral resolutions or decisions. The four crimes mentioned in the 2005 World Summit outcome document (resolution 60/1) are certainly atrocious, but so are other crimes that are not related to R2P, such as aggression. Despite being dealt with as a homogeneous group, each type of R2P crime may be the result of different factors and may therefore demand distinct strategies for prevention. One common trait, however, is the frequent correlation between R2P crimes and armed conflict, which only highlights the atrocious nature of the crime of aggression and recalls the importance of conflict prevention.

Brazil has is a sponsor of draft resolution A/75/L.82, which includes the item on the responsibility to protect on the General Assembly’s agenda. The importance of this small and strictly procedural step should not be overlooked. It affirms the Assembly’s role as the main forum for discussing R2P. It also represents a recognition that more than 15 years after the international community committed to protecting populations from R2P crimes, there is still a need to collectively discuss its implementation. We need to reflect on why a once-consensus notion now leads to heated debates on the mere possibility of its inclusion on the General Assembly’s agenda. There is also a need to assess what we have gotten right, where we have failed and how to correct our course.

The Secretary-General’s report noted that the annual reports on the responsibility to protect have provided guidance on its implementation over the years. While expressing our deep appreciation to the Secretary-General and the Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect for their efforts, we believe it is high time that Member States took the lead on discussing the concept and operationalization of R2P. There is no better place than the General Assembly, with its wide and representative composition, to hold that debate.

In conclusion, R2P crimes are preventable. The fact that they still occur and claim so many victims is evidence of the importance of increasing our efforts to protect our populations, including through capacity-building and long-term measures capable of promoting more inclusive, diverse and tolerant societies. Brazil

looks forward to continued discussions on the best strategies for advancing those goals.

**Mr. Jinga (Romania):** Romania aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representative of the European Union (EU), in its capacity as observer, and the representative of Costa Rica, on behalf of the 53 members of the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect.

Today’s debate in the General Assembly represents a good opportunity to learn lessons from the past in order to prevent mass atrocities from happening in the future. That should be an objective for all States Members of the United Nations.

We thank the Chef de Cabinet of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General for her remarks on behalf of the Secretary-General, as well as the Secretary-General himself for his latest report (A/75/863) on genocide prevention and the responsibility to protect (R2P). We ask him to continue his very important work on atrocity prevention and R2P. Events in recent years have reaffirmed the relevance of the principle of the responsibility to protect and the importance of continuing efforts to implement it, given that the main purpose of R2P is preventing mass atrocities. We believe that Member States should make good use of all the relevant instruments that the United Nations offers in this area. And in that regard, we would like to express our full support for the mandates of the Special Advisers on the Prevention of Genocide and on the Responsibility to Protect. We support the recommendations made by the Secretary-General in his report on prioritizing the prevention of atrocities at the national, regional and international levels. In that connection, I would like to recall that Romania has ratified the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide and enacted national legislation in accordance with its provisions.

As a strong supporter of the rules-based international order, Romania is committed to the unique role played by the International Criminal Court in preventing and punishing the most serious crimes of concern to the international community. I also want to point out that my country has submitted a unilateral declaration recognizing the compulsory jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice. Regarding the recommendation on including an atrocity-prevention dimension in Human Rights Council mandates where relevant, Romania, as a candidate for election to the

Human Rights Council for the 2023-2025 term, is committed to playing an important role in consolidating the universality of human rights, based on the belief that respect for human rights is an essential component of the atrocity prevention agenda. As the Secretary-General notes, human protection begins with prevention. Ensuring that the Human Rights Council is considering the human rights situation in various countries can itself be a useful early-warning instrument. We would also like to welcome the fifteenth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 60/1, on the responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, as enshrined in the 2005 World Summit outcome document.

Romania acknowledges the imperative of combating discrimination and hate speech, including anti-Semitism, and is fully committed to promoting that principle in all decisions and actions at the international level. At the national level, we are preparing a strategy for preventing and combating anti-Semitism, xenophobia, radicalization and hate speech per our commitment to dealing with the past, ensuring accountability and recognizing the tragedy of the Holocaust. My country is an active member of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, including in the area of genocide prevention. Moreover, as a member of the European Union, Romania supports the EU's common action to operationalize the responsibility to protect. We recognize the importance of early action when it comes to the responsibility to protect and pay particular attention to the protection of civilians, especially as a police- and troop-contributing country involved in peacekeeping missions with a protection-of-civilians mandate.

Romania has consistently supported the inclusion of the item on the responsibility to protect on the agenda of the General Assembly in previous years and is proud to introduce, during this session and together with Belgium, Botswana, Costa Rica, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Guatemala, Luxembourg, Morocco, Qatar, the Republic of Korea and Rwanda, draft resolution A/75/L.82, entitled "The responsibility to protect and the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity". That concise procedural initiative is aimed at keeping R2P as an annual item on the agenda of the General Assembly, as well as ensuring regular annual reports by the Secretary-General on this important topic. We encourage all Member States to vote in favour of the

draft resolution, which the Assembly will take action on at the end of this debate.

**Ms. Webster** (Australia): This year marks the twentieth anniversary of the release of the report on the responsibility to protect by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, co-chaired by a former Foreign Minister of Australia, Gareth Evans. The world then came together in 2005 to unanimously adopt the responsibility to protect (R2P) norm. Those two watershed moments rallied the international community in a shared vision for preventing a repeat of the worst atrocity crimes inflicted on humankind. Since then, we have seen consistent, overwhelming support for maintaining a dialogue on R2P in the Assembly. History has tragically revealed that no society is immune to the risk of atrocity crimes and that there should be no tolerance for complacency. We need to do better, especially because the coronavirus disease pandemic has exacerbated vulnerabilities and increased risk factors. It is time to once again reinforce our common vision and commitment to R2P. We therefore strongly support the adoption of draft resolution A/75/L.82, which is being put forward in the Assembly today to further strengthen R2P within the United Nations system.

The purposes, principles and obligations under the Charter of the United Nations are not divisible. Sovereignty comes with responsibility, and that includes the responsibility to protect our populations from mass atrocities. Australia thanks the Secretary-General for both his 2020 and 2021 reports on R2P (A/74/964 and A/75/863). They make a vital contribution to our understanding and operationalization of the norm. We encourage him to include updates on the implementation of his previous recommendations in his future reports. We also continue to support the important work of the Secretary-General's Special Advisers on the Prevention of Genocide and on the Responsibility to Protect in addressing upstream drivers of atrocity crimes, strengthening early warning and prevention and providing analyses of unfolding crises. We need to do more to further integrate an atrocity-prevention lens across all the relevant areas of United Nations work. We commend the increasing efforts to use consistent language and joined-up approaches across the human rights, peace and security and justice spectrum. We must continue to promote justice and accountability, which are key to preventing the recurrence of atrocities. When States hold perpetrators to account, the prospects

for resolution, transitional justice and sustainable peace are strengthened.

We encourage Security Council members to bring potential atrocity situations under consideration as early as possible. We encourage all States, and especially Security Council members, to join Australia and more than 100 other States in supporting the code of conduct regarding Council action against genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, as well as the political declaration on the suspension of veto powers in cases of mass atrocity. It is our shared responsibility to take the opportunity to interrogate in more detail how the United Nations system, in all its moving parts, can improve our capacity for accountability, early warning, mitigation and the prevention of mass atrocities.

**Mr. Braun** (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): My delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representative of the European Union, in its capacity as observer, and the representative of Costa Rica, on behalf of the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect.

I thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/75/863) and Ms. Alice Wairimu Nderitu and Ms. Karen Smith, the Special Advisers on the Prevention of Genocide and on the Responsibility to Protect, for their tireless efforts.

Members are already aware of my country's commitment to the integrity of multilateral governance institutions, with the United Nations at their centre, and to a just international order based on the rule of law. The responsibility to protect is an integral part of that international order. At the time of the adoption of the 2005 World Summit outcome document (resolution 60/1), we were unanimous in recalling that every Government has a fundamental responsibility to protect its population from the worst crimes against humanity. Unfortunately, on the ground, things have not changed much since 2005. The number of the most serious crimes affecting the entire international community has not decreased. The statement made a few minutes ago by my colleague from Myanmar unfortunately speaks for itself.

Some States that often have trouble with the concept of the responsibility to protect and the obligations it implies refuse to engage in the debate by insisting on the principles of sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of States, which are indeed recognized by the Charter of the United Nations and accepted by all Member States. However, those principles

were not conceived in the minds of the drafters of the Charter as giving carte blanche to violate human rights with impunity. Human rights are enshrined in the Charter and in international law in the same way. It is sometimes said that the responsibility to protect is manipulated for political purposes and misused to bring about regime change. We do not subscribe to that view. The responsibility to protect civilian populations lies primarily with the States concerned. Moreover, the responsibility-to-protect mechanism is gradual and is made up of an entire range of peaceful, diplomatic and humanitarian measures, as many speakers today have pointed out. We welcome today's debate in this Hall. The General Assembly, along with the Human Rights Council, is indeed a prime forum for taking stock of the responsibility to protect. The Security Council is too often paralysed by the vetoes of some of its permanent members. From that point of view, efforts to reform the Security Council remain pertinent.

Finally, the role of civil society is essential at both the local and international levels, where non-governmental organizations such as the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect can support States in their efforts to fulfil their international obligations. I encourage all Member States to designate a focal point for the responsibility to protect in order to maintain both the momentum and the pressure to translate that principle into action on the ground. My delegation will vote in favour of draft resolution A/75/L.82, which was presented today and of which we are a sponsor. It may be procedural in nature, but it will certainly send a strong political signal of our shared commitment.

**Mr. Zellenrath** (Netherlands): The Kingdom of the Netherlands fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of the European Union, in its capacity as observer, and would like to add the following remarks in its national capacity. I will focus on three issues — the importance of draft resolution A/75/L.82, on the responsibility to protect (R2P); the prevention of atrocity crimes; and the enhancement of the cooperation between New York and Geneva.

With regard to the draft resolution, I would first like to express my gratitude for this fourth formal General Assembly debate on the principle of R2P. We fully support the draft resolution under consideration today and would like to thank the core group for its endeavours in submitting it.

Preventing atrocity crimes is a key task for the United Nations and is in fact the very reason for its existence. Atrocity crimes affect all three pillars of the work of the United Nations, and their costs go far beyond the monetary. Such crimes affect the very fabric of societies. As a staunch supporter of R2P, the Netherlands emphasizes that if we want to ensure a continuing, constructive and sustainable dialogue on prevention and protection, R2P should be made a standing agenda item in the General Assembly.

That leads me to my second point, on the prevention of atrocity crimes. It is clear that the effects of the coronavirus disease pandemic and increases in hunger, poverty, unemployment and instability may further exacerbate human rights violations and lead to violent conflict. In our view, efforts at all levels are necessary to mitigate those risks at the national level, in cooperation between Member States and in the Security Council in particular. If information sends a clear message that atrocity crimes are taking place, the Security Council has a responsibility to respond. Populations should be protected and universal human rights respected at all times. Early warning must lead to early action. At the same time, combating impunity and holding perpetrators to account also serves to deter future human rights violations.

The Netherlands is proud to be the host country of the International Criminal Court. We fully support its mandate, for which the principle of accountability is key. Ensuring accountability helps to break cycles of impunity and violence and thereby contributes to the prevention of atrocities.

Thirdly, as regards cooperation between New York and Geneva, it is crucial to exchange best practices for strengthening the first and second pillars of R2P. To that end, we must use all the tools at our disposal. In Geneva, the Human Rights Council plays a crucial role in that regard, and last year it adopted an important resolution (resolution 45/31) that is directly relevant to R2P. Entitled “The contribution of the Human Rights Council to the prevention of human rights violations”, it constitutes a valuable addition to the Council’s toolbox, along with its regular sessions, the Universal Periodic Review and its Special Procedures, which help us identify risks of human rights violations. Furthermore, the High Commissioner for Human Rights should brief the Human Rights Council and the Security Council when the available data points to a heightened risk of human rights violations. That would further strengthen cooperation and interaction between New York and

Geneva, which are pivotal in our commitment to preventing mass atrocities.

In conclusion, our engagement with R2P is clear. Let us practice what we preach so that together we can prevent atrocity crimes from happening.

**Mrs. Chatardová** (Czech Republic): The Czech Republic fully supports the statements made previously by the representative of the European Union, in its capacity as observer, and by the representative of Costa Rica, on behalf of the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect. I would like to add some remarks in my national capacity.

The responsibility to protect (R2P) their populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity stands at the core of the social contract that gives States their *raison d’être*. At the World Summit in 2005, we all united in subscribing to that universal responsibility, and the three pillars of R2P were born. Back then, we were reacting to the dire situation of the peoples of various countries with ongoing domestic conflicts who were affected by mass atrocities, perpetrated all too often by their own State officials. Ensuring accountability for mass atrocity crimes is one of the best ways to prevent their recurrence. Where national mechanisms fail, it is up to the international community to step in.

The international community should deploy every available means, including early-warning mechanisms, mediation and sanctions, to prevent conflicts and preclude any atrocities committed against civilians. Special emphasis must be given to the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, as well as political participation and accountability. The protection of populations in vulnerable situations is now more pressing than ever as the coronavirus disease pandemic has led to increased inequalities. Despite the Secretary-General’s call for a global ceasefire, conflicts have continued and the conflict-related risk of atrocity crimes has increased.

The Czech Republic supports the International Criminal Court, which remains our most important institution for fighting impunity for genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. We fully support all other relevant United Nations bodies, including the efforts of the Special Advisers on the Responsibility to Protect and on the Prevention of Genocide. We also welcome the Human Rights Council’s adoption of its resolution 45/31 on R2P.



As a proud member of the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect, the Czech Republic stands ready to take another step within the General Assembly to implement R2P more effectively. As one of the many sponsors of draft resolution A/75/L.82, on R2P and the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, we would like to see the General Assembly maintain R2P as an annual item on its agenda, along with regular annual reports by the Secretary-General.

We believe that hearing all voices and discussing all views, without procedural obstacles, based on the Secretary-General's reports, would help to further implement the R2P concept, and we urge all Member States to vote in favour of the draft resolution when the Assembly takes action on it.

**Mr. Stefanile (Italy):** Italy aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of the European Union, in its capacity as observer, and of Costa Rica, on behalf of the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect. We would like to add the following remarks in our national capacity.

Last year we celebrated the fifteenth anniversary of the principle of the responsibility to protect (R2P). Nevertheless, these remain challenging times for the protection of civilians. Despite some tangible progress in advancing atrocity prevention at the national and international levels, we continue to witness widespread violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, as shown in this year's report of the Secretary-General on R2P (A/75/863).

The coronavirus disease outbreak has aggravated the suffering of people living in conflict zones. The restrictive measures that States have adopted to prevent the spread of the pandemic have often had a negative impact on humanitarian logistics and exacerbated socioeconomic hardship, one of the primary triggers of atrocities. Against that background, Italy, which remains a staunch supporter and advocate of the R2P principles, believes it is time to step up our efforts to advance that collective agenda.

Addressing the roots of atrocity crimes is key to advancing the R2P principles. The commitment of Member States to the responsibility to protect is first and foremost a commitment to preventing and mitigating the risk of the commission of the most heinous crimes. Atrocities can and must be prevented. In that regard, it is essential to strengthen the tools for early warning in order to effectively and promptly detect the first signals of disruption. The systematic introduction

of references to the protection of civilians in the mandates of peacekeeping operations is necessary. We also advocate for instituting a cross-cutting strategy linking the various United Nations agendas, from the protection of civilians to women and peace and security and from sustainable development to the broader human rights agenda.

Keeping a gender perspective is also key, as women and girls are disproportionately affected by humanitarian crises, notably in the context of forced displacement. They are also the main victims of the atrocities perpetrated in such contexts. Strengthening civil society and building pluralistic and inclusive societies provide the best safety net against mass atrocities. We need to raise awareness among the younger generations on the importance of a widespread commitment to strengthening tools for preventing and stopping mass atrocities.

We welcome initiatives aimed at ensuring that the Security Council is able to effectively prevent or act in situations of mass atrocity, including the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency group's code of conduct and the French-Mexican initiative on the use of the veto in cases of mass atrocities.

Along with the European Union and its member States, we have designated a national focal point to advance the implementation of R2P across different administrations. This year, we renewed our financial support to the Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect with a pledge of €100,000, added to similar contributions allocated in previous years.

We believe that the General Assembly should discuss these important issues regularly in order to ensure that we advance this agenda and make further progress on the road to fully promoting and protecting human rights. In that spirit, we have sponsored and will vote in favour of draft resolution A/75/L.82, which is aimed at including R2P as a permanent item on the annual agenda of the Assembly, and we encourage other Member States to do the same.

**The Acting President:** We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item for this meeting. We will hear the remaining speakers this afternoon at 3 p.m. in this Hall.

Before adjourning, I would like to request that delegates leave the Hall while maintaining physical distancing.

*The meeting rose at 1 p.m.*