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65th plenary meeting

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Official Records

President: Mr. Bozkir (Turkey)

In the absence of the President, Ms. Kadare (Albania), Vice-President, took the Chair.

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

Agenda 135 (continued)

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 Acting President: The General Assembly will resume its consideration of agenda item 135, entitled “The responsibility to protect and the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity”.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Altarsha (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation has reviewed the Secretary-General’s report (A/75/863), and I would like to make the following observations in my national capacity.

First, my delegation, along with a considerable number of Member States, continues to reject the exclusionary and unprofessional approach that aims to exploit and politicize the concept of the responsibility to protect in a way that deepens divisions within the General Assembly and forces the concept to deviate from its humanitarian objectives.

Second, it is worth reminding the Assembly that in one of his reports on the responsibility to protect, the Secretary-General made clear his serious concerns regarding some individual Governments’ misuse of the concept in Libya, a brother country that is still enduring the tragedy of a situation of destruction, chaos, political division and terrorism that was chiefly caused by the military air strikes carried out by the armies of various Governments claiming to protect civilians.

Third, a significant portion of the resources and budget of the United Nations is used to finance its specialized agencies’ relief operations in countries affected by wars, external interference or direct occupation by a State or group of States under various pretexts. The countries affected may also be dealing with terrorism that is backed by the same States. All of us in this Hall are aware that there are a small number of States that have been able to destroy and occupy, leaving it up to the rest of us to shoulder the responsibility of restoration, relief and the rescue of civilians.

Fourth, our brothers and sisters in occupied Palestine have been dealing with tragic events in the past few days. I would like to inform my colleagues who may have missed the news that the occupation authorities forced Palestinians out of their homes in Jerusalem, and specifically its Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood, on false pretences and pretexts. After that, they began aerial bombardments of civilians in the Gaza Strip. Try to imagine what it is like for someone who comes home to find that his house has been reduced to rubble and that his family members are buried under it, or that a group of settlers have occupied his home and driven his family

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out onto the street. I have a simple question about this. What do those who defend the concept of responsibility to protect have to say about what is happening in occupied Palestine? Why have they not put together an international coalition and imposed a no-fly zone over Palestine to prevent further atrocity crimes? Is this yet another case of individualism and selectivity?

Fifth, the Syrian Arab Republic remains committed to the Charter of the United Nations. We will continue to reject any attempt to politicize or distort the 2005 World Summit outcome document (resolution 60/1). In that context, we reiterate once again that those responsible for the current deep divisions regarding the concept of the responsibility to protect are the Governments that have come up with false legal arguments to fit their own distorted view of the concept.

Sixth, there has been a lot of talk about creating an early-warning system to address disasters, genocide and other atrocities, as stated in the Secretary-General's report. But where was such a system when hundreds of thousands of foreign terrorist fighters flocked to Syria and Iraq? Where was it when terrorists were being mobilized, recruited, transported and armed, and when the murder, slaughter and displacement of people began? Did States and Governments sound the alarm before they sent their occupying forces to my country? Only when the Secretariat and the Governments of those States admit that the cases I have just mentioned are part of an international failure to respect the principles of the Charter and the will of States will we be able to have a transparent discussion on the concept of the responsibility to protect and the way to apply it correctly.

Seventh, it is worth stressing that the purpose behind the concept of the responsibility to protect has always been to promote national sovereignty rather than undermine it, assist Governments rather than overthrow them and protect civilians rather than displace them. Most importantly, it was not intended to be used by any external party to impose its will or launch aerial attacks on Member States on the pretext of exercising a moral responsibility to protect defenceless civilians. My delegation therefore calls for this item to be removed from the agenda of the General Assembly and for a vote against it.

Finally, as we have done in many of our national statements, we want to assure Member States that while what is happening today is targeting one category of

States, their countries will be included in the second or third group, or at best the fourth, even if they are not included in the current targeted group. The conspiracies and occupation that we are facing now are unfortunately what their countries will be facing in the future. No one is safe from these brutal policies. Member States have been warned.

Mr. Abd Aziz (Malaysia): My delegation would like to thank the President for convening this meeting. We welcome the opportunity for Member States to deliberate and have a frank exchange of views on the report of the Secretary-General (A/75/863) on the responsibility to protect (R2P). Our presence here is testament to our common commitment made at the 2005 World Summit to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. We note that the Secretary-General's report provides an overview of how R2P has been operationalized through the prevention, early-warning and response work of the United Nations, led by the Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect. My delegation is dismayed that despite broad endorsement of the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire, made during the early months of the coronavirus disease pandemic, the conflict-related risks of atrocity crimes continue to rise. My delegation is also concerned about the rapid and alarming increase in hate speech and incitements to violence in the past few years, given that they constitute well-known risk factors for mass atrocity crimes such as genocide and ethnic cleansing.

For Malaysia, there can be no doubt that the responsibility to protect starts at home. Building national capacities for prevention remains a key priority. In that regard, we agree with the Secretary-General that the international community should encourage and help States to exercise this responsibility, as appropriate, including by working with national institutions to advance prevention as part of a State-owned sustainable effort. Nonetheless, the principles of consent and the sovereignty of States should remain paramount when considering international assistance. We must bear in mind that every country differs in terms of political systems, historical background, religious, ethnic and cultural make-up and socioeconomic conditions.

In our view, non-military solutions should always be the first option, as military interventions can only cause further human catastrophe. In efforts to respond to or prevent the escalation of atrocity crimes, Malaysia will

continue to support the use of a number of non-military measures, including mediation, monitoring and observer missions, fact-finding missions, commissions of inquiry and public advocacy by international officials. In that context, we strongly support the view that prevention must become the rule rather than the exception. The Security Council, the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council, the Peacebuilding Commission and regional and subregional organizations can all enhance their contributions to preventing atrocity crimes by demonstrating a greater willingness to consider and respond to the earliest signs of risk. In this respect, we join others in calling for restraint in the use of veto power in the Security Council, especially in cases of atrocity crimes. For practical reasons, we believe the exercise of the veto should be regulated so as to allow the international community to act promptly to save innocent people from brutal atrocities. Inaction in such situations should be avoided in order to enable the Council to carry out its mandate as prescribed in the Charter of the United Nations.

In principle, Malaysia welcomes the noble aims of R2P. However, we reiterate that R2P still requires in-depth discussion in the international community in order to clearly define its meaning, applications, implementation and effects on States at both the international and national levels. We believe that only through complete understanding and systematic application to all Member States can we truly accept R2P as an international norm.

Having followed all the discourse on this topic since the 2005 World Summit, we note that opinions continue to diverge among Member States regarding the concept of R2P and its understanding and implementation, especially with regard to State sovereignty and the international mandate to act. We see merit in holding regular meetings on the issue so that we may have more opportunities for enriched discussion and for narrowing our differences. The lack of discussion has resulted in a continued lack of consensus and action on the part of the international community in addressing atrocities that may require urgent intervention. In that connection, Malaysia stands ready to work closely with the United Nations and its Member States to develop options with a view to strengthening civilian action to prevent atrocity crimes. We sincerely hope that with every debate we will move closer to a point of convergence so that we can respond effectively to

mass atrocity crimes and ensure that such unspeakable tragedies never recur.

Ms. Jurečko (Slovenia): Slovenia welcomes today's formal debate in the General Assembly on the responsibility to protect (R2P) and the inclusion of R2P, as well as the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, in the formal agenda of the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly. We would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/75/863).

Slovenia aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of the European Union, in its capacity as observer, and with the statement by the representative of Costa Rica on behalf of the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect (see A/75/PV.64).

History has taught us that strong preventive efforts, and early warning followed by early action, are crucial to ensuring that our past failures are not repeated. It is imperative to deliver on our promise of "never again". Looking back, we should acknowledge that important progress has been made and celebrate the many achievements. However, as the biggest crisis of this modern world has challenged our humanity and solidarity, we have yet again witnessed the tremendous suffering of too many people, including children. In that respect, we would like to recall the Secretary-General's call for an immediate global ceasefire in order to ensure protection for the most vulnerable to coronavirus disease in situations of armed conflict.

It is worrisome that as we are grappling with the suffering caused by the pandemic, we are also seeing a rise in conflict-related and other risk factors for atrocity crimes, including incitement to violence, identity-based hate speech and hate crimes, demonstrating the urgent need to scale up our efforts at every level to protect populations from future mass atrocity crimes and build more resilient societies. It further reaffirms a clear need for regular dialogues on implementing the responsibility to protect and preventing mass atrocity crimes. Slovenia fully supports 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 is under consideration today. We call on all Member States to support it by voting in favour of its adoption.

We reaffirm our support for the Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect

and fully support the work of the Special Advisers on the Prevention of Genocide and on the Responsibility to Protect. We would like to thank them for their efforts and dedication to mainstreaming R2P and genocide prevention across the United Nations system and assisting Member States. We are also grateful to civil society and non-governmental organizations, particularly the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, for their efforts and support in raising awareness of the concept and advancing its implementation.

Slovenia has been organizing biannual regional meetings of R2P focal points and academic conferences on R2P since 2013 and will host the next virtual international academic conference on 1 and 2 June. Furthermore, Slovenia's focal point is a member of the steering group aimed at mobilizing effective implementation of R2P through the Global Network of R2P Focal Points. I would like to take this opportunity to encourage countries that have not yet done so to appoint senior officials as focal points in order to build their national and collective capacity in prevention processes.

Prevention remains key to protecting populations from situations that may lead to mass atrocity crimes. Enhanced preventive efforts, and early warning followed by early action, are essential if we are to prevent atrocities more effectively. We should spare no effort in investing systematically in preventing genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. By addressing human rights violations as early-warning signs, the Security Council has a vital role in preventing mass atrocity crimes. The Special Advisers and other experts should brief the Security Council regularly on issues that deserve our attention. Regular briefings by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the leaders of fact-finding missions and commissions of inquiry can strengthen the effective prevention of mass atrocities.

To ensure timely action, Slovenia supports the initiative of the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency group regarding the use of the veto in Security Council action against genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, as well as the French and Mexican initiative on the suspension of veto powers in cases of mass atrocities. The Human Rights Council and its mechanisms, such as the Universal Periodic Review and Special Procedures mandate holders, also provide up-to-date, reliable information on human rights situations on the ground and thereby play an

essential role in the early-warning system. Preventive diplomacy and better responses to large-scale violations of human rights and international humanitarian law are also needed.

At the national level, Slovenia organizes awareness-raising events on R2P by using the Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes, which we translated into our own language some years ago. Other activities, such as delivering on our commitment to leave no one behind and implementing the World Programme for Human Rights Education, further contribute to the protection of human rights and the prevention of atrocities.

The United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech is an important contribution to preventing hate speech and incitements to violence that can trigger mass atrocity crimes. Sadly, although ensuring accountability for atrocity crimes and other serious abuses of human rights and international humanitarian law is an essential part of prevention, it continues to present a major challenge. In that respect, Slovenia strongly supports the work of the International Criminal Court and of regional and national mechanisms to counter impunity. Together with a group of like-minded States, Slovenia supports the adoption of a new multilateral instrument on mutual legal assistance and extradition for international crimes to enhance accountability for perpetrators of atrocity crimes. We hope to organize a diplomatic conference in Ljubljana next year to draft the new instrument.

I would like to conclude by reiterating Slovenia's strong commitment to promoting and implementing the responsibility to protect. Slovenia will remain a strong advocate for the promotion and protection of human rights and the rule of law to prevent mass atrocity crimes.

Mr. Mike (Hungary): Hungary 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 (see A/75/PV.64), and would like to add a few observations in its national capacity.

At the outset, I would like to thank the President for convening this formal debate. After the cancellation of the debate in 2020 because of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, it is a great privilege to be here this year. We welcome the new report of the Secretary-General (A/75/863) and the inclusion of the

responsibility to protect (R2P) on the formal agenda of the General Assembly at its current session.

As a sponsor of draft resolution A/75/L.82, Hungary strongly supports its adoption by consensus, the inclusion of the principle as an annual item on the agenda of the General Assembly and regular annual reports by the Secretary-General, all of which will contribute to furthering dialogue among the Member States and enable a much greater focus on the substantive elements of R2P rather than repeated procedural debates year after year. Hungary shares the growing concerns of the Secretary-General about the spillover effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in terms of hate speech, discrimination and stigmatization as contributing factors in atrocity crimes. We have to strengthen the United Nations response by adopting specific measures to improve internal coordination in the area of R2P. This is why Hungary is strongly committed to supporting the work of the Special Advisers on the Prevention of Genocide and on the Responsibility to Protect. We welcome their efforts to mainstream R2P within the United Nations system.

As a member of the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect, both in Geneva and in New York, Hungary is dedicated to raising awareness about the principle at the national and international levels. Hungary hosts the Budapest Centre for Mass Atrocities Prevention, which is devoted to helping to build a global architecture for the prevention of atrocity crimes and focuses its activities on education and disseminating a culture of dialogue. With the launch of the E-Youth Library for Mass Atrocities Prevention, the Budapest Centre provides a collection of news items relevant to the subject of the responsibility to protect, including a wide variety of official documents, research papers and articles by academics and reports prepared by partner organizations on at-risk situations. The Centre has also joined the project of the Central and Eastern European Network for the Prevention of Intolerance and Group Hatred, whose main objectives are fostering capacities for dealing with intolerance, group hatred and violence among young people and creating a platform for multi-agency cooperation in the project countries and across the Central and Eastern European region.

Finally, Hungary is also committed to strengthening the Global Network of R2P Focal Points in order to draw broader attention to our action under the R2P label. We encourage all actors to appoint their focal points and join this community. Hungary

supports the work of the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011, as well as the International Criminal Court, to end impunity and bring perpetrators to justice. As a member of the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency group, Hungary advocates for voluntarily refraining from the use of the veto in the Security Council in cases of mass atrocity crimes and encourages all Member States that have not yet done so to sign the group's code of conduct.

Ms. Cerrato (Honduras) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would first like to express my country's pleasure at once again being able to hold the formal debate on the responsibility to protect and the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, which represents a unique opportunity for Member States to promote dialogue on actions to implement the responsibility to protect on the basis of the 2005 World Summit outcome document (resolution 60/1). In addition, Honduras salutes the sponsors of draft resolution A/75/L.82, on the responsibility to protect, which Honduras supports, for bringing this issue before the General Assembly. I would also like to express my country's appreciation and to welcome the report of Secretary-General António Guterres, entitled "Advancing atrocity prevention: work of the Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect" (A/75/863), as well as the work of the Special Advisers on the Prevention of Genocide and on the Responsibility to Protect.

As the Secretary-General says in his report, in the difficult times that have resulted from the coronavirus disease pandemic, which has only increased people's vulnerabilities, we believe it is crucial to strengthen international cooperation to respond to the major challenges related to protection that developing countries are facing, prioritizing respect for international human rights and humanitarian law and the rights of refugees and migrants. Nor can we divorce the responsibility to protect from efforts to achieve genuine sustainable peace, with the goal of strengthening international peace and security while ensuring the full participation of women and young people in all areas of society, particularly conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

Honduras, in keeping with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and its commitment to the protection of fundamental human rights and the

maintenance of international peace and security, joined the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire in 2020, as we believe that peace is vital, particularly amid a global health crisis with a serious impact on the most vulnerable. The responsibility to protect is a priority for my country. In recent years we have carried out joint actions in the public sector, including Congress and the Ministries of Human Rights, Security and Defence, together with academia and civil society. For example, the Ministry of Human Rights, through our directorate for human rights and a culture of peace, provided training on the topic to 4,361 members of the armed forces between 2018 and 2021. Furthermore, over the same period, some 100 public servants from the Ministries of Human Rights, Security and Defence and other Government institutions, received training in the prevention of mass atrocities through courses of the Auschwitz Institute for the Prevention of Genocide and Mass Atrocities.

I would also like to highlight that since 2012, Honduras has actively participated in the Latin American Network for Genocide and Mass Atrocity Prevention, an initiative focused on the development of regional public policies in the areas of human rights and anti-discrimination, with a special focus on the prevention of atrocities. Since 2019 we have also incorporated the subject of genocide and prevention of mass atrocities into the training curriculum for public servants and members of our armed forces, as well as publishing didactic material with a focus on the prevention of discrimination.

In conclusion, I would like to say that my country is committed to complying with the Rome Statute and to continuing to move forward together with the competent national, regional and international bodies in order to prevent atrocity crimes and implement its responsibility to protect the people of Honduras.

Ms. Joyini (South Africa): Let me begin by thanking the Secretary-General for his report, entitled "Advancing atrocity prevention: work of the Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect" (A/75/863). I would also like to take this opportunity to commend the Office for its role, contributions and efforts, as well as the mandate of the Special Advisers on the Prevention of Genocide and on the Responsibility to Protect.

South Africa agrees with the Secretary-General's assessment that these efforts require consistent

attention. As the international community, it is therefore our duty to support and deepen our collective efforts, raise awareness and address the root causes of atrocity crimes, including by identifying risks and mitigation measures. As we are all aware, the notion of the responsibility to protect (R2P), as defined in the 2005 World Summit outcome document (resolution 60/1), emphasizes that it is the responsibility of States to protect their populations from atrocity crimes — that is, genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing. While the international community has made progress towards the implementation of the responsibility to protect, we must redouble our efforts to guarantee the protection of our citizens through its further operationalization. In that regard, South Africa would like to highlight the following points.

First, the challenges posed by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic have undermined the gains made by Governments and regional bodies in implementing the responsibility to protect. As the Secretary-General says in his report, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing vulnerabilities and created new protection challenges. There has been a surge all over the world in stigmatization and hate speech and in increased incitement and violence towards national, ethnic, racial, religious or linguistic groups. In addition, State and non-State actors continue to flagrantly disregard the principles of international human rights and humanitarian law. The Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire has not always been heeded, and the deliberate targeting of schools and hospitals, the destruction of religious and heritage sites, the weaponization of food and widespread sexual and gender-based violence have unfortunately increased since the start of the pandemic. In that context, the international community must enhance its cooperation in order to prepare for the post-pandemic recovery and deepen efforts to promote human rights and prevent atrocities. This also demonstrates the importance of strengthening our efforts to ensure the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and of regional initiatives such as the African Union's Agenda 2063.

Secondly, the international community must strengthen the tools provided by the Charter of the United Nations for the peaceful settlement of disputes. At the 2005 World Summit, Member States committed to protecting populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. Since

then, however, conflicts have changed drastically, becoming more complex and multidimensional. We must therefore find innovative ways to address such unprecedented threats and challenges.

Thirdly, the international community has access to a multitude of tools under the Charter providing preventive measures for conflicts and atrocity crimes. We should therefore ensure full implementation of the three-pillar strategy for the implementation of the responsibility to protect, as highlighted in the 2005 World Summit outcome document (resolution 60/1). Additionally, the Security Council, as the principal United Nations organ charged with the maintenance of international peace and security, must take preventive measures, within its mandate, to address emerging conflicts. Should the Council manifestly fail to take up that responsibility, the General Assembly must act, particularly where populations are at risk of suffering atrocity crimes within the ambit of the responsibility to protect.

Fourthly, in the context of the women and peace and security agenda, and as we work towards the full implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent related resolutions, South Africa will continue to call for women's full, equal and meaningful participation in political and economic systems to help address the root causes of conflict and atrocity crimes. As the Secretary-General's report rightly highlights, working with women peacebuilders to end inequality and discrimination and to protect and empower women and girls reinforces efforts to prevent atrocity crimes.

Fifthly, our collective efforts must also include support for nationally and regionally led initiatives, as well as grass-roots and civil-society organizations, which are often on the ground assisting Governments with implementation. Given the current global dynamics, compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, it will be useful for the Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect to engage with the United Nations membership and regional bodies on country-specific issues and provide analysis and recommendations as to where Member States can lend support.

Lastly, I also want to take this opportunity to reiterate that South Africa remains committed to instruments that promote and implement the responsibility to protect. Among other things, they embody our

commitment to human rights and humanitarian law and include Africa's own instruments, such as the Constitutive Act of the African Union (AU), as well as the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights and the African peer review mechanisms. We are pleased that the Secretary-General's report recognizes that the AU is also integrating risk factors and indicators for genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity into its continental early-warning system and those of a number of Africa's regional economic communities. South Africa, as a member of the Global Network of R2P Focal Points and the Peacebuilding Commission, and as co-Chair of the Group of Friends of Security Sector Reform, will continue to use those platforms to promote and prioritize negotiations and the use of good offices, mediation, arbitration and other peaceful means to address any challenges faced by countries affected by conflict.

In conclusion, we must acknowledge that this plenary meeting is more critical today than ever, as we strive together to protect people from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. In the context of what is going on in the occupied Palestinian territories, we must also recognize the legal responsibility of occupying Powers over the people whose land they occupy. When applying the principle of the responsibility to protect, we must recognize the concerns about possible double standards and selective views of the principle, as we have seen in the recent past. That is why open and frank exchanges such as today's meeting are necessary to dispel misconceptions. In that regard, South Africa will vote in favour of draft resolution A/75/L.82, entitled "The responsibility to protect and the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity".

Mr. Kridelka (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): Belgium welcomes the holding of this formal debate on the responsibility to protect. My delegation fully associates itself with the statements made by the representative of the European Union, 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. I would like to make a few additional remarks in my national capacity. I will address three points — full compliance with the commitments that all the States Members of the United Nations made in 2005; the special responsibility of the Security Council; and finally, the key role played by the

Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect.

First, I would like to emphasize that today's meeting is directly related to the commitments we all made at the 2005 World Summit with regard to the responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. On that occasion, we agreed that the General Assembly should continue to consider the responsibility to protect and its implications. In the World Summit outcome document (resolution 60/1), the emphasis was rightly placed on the primary responsibility of States to protect their populations. There can be no ambiguity in that regard. State sovereignty is not an obstacle to the responsibility to protect. On the contrary, they are two mutually reinforcing concepts.

Since 2009, the Secretary-General's annual reports on the responsibility to protect have provided clear and concrete guidance on the implementation of the principle. The informal interactive dialogues and debates held in this Hall have also provided an opportunity for all Member States to engage in an ongoing dialogue on the scope of the responsibility to protect and to share their good practices, successes and failures. The conceptual debate should not prevent us from continuing to work on operationalizing the responsibility to protect. We owe it to the populations who are victims of multiple atrocities in Yemen, Myanmar, Syria and elsewhere, but also to those in countries where there is a risk of atrocities. It was in that spirit that Belgium joined the transregional group behind the draft procedural resolution (A/75/L.82) before us today. We invite all Member States to support it in order to provide an appropriate framework for furthering our dialogue on how Member States and the United Nations can more effectively prevent atrocity crimes.

That brings me to my second point. Beyond the primary role of States, the commitment made in 2005 emphasized that the international community should intervene when national authorities are unable to fulfil their responsibility to protect, or when they are manifestly failing to protect their populations. In that context, the Security Council has a particular role to play. First and foremost, the Council should make use of the many tools at its disposal to act in the area of atrocity prevention. During its term on the Council in 2019 and 2020, Belgium therefore focused in particular on specific measures for girls and young women, in line with the priority we give to the rights of the child,

women's rights and the women and peace and security agenda. We also successfully advocated for regular informal preventive briefings with representatives of the Secretariat intended to strengthen the Council's early-warning capacity, notably by being better informed of situations that could lead to atrocities. We also remain convinced of the need for closer ties between the Security Council in New York and the human rights bodies and mechanisms in Geneva.

Beyond that, the Security Council can also contribute, within peace operations mandates, to capacity-building in the areas of the rule of law, good governance and access to justice. In order to deter new atrocity crimes, it can also support domestic judicial proceedings and hybrid courts, and even refer situations to the International Criminal Court. Finally, in the event of a mass atrocity situation, the Council must be able to discharge its responsibilities and take coercive measures if necessary. This is why Belgium has signed on to the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency group's code of conduct and continues to fully support the Franco-Mexican initiative to set guidelines for the exercise of the right of veto in cases of atrocity crimes.

In conclusion, I would like to commend the remarkable work of the Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect. Its role and its many concrete activities are deservedly highlighted in the latest report of the Secretary-General on the responsibility to protect (A/75/863). Belgium is particularly pleased with the Office's approach to working at the local level, for example by supporting atrocity-prevention initiatives set up by civil society. My country supports it financially and we encourage Member States in a position to do so to join us as voluntary contributors.

Mr. Sparber (Liechtenstein): Liechtenstein welcomes this debate on the responsibility to protect (R2P) and aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Costa Rica on behalf of the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect.

The agreement on the responsibility to protect was one of the most important achievements of the 2005 World Summit, and Liechtenstein supports draft resolution A/75/L.82, put forward by Croatia to institutionalize the General Assembly discussions on the topic. Liechtenstein remains fully committed to the R2P norm, as does an overwhelming majority of the General Assembly. We would also like to remind

the Assembly that not only do the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations on the authorization of the use of force apply as a matter of course, they are also referenced in the relevant provisions of the 2005 World Summit outcome document (resolution 60/1) on R2P, so that nothing in those provisions suggests a change in the legal basis for the use of force. While certain disagreements persist, it is time to redirect the debate away from the conceptual level and refocus it on implementation. The crimes subsumed under R2P are not theoretical or abstract in nature. They are the most harrowing expressions of brutality and disregard for human value and dignity to which people can fall victim. Addressing them should therefore be a matter of practical urgency for the Assembly, not a theoretical dispute.

The responsibility of each State to protect its population from mass atrocities is uncontested, but in committing to the R2P norm, we have also collectively agreed on a joint obligation when authorities are unable or unwilling to live up to that responsibility. R2P can be implemented through a broad variety of measures, from diplomatic engagement to more vigorous action, including by the Security Council. The world has been observing the inability of the Security Council to do its work with increasing frustration. The Council not only refuses to act in many situations where it is clearly mandated to, it also often deprives itself of the tools to address situations early on from a preventive perspective, such as institutionalized briefings from relevant parts of the United Nations system, including its human rights Special Procedures, mandates and mechanisms, and from civil society. That points to significant untapped potential for the Security Council to support the first and second pillars of the responsibility to protect. The coronavirus disease pandemic could have provided an opportunity to strengthen that work of the Council. Instead, the Council has adopted working methods — and does so to this day — that have further limited its vision on developments of concern.

In an important commitment to improving the Council's performance, 122 States have signed on to the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency group's code of conduct on mass atrocities, thereby committing to taking measures, when serving on the Council, to stop and prevent atrocity crimes and not to vote against credible draft resolutions put forward to that end. The code of conduct is an essential political commitment that can change the political culture in the

Council when it is faced with the risk or occurrence of atrocity crimes. In spite of the strong support for the code of conduct, the use of the veto has significantly increased in recent years, in most cases preventing the Security Council from acting in response to mass atrocities. Liechtenstein supports a strong and active role for the General Assembly, especially where the Security Council fails to address atrocity crimes in accordance with its mandate under the Charter. We are also of the principled view that any veto in the Security Council should automatically be discussed in the General Assembly, independently of its subject matter and without prejudice to the outcome of such a discussion.

We need a stronger focus on prevention. The impact of hate speech on violence, which in turn may spiral out of control and lead to atrocity crimes, is well known and corroborated by research. The political leadership therefore has a key responsibility under the first R2P pillar to take a vocal stance against hate speech and incitement to violence. In addition, States must promote and make full use of the rule of law when mass atrocity crimes are committed, condoned or incited. Criminal accountability for such acts through independent justice mechanisms is crucial to breaking recurring cycles of violence and deterring the commission of future crimes. The International Criminal Court is a cornerstone in the international criminal justice architecture, and Liechtenstein will continue to support the Court and its important work, including by promoting the universality of the Rome Statute.

Mr. Kim Nam Hyok (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): The delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea hopes that the agenda item "The responsibility to protect and the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity" will be discussed at this meeting in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law. My delegation would like to take this opportunity to clarify its position with regard to the responsibility to protect (R2P).

First, the responsibility to protect its people from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity falls entirely under the sovereignty of the State concerned. The concept of R2P is a variation on the humanitarian intervention, which the international community has rejected in the past. State sovereignty is sacred and inviolable. Respect

for States' sovereignty and territorial integrity, and for the principle of non-interference in their internal affairs, is a main principle of the Charter, as well as a cornerstone of international relations. R2P, which is a violation of those principles, is no more than a sophism to justify interfering in the internal affairs of small or weak countries.

Secondly, genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity are not attributable to a State's inability to adequately protect its people but to flagrant encroachment on a State's sovereignty. It is because of some Western countries' interference in States' internal affairs that great upheavals such as armed conflicts and acts of terrorism, genocide and mass destruction have long been endured in the Middle East and in countries in Africa. Reality shows that it is a self-evident truth that developing countries will fall victim to acts that are perpetrated under the concept of R2P. The United Nations should no longer tolerate any sinister schemes intended to promote political, economic and military interventions in other countries under the pretext of R2P.

In conclusion, my delegation stresses that the principle of respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in internal affairs should be strictly observed and that the issue of the responsibility to protect should no longer be considered as a formal agenda item of the General Assembly. Accordingly, my delegation will vote against draft resolution A/75/L.82 and calls on other Member States to do the same.

Mr. Kadiri (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank the President for organizing this formal debate of the General Assembly on the responsibility to protect (R2P), the fourth such debate since 2009.

This year's debate is taking place at an unprecedented time. With the coronavirus disease pandemic our habits and our certainties have changed, but if there is one thing that must not change, it is our political will to strengthen multilateralism. Indeed, the pandemic has underscored the fact that global problems require multilateral solutions and productive, dynamic international cooperation. In that regard, today's debate is important for reaffirming our collective commitment to the responsibility to protect and for improving our responses in order to prevent genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing. The inclusion of the responsibility to protect on the agenda of the General Assembly over the past four

years reflects the strong interest of Member States in sharing ideas and good practices, including with regard to our collective power to improve the international community's ability to prevent genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing.

It is obvious that the international community has come a long way in the area of protection, in terms of peacekeeping, when mandated, of respecting and promoting human rights, democracy and the rule of law, and of preventing atrocities. That is why Morocco has always favoured a consensus approach to the responsibility to protect. We also believe that prevention must be holistic, as the challenges in this area have multiple roots. That should be able to help break down the silos between the various areas of multilateral cooperation in order to fully implement the road maps set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular Sustainable Development Goal 16, on peace, justice and strong institutions, and to live up to the immense responsibility entrusted to us in our core documents, especially the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. I would now like to share my delegation's perspective on the following points.

First, we want to point to how the three R2P pillars intersect and to reiterate that the third is primarily a matter of national responsibility. At the same time, we must recognize that in times of conflict, the capacity of some States may be inadequate or even non-existent. In such cases, the international community must support them by strengthening their capacity and providing them with the necessary means to protect their own populations.

Secondly, Morocco emphasizes the importance of building national resilience. National human rights institutions, as well as civil society, including religious leaders, have played and continue to play a crucial role in combating hate speech and preventing violent extremism, both of which are key potential catalysts for mass atrocities.

Thirdly, States must fulfil their obligation to combat impunity in order to prevent the recurrence of mass atrocities. To that end, national accountability efforts must be encouraged and supported, including through enhanced judicial cooperation among States.

Fourthly, the various United Nations bodies could make better use of the tools at their disposal to prevent genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity

and ethnic cleansing and to strengthen international accountability. Important mechanisms such as the Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) are well placed to support prevention efforts, and we encourage Member States to make better use of the UPR process as a preventive mechanism.

In conclusion, the Kingdom of Morocco shares the Secretary-General's firm belief that the responsibility to protect necessarily involves the consolidation of democracy and the rule of law, as well as the implementation of the provisions of international humanitarian law and human rights law. In that connection, Morocco, as a member of the core group that presented draft resolution A/75/L.82, on the responsibility to protect, which is under consideration today, reaffirms its international commitment to respect for diversity and human rights, the promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue and the consolidation of the rule of law and democracy. Those values are part of Morocco's history and its present and at the heart of our efforts to promote peace, security, conflict prevention, the peaceful settlement of disputes and respect for human rights.

Mr. Amorín (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would first like to thank the President for convening this fourth formal debate of the General Assembly on the responsibility to protect (R2P), which presents an opportunity for Member States to reflect on and assess past and future efforts to prevent crimes against humanity and mass atrocities.

Before I begin my statement in my national capacity, I would like to express my delegation's support for the statement made this morning by Costa Rica on behalf of the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect (see A/75/PV.64). I would also like to reaffirm my country's commitment to the responsibility to protect and in particular our support for draft resolution A/75/L.82, on institutionalizing the responsibility to protect across the United Nations system, which brings us together today and of which we are a sponsor. In addition, we welcome the presentation of the Secretary-General's report "Advancing atrocity prevention: work of the Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect" (A/75/863).

My delegation encourages the members of the Security Council to use the Council's working methods to consider potential atrocity situations as early as possible. In that regard, we support holding open

discussions on the responsibility to protect, the threat of atrocity crimes and the role of the Council in their prevention, and we therefore urge Council members to request regular briefings from the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

I want to point out that Uruguay, as a member of the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency group, affirms its support for the proposal for a code of conduct for the Security Council with regard to draft resolutions aimed at protecting populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, as well as for the French-Mexican declaration asking the permanent members of the Council to abstain voluntarily from the use of the veto when mass atrocities are committed. We support the work of the Special Advisers on the Prevention of Genocide and on the Responsibility to Protect and encourage them to share their analyses of developing crises with members and to provide recommendations and early warnings on atrocity prevention to the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council. We also request that the Secretary-General continue to prioritize atrocity prevention and the responsibility to protect and encourage Member States to facilitate the implementation of the Secretary-General's call to action for human rights.

I cannot overemphasize the importance of the work of the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms, including the Universal Periodic Review, the Special Procedures and the treaty bodies, and of the technical assistance provided by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, all of which play a fundamental role in providing early warnings of risks and detecting indicators of potential mass atrocity crimes.

Uruguay recognizes the three pillars of the responsibility to protect and emphasizes that force should be used only as a last resort and in keeping with all the safeguards established in the Charter of the United Nations, including any explicit resolutions of the Security Council. However, our country favours the first and second pillars related to prevention as the most effective means of approaching the responsibility to protect. We advocate for a preventive and comprehensive approach based on cooperation and an analysis of the underlying causes of a conflict. My delegation is of the view that accountability, in addition to being an act of justice, plays an effective role in preventing atrocity crimes. Impunity often serves as a shield for those who

commit such crimes, and States, as the primary bearers of the duty to ensure that their population's human rights are respected, must guarantee accountability within their borders and ensure that the perpetrators of crimes that violate the most basic standards of humanity are brought to justice.

The Security Council, to which the Charter assigns the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, must make every effort and take effective measures to protect the civilian population and prevent atrocity crimes. In that regard, Uruguay has emphatically advocated for the Council to refer situations to the International Criminal Court when cases warrant.

From the perspective of a troop-contributing country, I would also like to highlight the usefulness of peacekeeping missions as one of the most effective tools for preventing atrocity crimes and protecting civilians from them. Uruguay is part of the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect in both New York and Geneva, and of the Global Network of R2P Focal Points, in recognition of the fact that national and regional preventive capacities are being strengthened and steps taken towards building trust among States thanks to those initiatives.

In conclusion, Uruguay reaffirms its commitment to the responsibility to protect and calls for continued efforts to advance its proper implementation.

Mr. Aliyev (Azerbaijan): At the outset, I would like to thank the President for convening this meeting and the Secretary-General for presenting his report on the topic (A/75/863). As the report acknowledges, the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity remains a constant global challenge and an ongoing imperative. Although international norms and standards, along with institutional activities, have developed significantly over the years, efforts aimed at protecting and vindicating rights and the prevention and punishment of international crimes have not always been consistent or successful. A lack of political will and notorious displays of double standards should definitely be mentioned among the primary reasons for the continued gap between commitments to the responsibility to protect and the commission of atrocity crimes. In that context, prioritizing prevention and responding effectively to atrocity crimes require ensuring that those who speculate in the sensitive domain of criminal justice in order to falsify history, sow

dissension and conceal their own responsibility for the most serious crimes never succeed in their intentions.

In the early 1990s, Armenia unleashed a full-scale war against Azerbaijan. As a result, a significant part of Azerbaijan's sovereign territory was seized and remained under occupation for almost 30 years. The war claimed tens of thousands of lives, and all the captured areas were ethnically cleansed of their Azerbaijani population of more than 700,000. Most of the occupied cities, towns and villages were razed to the ground. Some of those acts, which constitute war crimes, also amount to crimes against humanity and acts of genocide, as they were part of widespread, systematic policies and practices aimed at killing Azerbaijanis and forcing them to leave their homes and properties. The scale of the violations is evidenced by the fact that some 4,000 citizens of Azerbaijan went missing in connection with the conflict. Armenia refuses to account for the missing persons or conduct investigations into their fate.

In 1993, in response to Armenia's continued acts of aggression, the Security Council adopted four resolutions — resolutions 822 (1993), 853 (1993), 874 (1993) and 884 (1993) — condemning the use of force against Azerbaijan, the occupation of its territories, attacks on civilians and the bombardment of inhabited areas; reaffirming respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, the inviolability of international borders and the inadmissibility of the use of force for the acquisition of territory; and demanding the immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of the Armenian occupying forces from all the occupied territories of Azerbaijan.

However, Armenia did not implement key demands in those resolutions, and the mediation efforts conducted within the framework of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe yielded no results. Moreover, numerous appeals by Azerbaijan regarding the need to ensure accountability for atrocity crimes committed by Armenia in the course of the conflict remained voices crying in the wilderness. Likewise, our calls concerning the rights of hundreds of thousands of Azerbaijanis uprooted from their homes, as well as the illegal settlement practices and the systematic destruction of our cultural heritage in the occupied territories, were met with indifference by those who loudly position themselves as true defenders of human rights and humanitarian law. Indeed, their attempts to maintain a so-called reasonable balance rather than calling a spade a spade, and their manifest selectivity

with regard to universally recognized obligations and commitments under international law, only encouraged Armenia to stick to its guns and contributed to its sense of permissiveness. Over that period, Armenia repeatedly carried out armed provocations on the ground, resulting in numerous civilian casualties in my country.

On 27 September 2020, another act of aggression by Armenia became the logical consequence of the impunity that it has enjoyed for more than 30 years. The shelling, with prohibited cluster munitions and ballistic missiles, of major cities and towns in Azerbaijan located far from the front line, where there were no military targets, including in particular a series of ruthless night missile strikes on residential areas in the cities of Ganja and Barda, resulted in the killing of 101 Azerbaijani civilians, including 12 children. More than 400 civilians were wounded, some 48,000 people were forced to leave their homes and almost 5,000 private houses, apartment buildings and other civilian objects were either destroyed or damaged. Even hospitals, medical facilities, ambulances, schools, kindergartens, religious sites, cultural monuments and cemeteries were not spared. In the course of the combat actions, which lasted 44 days, Azerbaijan liberated more than 300 cities, towns and villages from the occupation. Acting in full accord with the inherent right of self-defence as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and customary international law, Azerbaijan has fought within its internationally recognized territory to repulse aggression, end the occupation and protect Azerbaijani citizens facing the imminent threat of atrocity.

The new realities on the ground deriving from the trilateral agreements of 10 November 2020 and 11 January 2021 offer a unique opportunity to consolidate peace and pave the way for recovery, reconstruction and mutually beneficial cooperation in the region. However, after the cessation of hostilities, hundreds of Azerbaijani civilians were killed or seriously wounded as a result of mine explosions in the liberated territories. Armenia refuses to release information about the landmines it deployed there, thereby deliberately targeting human lives and attempting to impede humanitarian efforts and the safe return of internally displaced persons to their homes. Moreover, a worrying level of hatred and Azerbaijanophobia is on the rise in Armenian society. It is disturbing to see that anyone who dares to speak about reconciliation and peaceful coexistence with Azerbaijan is labelled and treated as a traitor. Moreover,

irresponsible and dangerous revanchist ideas and intolerance are propagated at the State level and shared across the whole political spectrum in Armenia.

Armenia must come to terms with its glaring misdeeds and realize that there is no way that the objectives of durable and lasting peace and stability can be achieved through territorial claims, groundless accusations, animosity towards neighbouring States and peoples or contempt for their legitimate rights to live in their own homeland. Azerbaijan is confident that there can be no alternative to the normalization of inter-State relations between the two countries, based on mutual recognition and respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity within their internationally recognized borders, and is determined to advance the agenda of peacebuilding, reconciliation, peaceful coexistence and development.

In conclusion, I would like to inform the Assembly of Azerbaijan's support for draft resolution A/75/L.82, entitled "The responsibility to protect and the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity".

Ms. Guardia González (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Cuba would like to thank the President for organizing this plenary meeting. We also thank the Secretary-General for preparing the latest report on the responsibility to protect (A/75/863), based on which we would like to make some observations.

First of all, my delegation believes that it is a mistake to speak of the responsibility to protect as a principle, as it does not constitute a fundamental norm or an action under international law. The so-called responsibility is only a notion whose scope, rules of application and evaluation mechanisms are still far from being defined and agreed on by the Member States. It is therefore inappropriate to speak of strengthening the implementation of the responsibility to protect when there is no consensus on its implications that would resolve differences in interpretation, guarantee its universal recognition and acceptance and lend legitimacy to the proposed steps for its implementation.

The report defines the term "atrocity crimes" in a footnote, in reference to the four crimes agreed on in resolution 60/1. In that regard, we want to remind the Assembly once again that numerous delegations have expressed disagreement with the use of this term, as well as that of "mass atrocities", because the Member States have not reached a consensus on their definition.

This is not the first time that concern has been voiced in this Hall about the selective use of those terms for political ends to refer to various situations that pose new challenges that warrant protection but can be easily manipulated, especially if the Assembly is not unanimous. In addition, we do not consider it wise to mandate other bodies, such as the Human Rights Council, to evaluate States on matters that are still being considered and lack consensus. The debate in the international community should be about encouraging and assisting States to exercise their primary responsibility, as appropriate.

More than 15 years after the World Summit, the question of the responsibility to protect continues to raise serious concerns for many countries, particularly small developing ones. In an undemocratic international system such as we have in place today, it is crucial to determine who decides when there is a need to protect, when a State is not protecting its population, how to act and on the basis of what criteria, and how to prevent the concept from being used for interventionist purposes. There is absolutely no clarity on how to ensure that the option to take action is chosen with the consent of the State concerned and that there is no possibility that the concept is being used to justify exercising an alleged and non-existent right to intervene.

International efforts to prevent acts of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing or crimes against humanity, a goal that Cuba has always shared, should contribute to strengthening the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law, especially those of equal sovereignty, territorial integrity and the right to self-determination. However, the ambiguities of the responsibility to protect and the implications of the implementation of its three pillars may contradict those purposes and principles. The pre-eminence of the principles of voluntariness, prior request and State consent must therefore be recognized in the context of the so-called responsibility to protect. If the intention is to prevent, we should tackle the root causes of a situation, such as underdevelopment, poverty, an unjust international economic order, social inequality, exclusion and marginalization, food insecurity and other structural problems capable of triggering conflicts that can escalate into extreme situations that, unfortunately, are not discussed with the same energy by many of those who defend the responsibility to protect.

Ensuring that the international community does not remain passive in the face of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity is a noble effort that Cuba supports. However, in many cases, the promotion of the responsibility to protect is only a mask for the use of another tool to facilitate interference in internal affairs — that is, agendas for carrying out regime change and subversion in third countries, usually small developing ones. Sadly, the history of the world is rife with examples that justify this concern.

Mr. Moncada (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is committed to the respect, promotion and protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms. We therefore reject the commission of crimes against humanity, war crimes, genocide and ethnic cleansing while reiterating the central role of the State as the guarantor of the security of its population at all times. We support justice in cases where such grave crimes have been committed.

We have frequently denounced the fact that the notion of the responsibility to protect, though originally promoted for altruistic purposes, has in practice degenerated into an instrument of colonial intervention. Its application has historically been selective, favouring the interests of those who wield military superiority and misuse humanitarian discourse as a pretext for initiating wars of domination. The actual result of the responsibility to protect has been the same as that of colonial invasions — suffering, death and destruction in countries subjected to the false protection. The population is never protected, merely used as an excuse for the external imposition of changes in Government to enable the plundering of natural resources. As a result, although the responsibility to protect may have been well-intentioned in the beginning, today it lacks legitimacy.

The same Powers that promised nations salvation, a salvation that ended in their destruction, are the ones that through the same discourse are threatening Venezuela's independence and territorial integrity today. Using the same humanitarian narrative, they have threatened to destroy the peace of our nation with armed force. The clearest aggression occurred in February 2019, when they tried to fabricate a military conflict from our border with Colombia using a false humanitarian operation as a pretext. In April of this year, the Government of the United States of America, through its own United States Agency for International Development, acknowledged

this precedent, so dangerous for the peace of the region and humanitarian operations around the world, noting that it was actually a military operation to impose a policy of maximum pressure on our country. We are witnessing the perversion of humanitarianism to achieve imperial ends, colonial aggression using humanitarian discourse.

Looking beyond Venezuela, who is protecting the Palestinian people? The military Powers that promote the responsibility to protect do not feel the same obligation when Israel, the occupying Power, perpetrates war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing against the Palestinian people. Selective application turns the responsibility to protect into an ideology in the service of colonialism.

Who is protecting the Colombian people? President Duque Márquez's Government is attacking its civilian population as if it were a military enemy. Dozens of peaceful demonstrators have been assassinated in the cities, hundreds of social, community, indigenous and political leaders and human rights defenders have been systematically murdered, and massacres can be counted by the dozens and the disappeared by the thousands. Yet we have heard nothing about Colombia from the interventionist Powers in the context of the responsibility to protect. The United States already has several military bases there, but they do not serve to protect Colombians, only to protect a Government that ignores human rights. The Colombian people are alone in the struggle for their human rights.

Finally, as long as the European military Powers and the United States impose unilateral coercive measures to subjugate dozens of countries through starvation and disease amid the largest pandemic we have seen in more than 100 years, it is impossible to believe that they have any humanitarian concern. Unilateral coercive measures are acts of economic aggression that are violating the human rights of hundreds of millions of people in more than 29 Member States of the United Nations. The first responsibility to protect is through ceasing to use countries' economies as a weapon of mass destruction against their peoples.

In view of all of this, we cannot support draft resolution A/75/L.82 and reject the inclusion of the subject of the responsibility to protect on the agenda of the General Assembly. In Venezuela, unlike other countries in our region, there are no armed conflicts today. We are not a threat to anyone, and our public

order is guaranteed by the democratic institutions of the Venezuelan State.

Finally, we call on all Member States to respect and apply the Charter of the United Nations comprehensively and non-selectively, as the best legal instrument established by humankind for the defence of the peace, independence and human rights of our peoples.

Ms. Agladze (Georgia): I would first like to thank the Secretary-General for his report on advancing the atrocity prevention work of the Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect (A/75/863).

As a strong supporter of the principle of the responsibility to protect, Georgia welcomes the forthcoming adoption today of draft resolution A/75/L.82 in order to further institutionalize the principle within the United Nations system. We fully concur with the Secretary-General that the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity remains a continuing imperative, while the coronavirus disease pandemic has further aggravated the situation by creating new protection challenges. We regret that despite the Secretary-General's appeal for an immediate global ceasefire, conflicts continue to rage in various parts of the world, increasing the risk factors of atrocity crimes. Prioritizing prevention remains as crucial as ever, and ensuring accountability for atrocity crimes remains key to preventing their recurrence.

Systematic human rights violations, widespread impunity, hate speech, exclusion and discrimination can be the early-warning indicators and triggers of atrocity crimes. The promotion and protection of universal human rights and the effective work of the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms are therefore key. We also recognize the importance of safeguarding the space for civil society, including human rights defenders, to ensure that their voices are not silenced. For its part, Georgia is committed to further strengthening our national human rights machinery and attaches great importance to cooperation with existing human rights mechanisms.

Regrettably, Russia's illegal occupation of Georgia's Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions prevents us from expanding the human rights protection framework to the other side of the occupation line. Despite numerous appeals from the international community, including in the latest Human Rights Council resolution on Georgia (resolution 43/37), both of those Russian-occupied regions remain closed to international human rights

bodies, including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

That is going on against the backdrop of a continually deteriorating human rights and humanitarian situation on the ground, with the fundamental rights of Georgians being violated on a daily basis, including during the pandemic. Violations of the right to life, torture and ill-treatment, kidnappings, arbitrary detentions, woundings, killings, violations of property rights and the right to education in one's native language, and discrimination on ethnic grounds are among the most common human rights violations in both regions. The ongoing installation of razor- and barbed-wire fencing along the Russian occupation line, as well as the lengthy closure of the so-called crossing points and restrictions on freedom of movement, has seriously aggravated the humanitarian situation on the ground. All of this creates acute risks with the potential to grow into atrocity crimes and demands that the international community take a resolute stance.

Let me reaffirm Georgia's commitment and support to the International Criminal Court and also reiterate our full support for the French and Mexican declaration on the voluntary restriction of the use of veto rights in the Security Council when it comes to decisions related to the prevention of mass atrocities.

In conclusion, I would like to affirm Georgia's commitment to advancing the goals and objectives of the responsibility to protect and express support for the mandates of the Special Advisers on the Prevention of Genocide and on the Responsibility to Protect.

Mr. Margaryan (Armenia): I would like to express our profound appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report (A/75/863), which provides an important reflection on the root causes of the persistent challenges to advancing the prevention of atrocities. The report reminds us once again that inadequate capacities for protecting the human rights of all create particular risks for identity-based violations of human rights, whose ultimate manifestations are genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. We are equally reminded that prevention is an ongoing process that requires sustained efforts to promote respect for the rule of law and human rights without discrimination.

Addressing and countering hate speech remain crucial priorities in delivering on the genocide prevention agenda. Incitements to hatred and hate crimes, and the denial, justification or glorification

of past crimes, along with instances of racial and ethnic profiling, are detectable early-warning signs that if unaddressed can lead to further violence and atrocities. Armenia has welcomed the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech, since, as the Secretary-General put it succinctly in his foreword, hate speech represents a menace to democratic values, social stability and peace. There is a growing and urgent need today to step up our collective efforts to fight racism, discrimination and xenophobia, which so often represent the root causes of atrocity crimes. Armenia has consistently raised its voice against the immense suffering and mass atrocities perpetrated against ethnic and religious minorities. Continued, systematic human rights violations and crimes on ethnic and religious grounds in contexts of humanitarian crisis require engagement on the part of the international community, including the human rights and preventive machinery of the United Nations system.

Fostering international cooperation on the prevention of mass atrocities and ensuring the further development of national and international early-warning mechanisms are important priorities of Armenia's engagement in the United Nations. Armenia, whose people underwent the horrors of genocide in the early twentieth century, will continue to support a strong focus on early action to prevent situations that can result in crises and atrocity crimes. As the main sponsor of resolution 69/323, which instituted 9 December as the International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide and of the Prevention of This Crime, Armenia is fully committed to strengthening that important platform, notably through thematic events aimed at fostering cooperation on the prevention of atrocity crimes and the further development of national and international early-warning mechanisms. The first intersessional meeting of the Human Rights Council on genocide prevention, held in February this year, is yet another reflection of our strong commitment to the mutually reinforcing agendas of human rights and genocide prevention, building on our extensive national record in this area.

The Secretary-General's report makes a salient observation that national prevention efforts require addressing the legacy of the past, in particular in countries and regions that have experienced atrocity crimes before. More often than not, at the heart of crimes against humanity is a history of continuing violations of fundamental human rights and identity-based violence,

where policies of identity-based hatred and intolerance are led and cultivated at the highest political level. In our part of the world, the brutal, large-scale violence unleashed amid the global pandemic in an attempt to resolve the Nagorno Karabakh conflict by force led to the most intense and destructive escalation in the region since the 1990s, putting the lives of thousands of civilians and Armenia's ancient Christian heritage under existential threat. Time and again, Armenia has alerted the international community about the dangerously rising level of hate speech and racist rhetoric dominating the political discourse in Azerbaijan, which represents all the elements of incitement to violence against ethnic Armenians and is a significant indicator of the risk of atrocity crimes.

Azerbaijan's continued failure to release the numerous prisoners of war and civilian hostages who are still being held in captivity, contrary to international humanitarian law, its ongoing provocations by way of incursions into the territory of Armenia, as well as its widespread State-led campaign to dehumanize Armenians — an example of which is the recently opened so-called military trophy park, which international media have already termed a national hatred theme park — are manifestations of the fact that genocidal ideology does not belong merely to history. This is a source of grave concern that should be properly identified and acknowledged in order to prevent further atrocities.

Armenia rejects all the allegations and fabricated accusations that we heard earlier from the representative of Azerbaijan, which are nothing short of a futile attempt to conceal the mass atrocities that Azerbaijan carried out in the course of the aggression it unleashed on 27 September 2020. Armenia condemns such actions in the strongest terms and views them as an affront to the values, ideals and principles of the United Nations, including the collective commitment to preventing and punishing crimes "that deeply shock the conscience of humanity".

Armenia remains strongly committed to advancing the prevention agenda and shares the view that ensuring accountability for atrocity crimes can be strengthened through open reflection and inclusive dialogue, with civil society, the free media and academia playing a key role. As ever, we recognize the central role of the Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect and expect it to deliver adequate responses at

all times and to act in situations in any part of the world where atrocity risks exist.

Mr. Ilnytskyi (Ukraine): Ukraine is proud to be among the main sponsors of draft resolution A/75/L.82, currently under consideration and sponsored by almost half of the United Nations membership.

Last year we celebrated the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations and the fifteenth of the adoption of the principle of the responsibility to protect (R2P) at the 2005 World Summit. I would like to affirm my Government's commitment to the World Summit outcome document (resolution 60/1), which the General Assembly adopted without a vote, and especially to its provisions on the responsibility to protect all populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. My country is also party to the core instruments of international law relating to the prevention of atrocity crimes, the protection of populations, the upholding of human rights and the elimination of all forms of discrimination.

Ukraine is a member of the group of States that initiated the inclusion of R2P on the agenda of the General Assembly at its seventy-fifth session and all previous sessions. The consideration of R2P has become more acute during the coronavirus disease pandemic, which has led to health, humanitarian and human rights crises and has increased the risk of serious human rights violations and atrocity crimes, including war crimes and crimes against humanity. My delegation is grateful to the Secretary-General and the Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect for this year's report (A/75/863), highlighting that R2P remains a "constant global challenge and an ongoing imperative".

We fully agree with paragraph 17 of the report, which states that the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity is

"an ongoing process that requires sustained efforts to build the resilience of societies by promoting respect for the rule of law and human rights without discrimination, establishing legitimate and accountable national institutions, eliminating corruption, managing diversity constructively and supporting a strong and diverse civil society and pluralistic media".

Unfortunately, certain countries that made this same commitment 15 years ago are today trying to oppose a discussion of the matter and the inclusion of R2P as an item on the General Assembly's annual agenda.

Ukraine has already expressed on many occasions its strong belief that the concept of R2P fully excludes any possibility of the covert use of military force by one State against another on the pretext of protecting its population and resulting in the occupation of its territory. Nevertheless, the exploitation of R2P for strategic and security purposes continues. The Assembly has condemned in its relevant resolutions the Russian Federation's temporary occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, thereby demonstrating that it has zero tolerance for the manipulation of the principles of the responsibility to protect. Russia has also disregarded the lives and safety of the people of Ukraine in various temporarily occupied areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. It has taken actions that contradict the spirit and letter of the responsibility to protect and should cease immediately. At the same time, the ongoing occupation of parts of Ukrainian territory limits our ability to implement the first pillar of the responsibility to protect. In temporarily occupied Crimea, the Russian occupation regime continues to deny access to international human rights observers, including the United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine.

In the context of today's discussion, it is worth mentioning that a human rights and humanitarian presence constitutes a critical part of a prevention mechanism that, in addition to monitoring, can also identify risks of a sharp deterioration in the situation and make recommendations for early action. I would like to underline that impunity for genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity, and an unwillingness to investigate and prosecute those responsible for such crimes, including massive, serious or systematic violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, will lead to their recurrence and undermine our multilateral efforts regarding R2P.

Turning to the second pillar, and especially to the third, we would like to highlight the role of the United Nations in preventing atrocity crimes through its principal organs. A special responsibility for that rests with the Security Council. However, the use of the veto, and even the mere threat of its use, can stall the Council's response in situations when urgent

action is needed to protect civilians. In that regard, we would like to emphasize our strong position on the importance of phasing out the veto, as a major obstacle to the Council's ability to act efficiently in certain situations. In that connection, we have supported all kinds of ideas that have been put forward to deal with the misuse and abuse of veto power, such as the French-Mexican initiative and the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency group's code of conduct on Security Council action against genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. However, we also firmly believe that the use of the veto should be restricted in cases when a permanent member is directly involved in a conflict under the Council's consideration or is a party to a dispute, and therefore cannot be expected to exercise its voting rights and privileges in an impartial manner. Nevertheless, given the current state of affairs, it is quite possible that the Security Council will again fail to act, as it has on many occasions already. We therefore need to be ready to activate the General Assembly's responsibility to assume its role and take action on such matters.

In conclusion, I want to once again underline the importance of the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity and to refer to the recommendations in the Secretary-General's report regarding the need to strengthen atrocity prevention assessments, response mechanisms and atrocity resilience. We believe that the inclusion of the responsibility to protect on the Assembly's annual agenda will enhance its ability to take fair, just, efficient and results-oriented decisions in the proper implementation of the responsibility to protect.

Ms. Oppong-Ntiri (Ghana): At the outset, I would like to express the Government of Ghana's commitment and support to the principle of the responsibility to protect (R2P) and to the framework for its implementation based on the three equal and mutually reinforcing pillars of the principle outlined in the 2005 World Summit outcome document (resolution 60/1).

My delegation aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Costa Rica on behalf of the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect (see A/75/PV.64), and we thank the President for convening today's debate. The increasing risk factors and perpetuation of atrocity crimes, 16 years after the inception of the concept of the responsibility to protect, justify a dispassionate consideration of the principle and its operationalization in the forum of the General

Assembly, and we welcome its inclusion on the formal agenda of this seventy-fifth session. Today's meeting provides us with a unique opportunity to dialogue, find commonalities, acknowledge and appreciate divergence and build consensus on the fundamental and moral obligation to protect the lives of people at risk of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. We must also take stock of its implementation and share national experiences to safeguard the lives of people, as envisaged in the Charter of the United Nations.

My delegation thanks the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (A/75/863), which rightly focuses on the collective efforts of the United Nations, in collaboration with national and regional mechanisms, to advance the prevention of atrocity crimes. We take note of the sustained efforts to prioritize prevention as a key strategy for the implementation of the responsibility to protect and welcome the specific recommendations in the report. Ghana also commends the Special Advisers on the Prevention of Genocide and on the Responsibility to Protect, whose work remains essential to the conceptual development and operationalization of the responsibility to protect in the prevailing context of increasing risk factors, heightened vulnerabilities and, regrettably, the continuing commission of atrocities.

We believe that the responsibility to protect is the expression of a political and moral commitment as well as a blueprint for action to prevent and end genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. We are encouraged by the continued expressions of commitment on the part of a large number of States and agree with previous speakers who have emphasized the need for greater collaboration at the national, regional and international levels in order to narrow the implementation deficit in responding to and ending atrocity crimes.

Prevention is fundamental to protecting people from situations of mass atrocities. In that regard, Ghana believes that an effective preventive mechanism should encompass an integrated approach involving robust legislative and institutional mechanisms girded by international law, the protection of human rights, humanitarian law, the rule of law, good governance and sustainable development. To that end, we support the International Criminal Court in its efforts to ensure international criminal justice and hold the perpetrators of atrocity crimes accountable. We also commend the work of the Human Rights Council, including

the Universal Periodic Review, which is useful for conducting national assessments of risks of conflict and atrocity crimes and assisting States in developing early-warning and effective response systems.

At the national level, the Government of Ghana remains dedicated to building a resilient society through functional institutional and legal frameworks that ensure national stability, cohesion and peace. The National Peace Council, which acts as Ghana's national R2P focal point, operates as an independent body for peace mediation and peacebuilding and is an important part of Ghana's peace architecture. In concert with the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice, regional peace councils, national security agencies, the Electoral Commission and the judiciary, the National Peace Council continues to collaborate in diverse ways to strengthen Ghana's national preventive capacity and resilience to atrocity crimes. It also maintains close grass-roots contact as part of its early-warning mechanism and is leading the development of a nationwide digital map for navigating hotspots of violent conflict and eruptions. In the area of capacity-building, more than 4,000 people have been trained in peacebuilding and the responsibility to protect using training manuals and toolkits developed by the National Peace Council. As a member of the steering group of the Global Network of R2P Focal Points, Ghana calls on Member States that have yet to appoint a national focal point to do so as a means of strengthening national preventive capacity. In our view, active membership in the Global Network can help to translate the 2005 commitment into concrete action for prevention.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to remind the Assembly that at the heart of the responsibility to protect are people in despair and on the brink of losing their lives in the most undignified ways. The responsibility to protect offers a beacon of hope, and we must not be bystanders in the face of atrocities.

Mr. Flynn (Ireland): I thank the President for convening today's debate.

Ireland aligns itself with the statements made by the representatives of the European Union, in its capacity as observer, and Costa Rica, on behalf of the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect (see A/75/PV.64).

Recognizing that each State has the primary responsibility for the protection of its citizens from atrocity crimes, Ireland also firmly believes in the role of the international community, including the

Assembly, in encouraging and supporting States in exercising that role. That is why we fully support the inclusion of the responsibility to protect as a standing item on the formal agenda of the General Assembly.

The Secretary-General's report (A/75/863), which we welcome, underlines the challenges that we face, not least the ongoing deficits in information collection and assessment, the failure to take early and timely action in response to warning signs and a lack of systematic implementation of atrocity prevention measures. The coronavirus disease pandemic reminds us how interconnected and interdependent we are, and how that underlines our collective responsibility to protect our people, one another and all of our rights. No State is immune. Ireland recognizes that hate speech and incitements to violence constitute indicators of the risk for atrocity crimes. For that reason, we are looking at how we can best legislate against hate crimes and hate speech. We are also looking at how we can best incorporate training for our police and security forces. That is why we are very pleased to be working with the Auschwitz Institute for the Prevention of Genocide and Mass Atrocities on the development and delivery of training in the prevention of conflict-related atrocity crimes. The course, which Ireland has made available at the national and international levels, will enhance the skills of security-sector personnel in recognizing early-warning signs, enabling them to prevent conflict-related atrocities.

Also key to prevention is the role of women. From our lived experience of conflict on the island of Ireland, we know the transformative role that women have to play in the prevention of violence, in mediation and in peacebuilding. We must ensure the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda in order to achieve women's full participation and leadership in the prevention and resolution of conflict. We must also pursue accountability for conflict-related sexual violence, to which women and girls are especially vulnerable and which can constitute war crimes, crimes against humanity or acts constitutive of genocide.

We recognize and value the work of the Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect. As an elected member of the Security Council, we are striving to ensure that due consideration is given to the analysis, advice and recommendations of the Special Advisers of the Secretary-General on the Responsibility to Protect and on the Prevention of Genocide. We will also continue to support the Accountability, Coherence

and Transparency group's code of conduct, and the declaration on voluntary restraint from the veto by the permanent members of the Security Council in cases of mass atrocity.

Recalling the reporting of the Secretary-General that systematic human rights violations, widespread impunity, exclusion and discrimination all increase the risk of atrocity crimes, we see the protection of human rights as essential to the work of prevention. Ireland has long been a strong supporter of international human rights bodies and monitoring mechanisms, which form an integral part of the existing early-warning system for potential threats of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

Where we have failed in our collective responsibility to prevent such atrocities, we must not fail in our collective responsibility to hold their perpetrators to account. Accountability mechanisms, including the International Criminal Court, have a crucial role to play in enabling societies to heal and progress, as well as deterring future abuses. We encourage all Member States to support draft resolution A/75/L.82.

Mr. Mills (United States of America): As we have heard from several delegations, States have the primary responsibility to protect their populations and vulnerable groups from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. Yet as we all know, some States do not uphold that sacred responsibility. In many situations, they hide behind the veil of national sovereignty in an attempt to obscure the human rights violations, abuses and unspeakable suffering that they inflict on their own people. In particular, as other delegations have pointed out, the impact of such abuses and moral monstrosities on women and girls is disproportionate. In Ethiopia, for example, horrific reports of widespread sexual violence demonstrate that pervasive and deliberate targeting of women and girls is under way. As Pramila Patten, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, has said, the brutal and hideous war in Tigray is being waged on the bodies of women. When a State fails to protect its own citizens like this, the international community must consider stepping in. And when women and girls are targeted, accountability efforts must include gender-sensitive transitional justice to end impunity for crimes of sexual violence.

Before I discuss accountability, though, I should say that we all need to work to prevent these terrible acts from happening in the first place. For its part, the United States is focused on stopping atrocities by strengthening prevention capabilities. In 2018, we passed and implemented a major piece of legislation, the Elie Wiesel Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act. It strengthens the ability of the United States Government to recognize patterns of escalation and early signs of potential atrocities and bolsters methods of preventing and responding to atrocities. Meanwhile, the White House continues to coordinate an approach across our entire federal Government to forecast, prevent and respond to atrocities through the Government's Atrocity Early Warning Task Force.

Tragically, though, atrocities still happen, and that is where accountability comes in. Accountability delivers justice, and it also acts as a deterrent. If we hold perpetrators accountable, we can deter those who might otherwise be emboldened to follow in their footsteps, and we can help advance post-conflict reconciliation. Nothing could be more important than preventing atrocities and holding those who commit them to account. So we, the United States, and all of us here will work as hard as ever to do both.

I would like to end by saying that the United States is pleased to be a sponsor of draft resolution A/75/L.82, under consideration today, and we urge all Member States to vote for its adoption.

Ms. Stoeva (Bulgaria): At the outset, I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for convening today's meeting, which provides an important opportunity to further our constructive dialogue and continue to build consensus on how best to develop national and collective capacities aimed at advancing the effective prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

Bulgaria aligns itself with the statement made earlier by the representative of the European Union, in its capacity as observer (see A/75/PV.64), and I would like to make some additional remarks of importance to my country.

In 2019, the fifteenth anniversary of the concept of the responsibility to protect (R2P) was marked by unfulfilled promises. The fundamental purpose of the United Nations, to save and protect, is seriously challenged. Too few have adhered to the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire to protect the most

vulnerable or to the reminder that it is the responsibility of every country to protect the health and safety of its people in periods of turmoil. Especially now, as we witness escalating conflicts and the world is coming to grips with the aftermath of the global pandemic, the resolve to protect vulnerable populations is needed more than ever. The pandemic in particular has exacerbated existing risk factors for outbreaks of violence and atrocities and added new ones. As we endeavour to build back better, R2P should reaffirm its relevance in all three pillars of the United Nations — peace and security, human rights and development. Guided by that understanding, my country upholds the values of R2P as a current member of the Human Rights Council and the Economic and Social Council.

I would like to take this opportunity to express Bulgaria's unwavering support for the work of the Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect and the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, and our appreciation for the efforts of the Secretary-General's Special Adviser on Responsibility to Protect to further advance the concept and operationalization of R2P.

As the Secretary-General points out in his report (A/75/863), atrocity prevention is an ongoing process that requires sustained efforts at the national, regional and international levels. The primary responsibility to protect lies with individual Member States, and the international community has to assist States in meeting that responsibility. To effectively use all the available atrocity prevention tools, we must strengthen coordination among the various United Nations entities, including the new resident coordinators, in the light of the 2019 reform of the United Nations development system.

I would also like to note the important contribution of the Global Network of R2P Focal Points to building national and collective capacities to prevent mass atrocity crimes, including through their work with international organizations, civil society and independent non-governmental organizations. There can be no doubt that all actors have important roles to play in the context of preventing human rights violations and atrocity crimes, including at the earliest stages. For that reason, support for efforts at the local level by civil-society organizations, humanitarian workers and human rights defenders is particularly relevant. I also want to emphasize the important role of women in the prevention of atrocity crimes, as the

Secretary-General noted in his 2020 report (A/74/964). For that reason, we should continue our efforts to strengthen gender equality and promote women's equal and meaningful participation.

The protection of human rights is central to the responsibility to protect. In that regard, we welcome the Secretary-General's Call to Action for Human Rights and encourage all Member States to facilitate its implementation. Violations of international law and international humanitarian law should not be tolerated. We should increase our efforts to end impunity, uphold the principles of international law and promote justice and accountability for atrocity crimes in order to prevent their recurrence.

Bulgaria is pleased to be a sponsor of draft resolution A/75/L.82, which the Assembly is considering today, because we believe firmly in the importance of keeping the responsibility to protect high on the United Nations agenda. In our view, having a regular annual debate on this subject, as well as regular reports by the Secretary-General, will contribute to the advancement of a constructive discussion on the best ways to uphold our resolve to protect populations at risk. Finally, we call on all Member States to support the adoption of the draft resolution, thereby demonstrating our strong will to reaffirm our collective commitment to preventing genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

Mr. Xing Jisheng (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China listened carefully Ms. Viotti's introduction (see A/75/PV.64) and has taken note of the Secretary-General's report on the responsibility to protect (A/75/863).

First of all, the responsibility to protect (R2P) is a concept from the 2005 World Summit outcome document (resolution 60/1) that applies only to four specific situations — genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. That represents a compromise resulting from difficult negotiations involving all countries and serving as a basis for all related discussions. It must be emphasized that Member States have not reached agreement on the definition and criteria of the responsibility to protect.

In recent years, some countries have been broadening their interpretation of the concept, even distorting and abusing it, and making extensive efforts to hype it up. That can only be detrimental to dialogue and cooperation among all parties and undermine the common interests of Member States. Discussions in

the General Assembly should help to build consensus among Member States. Certain countries have forcibly introduced divisive issues into the General Assembly's agenda and have even railroaded the adoption of some draft resolutions. China is against that practice and has clearly expressed its position in a joint letter with many countries. We hope that all parties will continue their informal discussions, while adhering to the principle that those discussions should be led by Member States, gradually move towards consensus and avoid creating artificial divisions.

According to international law, Governments have the primary responsibility to protect their own citizens. That role cannot be usurped. The international community should abide strictly by the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and fully respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the countries concerned, as well as the basic norms in international relations of non-interference, non-aggression and the peaceful settlement of disputes. Assistance should be provided to countries concerned for constructive purposes, with full respect for their wishes and for the principle that those countries must lead, while strengthening their capacity-building.

Prevention is the key to implementing R2P, and efforts should be focused on tackling the root causes of conflict while also addressing its symptoms. As stated in the Secretary-General's report, achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development would be the most effective way of preventing human suffering and crises. It is the cornerstone of prevention. The international community should be committed to reducing and eliminating poverty globally and to helping developing countries enhance their own development capacity, thereby laying the foundations for conflict prevention. United Nations agencies and regional and subregional organizations can play an active role to that end. Enforcement, coercive measures and the use of force should be authorized only when all peaceful means have been exhausted and should meet the conditions in the Charter. The protection of civilians through enforcement action must be authorized by the Security Council and considered on a case-by-case basis, with strict limitations on the conditions and methods of implementation. The international community should prioritize peaceful means for resolving conflicts, such as dialogue, consultation, negotiations and good offices.

Mr. Sahraei (Islamic Republic of Iran): The Islamic Republic of Iran affirms its unwavering commitment to

the noble goal of the protection of civilians. We fully share the sentiment that the international community must be vigilant not only to prevent the horrors of mass killings but also to break cycles of past genocides that might be repeated. History has shown us time and again that inaction on the part of the United Nations in the face of tragic cases of genocide and crimes against humanity, as well as outrageous acts of aggression, have led to the death, injury and displacement of millions of innocent people. However, that is due more to failures on the part of the Security Council rather than the lack of a relevant normative framework.

The Islamic Republic of Iran firmly believes that we are still far from a consensus on our understanding of the responsibility to protect (R2P) as a notion. A number of statements and the inclusion of this item on the Assembly's agenda testify to that. However, the controversies around the notion are not rooted in the provisions on atrocity crimes but rather in its definition, implementation and scope of application. Furthermore, the most important aspect, and one that is a matter of legitimate concern for the international community, is that of the scenarios for the preparation of various kinds of intervention in sovereign States' internal affairs in the guise of the responsibility to protect, and the introduction of country-specific resolutions with the same aim. We also believe that efforts to clarify the concept's scope and implementation should not be conducted in such a way as to reinterpret or renegotiate well-established principles of international law enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and other existing legal frameworks.

The primary responsibility for preventing the commission of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity lies with sovereign States in accordance with principles of international law enshrined in the Charter and articulated in paragraphs 138 and 139 of the 2005 World Summit outcome document (resolution 60/1). In order to prevent such horrendous atrocities, the international community at large may step in to help — upon request, on a case-by-case basis and through the Security Council. Prevention should be seen as a long-term strategy, should be reinterpreted in broad terms, and should consist mainly of non-coercive measures. It involves a broad range of issues, from the promotion of sustainable development, education and health to the eradication of poverty, marginalization and discrimination. It by no means implies permission to use force against sovereign States under any pretext,

including that of humanitarian intervention, which may pave the way for all manner of politically motivated interventions aimed at installing different regimes or interfering in countries' internal affairs.

Furthermore, attempts to introduce parallel initiatives or alternatives to the central role of the United Nations, such as the concept of the international leadership of a State or group of States, or unilateral coalitions outside the United Nations framework, not only undermine the role of the United Nations in asserting the rule of law at the international level but would also manipulate the concept of the responsibility to protect for political purposes that are doomed to failure. Contrary to what they claim, a number of staunch proponents of the responsibility to protect have been ignoring the deep-rooted causes of crises and atrocities and have helped to increase atrocities by selling arms to volatile regimes and turning a blind eye to their obligation to protect populations. The unwavering support that we see being provided to the perpetrators of crimes and atrocities against the Palestinians is an example of that double standard. The current situation in occupied Palestine is a living example of the degree to which proponents of the notion of the responsibility to protect actually take seriously the commitments they have repeatedly expressed today.

As I mentioned earlier, notwithstanding the formal discussions that have taken place in the General Assembly, we are still far from a consensus understanding on how to implement R2P. A formal discussion in the Assembly is not an appropriate format for addressing the existing conceptual differences among Member States. We reiterate our appeal for reverting to an informal interactive dialogue, as agreed on in 2019, which would be more conducive to achieving consensus on this controversial concept.

With regard to draft resolution A/75/L.82, entitled "The responsibility to protect and the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity", the Islamic Republic of Iran strongly opposes the dissemination of any premature, biased and politically motivated concepts that intrinsically violate fundamental principles of international law such as respect for the equal sovereignty of States, non-interference in the internal affairs of States and the prohibition of the use or threat of use of force. We cannot accept agendas that ultimately undermine collective security and the rule of the law, as enshrined in the Charter, and that have the potential to be misused

in the service of internal political agendas. The Islamic Republic of Iran dissociates itself from that attempt and expresses its unequivocal objection to the inclusion of this item on the annual agenda of the Assembly, based on its commitment to ensuring that it does not become an accomplice in any future intervention involving interference in the internal affairs of States or any ensuing atrocities that may claim justification under this notion.

Mrs. Frazier (Malta): Malta fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of the European Union, in its capacity as observer (see A/75/PV.64) and would like to add some remarks in its national capacity.

This debate provides us with an opportune moment to recall our collective commitment made at the 2005 World Summit, where the international community pledged to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. It also provides us with an avenue to discuss the implementation of the pledge to prevent atrocities at the local, national, regional and international levels.

While the prevention of such atrocities remains a continuing global priority, our current circumstances lend even more urgency to the situation. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has invariably magnified and exacerbated existing vulnerabilities, in part due to surges in incitement, hate speech and violence towards others, whether on national, ethnic, religious or racial grounds. Malta has long echoed and supported the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire in order to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, so it is deeply regrettable that we are witnessing escalating levels of conflict, violence and human rights abuses in a number of situations, thereby increasing the risk that atrocity crimes may be committed. In such circumstances, the international community must remain cognizant and fully aware of its responsibilities.

That is why Malta is one of the many sponsors of draft resolution A/75/L.82, under consideration today. Any initiative that seeks to advance the realization of our historic pledge made in 2005 is to be commended, and we therefore call on all Member States to vote in favour of the draft resolution, which will complement the initiatives taken at the national, regional and international levels to advance atrocity prevention. Malta underlines the importance of strengthening early-warning and prevention mechanisms to ensure

that they are effective and, crucially, that they embrace inclusivity and recognize the vital role of women and young people in building cohesive, tolerant and resilient societies.

It is distressing that gaps exist between the commitments made in 2005 and the reality of populations that are exposed to the risk or actual perpetration of atrocity crimes. In contexts where the international community may fail in its commitment to preventing the commission of atrocity crimes, it is vital to prioritize accountability, both as a measure of justice and as a deterrent. Impunity begets impunity, and it is our duty to prevent that. In that context, Malta stresses its support of the International Criminal Court as a key mechanism for advancing international justice.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate Malta's full support to the Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect and the Secretary-General's two Special Advisers on the Prevention of Genocide and on the Responsibility to Protect. We look forward to enhancing our cooperation with the Office — including in the Security Council, should Malta be entrusted with the responsibility of serving on the Council in 2023 and 2024 — given our common priorities of addressing emerging atrocities and preventing the perpetration of atrocity crimes.

Mrs. Kocyigit Grba (Turkey): We thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (A/75/863), which constitutes a solid basis for our deliberations today.

At the 2005 World Summit, Member States made a landmark commitment regarding their responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. As stipulated in the World Summit outcome document (resolution 60/1), the United Nations has an essential role to play with regard to this issue. We are pleased to see that in his report the Secretary-General elaborates on how that responsibility has been operationalized over the years through United Nations prevention, early warning and response work. The Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide is specifically mandated to collect information from within the United Nations system and to act as an early-warning mechanism for the Secretary-General. While delivering that critical mandate, Special Advisers should be immune from any attempts at politicization and should conduct their duty impartially, in line with their Office's mandate.

As highlighted in the report, incitement of violence and hate speech are risk factors and potential early-warning indicators for atrocity crimes. We welcome the initiatives to address and counter hate speech in the context of the coronavirus disease pandemic, such as the joint call on 26 March 2020 for solidarity, compassion and unity by the High Representative for the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations and the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide. We also welcome the Secretary-General's approach, with its central focus on prevention. The fact is that prevention is one of the most effective instruments in our toolbox. With that understanding, Turkey leads mediation efforts through regional and bilateral initiatives as well as at the United Nations.

When prevention efforts do not prevail, the organs of the United Nations, including the Security Council, must be ready to assume their responsibilities as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. We hope that the discussion on the responsibility to protect and its implementation will also contribute to the efforts aimed at restraining the use of the veto in the Security Council in cases of crimes against humanity and the crime of genocide. A major example is the current situation in Palestine, where the Council's inaction is resulting in countless civilian casualties. What we are witnessing in the Palestinian territories today is also a protection crisis. In order for the international community to implement its commitments, it should take collective action in accordance with the Charter, including the establishment of an international protection mechanism for Palestine.

We welcome draft resolution A/75/L.82, entitled "The responsibility to protect and the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity", which is before us today. We consider it an important tool for preventing future atrocity crimes by initiating a substantive debate on the responsibility to protect and bringing Member States closer to consensus on the parameters and implementation modalities of the concept. Efforts in that regard should not be made in such a way as to reinterpret or renegotiate well-established principles of international law or the existing legal framework. The crime of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity are well-defined legal concepts. We should implement the relevant legal framework faithfully and consistently. We should also bear in mind that the concept of the responsibility to protect seeks to

establish a delicate balance between safeguarding the humanitarian concerns of the international community while respecting the principles of national sovereignty. The responsibility to protect their peoples rests with States. In cases where States are unable to meet their responsibilities, the international community may use the tools at its disposal in conformity with the Charter.

We call on all Member States that have not done so to consider joining the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, which is the key international instrument in this field. It is equally important to ensure that all Member States act in accordance with the letter and spirit of the Convention and the relevant, well-established decisions of the United Nations-mandated international courts. In that regard, we would like to underline that genocide is a legal term, strictly defined under international law, and cannot and should not be used randomly or arbitrarily. Furthermore, the commission of the crime of genocide can be determined only by a competent court after proper investigation and adjudication. A determination made by any other actor in the absence of a judgment issued by a competent court lacks legal status. As far as the events of 1915 are concerned, there is no such judgment.

Mr. Mainero (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, my delegation would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/75/863) and emphasize its importance in the current international situation in the context of the coronavirus disease pandemic, in which vulnerabilities have been exacerbated and new challenges have arisen with regard to the protection of human rights.

I would like to reiterate my country's support for the Secretary-General's March 2020 call for a global ceasefire to silence the guns and help create the necessary conditions for delivering the assistance that is so vital in these circumstances. We also note the Secretary-General's Call to Action for Human Rights in 2020, which emphasized the links between the protection of human rights and prevention. Nevertheless, Argentina notes with great concern the increase around the world in stigmatization, hate speech, incitement and violence against national, ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities, as well as other ethnic and racial groups based simply on their identity.

I therefore want to emphasize the need to deepen our work on the responsibility to protect, which lies with

each of our States. Since the adoption of the concept, the Secretary-General has contributed to its development through his annual reports and has provided guidelines on its practical application, structuring it around three pillars. Argentina has followed the development of the concept within the United Nations and has participated actively in the debate on the topic. The three pillars of the concept of the responsibility to protect are at an equal level. Any initiative by the international community to prevent mass atrocities must fully respect international law and the Charter of the United Nations. In line with the Secretary-General's statement on the priority of building national preventive capacity, Argentina maintains that international cooperation on the prevention pillar at the national, regional and global levels alike is key, as are efforts to strengthen the role of local actors, including young people, women and grass-roots organizations.

I would also like to highlight the work done by the Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect to prioritize and operationalize prevention within the system and to reiterate my country's support for the work being undertaken by both the Office and the Special Advisers. However, we should continue to refine the tools that enable the collection of timely, reliable and accurate information on current and emerging human rights crises and that can result in an integrated analysis, such as the framework for atrocity crimes analysis, a prevention tool that enables the collection of information, assessments of the presence of risk factors associated with atrocity crimes and the issuance of early warnings. With regard to early warnings, my delegation would like to emphasize the risk posed by the abuse of warning systems but also by inaction. Accordingly, as the Secretary-General points out, any warning mechanism must be balanced and take into account the specifics of every situation.

Argentina reiterates its support for the recommendation in the Secretary-General's report regarding the inclusion of an atrocity-prevention dimension in the Human Rights Council Special Procedures, the country reports under the Universal Periodic Review and the work of regional human rights institutions. We also realize that it is imperative to redouble our efforts to raise awareness at the international level of the fact that genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity are themselves threats to international peace and security. We therefore support the adoption of draft resolution

A/75/L.82, sponsored by many of our delegations, which seeks to establish the responsibility to protect as an item on the General Assembly's annual agenda. We are confident that through regular dialogue and debate among the membership, we can enhance the conceptualization, implementation and scope of the responsibility to protect.

Finally, my delegation would like to emphasize the Secretary-General's recommendation encouraging Member States to become parties to and implement the international agreements relating to the prevention of atrocity crimes and the protection of populations, including the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, as well as other relevant international and regional instruments. We are confident that it is through such mechanisms that we can effectively contribute to preventing the recurrence of such crimes in future.

Ms. Perdomo (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): Chile aligns itself with the statement by the representative of Costa Rica on behalf of the countries belonging to the Group of Friends on the Responsibility to Protect (see A/75/PV.64).

Today's debate is important in reaffirming our collective commitment to the responsibility to protect and in improving our efforts to prevent and respond to atrocity crimes. Chile recognizes that the 2005 World Summit outcome document (resolution 60/1) is a relevant milestone, as it establishes that the responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity is a collective mandate given to the entire international community. In that regard, the debate that brings us together today takes place in an unprecedented context of a global pandemic, serious human displacement and escalating levels of conflict, violence and human rights abuses. The coronavirus disease pandemic has reinforced the idea that global problems require multilateral solutions and that international law, international humanitarian law and global norms must be respected. That only strengthens our belief that the responsibility to protect does not end with once a conflict has abated. It is the duty of States to ensure guarantees of non-recurrence through memorialization and the principles of transitional justice.

Taking into account this year's theme of the Secretary-General's report on the responsibility

to protect (A/75/863), we would like to affirm our support for the Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect. Given the importance of fostering communities of dialogue on this matter, Chile also values the inclusion of the responsibility to protect on the annual agenda of the General Assembly, as proposed in draft resolution A/75/L.82, entitled “The responsibility to protect and the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity”, which is before the Assembly today. We would also like to take this opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to preventing mass atrocities and working to strengthen the responsibility to protect.

Ms. Fatima (Bangladesh): We align ourselves with the statement made by the representative of Costa Rica on behalf of the Group of Friends on the Responsibility to Protect (see A/75/PV.64). We welcome the initiative to introduce a draft resolution (A/75/L.82) in the General Assembly under this agenda item, of which we are pleased to be a sponsor.

The coronavirus disease pandemic has exposed the fragility of our societies as we have witnessed a rise in intolerance, hate crimes, violence and mass atrocities. Against that backdrop, and as we build back better, the responsibility to protect has never been more relevant. We support the centrality of a multilateral approach to implementing the principles of the responsibility to protect (R2P) and believe that the United Nations has a central role to play in that. It will be critical in that regard to ensure synergies and complementarities among the United Nations humanitarian response, the Sustainable Development Agenda, peacekeeping and initiatives for sustaining peace. There is clearly also scope for making better use of various institutional human rights mechanisms, including the Universal Periodic Review, in support of evidence-based risk assessment, early-warning and mitigation measures.

Bangladesh supports the Secretary-General’s approach of making atrocity prevention the centrepiece of his prevention agenda. We agree with him that the Security Council should collectively reflect on its role in atrocity prevention. We also maintain our principled support for a possible suspension of the veto in cases of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. As a party to the Rome Statute, we are fully committed to the authority of the International Criminal Court in ensuring justice for genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity and call for the universalization of the Rome Statute.

We take note of the Secretary-General’s report (A/75/863), which provides an account of United Nations efforts to operationalize the principle of R2P through its prevention, early warning and response work. However, we do not see enough evidence in the report of the effectiveness of those efforts in protecting people from atrocity crimes or of the challenges in implementing R2P.

As a leading troop-contributing country, we contribute directly to implementing the protection-of-civilians mandate in peacekeeping missions, and it was on the basis of that commitment that we opened our doors and gave protection and shelter to the nearly 1 million Rohingya who fled mass atrocities in Myanmar, where they had been subjected to ethnic cleansing on everyone’s watch. The mass atrocities against the Rohingya in Myanmar should not have come as a surprise. In 1982, when the Rohingya were stripped of their citizenship, the international community knew the risks. What has followed since is recurring human rights violations, leading to the Rohingya’s mass exodus, not once but repeatedly — in 1992, 2012, 2016 and again in 2017. None of them were unforeseeable. As Mr. Adama Dieng, the former Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, stated after his visit to the Cox’s Bazar camps in March 2018,

“the scorched-earth campaign carried out by the Myanmar security forces against the Rohingya population was predictable and preventable.”

Yet the international community, including the United Nations, failed to act. The United Nations mechanisms in Myanmar failed to provide early warning, uphold human rights in their development support or alert the world to what was going to unfold in August 2017. Such failures should be accounted for.

What happened in Myanmar against the Rohingya is a glaring example of the failure to act in keeping with the R2P principles. We have not seen any determined commitment on the part of the international community to compelling Myanmar to admit that it has a responsibility to protect populations from atrocity crimes, nor any serious efforts by countries that matter to come forward with support, as is outlined in the second pillar of the responsibility to protect. The forcibly displaced Rohingya have been living in Bangladesh for at least four years now, and many of them have been there for more than three decades. Rohingya have also received shelter in other countries in the region. The

solution to this problem lies first and foremost with the Myanmar authorities, who should create the conditions for the Rohingya population to return home in safety and dignity and with entitlement to the same rights as any other citizen of Myanmar.

We support the pivotal role of the United Nations in preventing atrocities, protecting human rights and sustaining peace from an objective and principled position, while respecting the principle of national sovereignty when providing support to Member States and their prevention measures. We encourage more engagement by the Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect in supporting national authorities to strengthen their capacity to prevent atrocity crimes and their engagement with community leaders and local human rights organizations, including youth and women's groups. We also believe in empowering national accountability mechanisms and watchdogs, including national human rights institutions. It is equally important to support national authorities in ensuring accountability and providing redress to victims.

Bangladesh will continue to work with and support the United Nations in fulfilling its prevention agenda and its commitment to ensuring that these crimes never happen again.

Mr. Pieris (Sri Lanka): We thank the Secretary-General for his very comprehensive report (A/75/863).

My plea in the late hours of this meeting is for caution, restraint and a carefully considered approach to this concept, with which we have had a mixed experience. The introduction of the responsibility to protect (R2P) has challenged the natural order of the international system by providing a different understanding of State sovereignty, including State accountability. When we refer to this doctrine, it is clear that even though there is a tension between the maintenance of State sovereignty and the defence of human rights, it is possible to overcome that tension by looking at sovereignty as the State's responsibility to protect its own citizens rather than merely as a tool for unbridled power.

Through the promotion of ideals such as mutual support and the protection of human rights, the Assembly has attracted substantial attention as the international community has come to appreciate that international institutions can play a particularly relevant role within the United Nations system. We should recall that that attention increased further in the

1990s, when we witnessed two serious humanitarian crises, with which we are familiar, that arose due to reasons of ethnicity and that undermined the credibility of the United Nations as an international institution that seeks to protect human rights. Among the community's responses, one voice stood out among the others — that of the late Kofi Annan, a former Secretary-General, who advocated for a reinterpretation of the concept of State sovereignty. He promoted the idea not only that State sovereignty has to be understood as a tool in the service of a people and not the other way around, but also that the Charter of the United Nations was created with the goal of defending human beings and their fundamental rights, not those who abuse them. He then affirmed that the idea of national interests should consequently be revisited and considered more as collective interests.

It is therefore necessary for us to approach this sensitive concept with caution and take a balanced view. It must be approached with restraint. It has to be said that the R2P doctrine specifies that the primary responsibility to protect lies with the State itself and not with the international community. The general idea is that sovereignty and military intervention should be seen as counterbalanced factors, with intervention intended only as a last resort. Consequently, the essential element that enables the balance between the two follows from the intention behind R2P, which focuses on the durability of sovereignty. However, such actions have been strongly condemned by another part of the community, whose criticism can be summarized in three points.

First, R2P has been misused by rapidly resorting to military force. Secondly, alliances in the Middle East have committed war crimes and crimes against humanity that have resulted in the deaths of many — somewhere between 2,000 and 30,000 casualties depending on estimates. Thirdly, we have the problem of post-alliance action, also in the Middle East, where the third pillar of the responsibility to protect — the responsibility to rebuild — has been put on the back burner by alliances that have left countries in serious disarray. In relation to the last point, not only have those interventions been faulted for abusing what has been stated in the relevant resolutions, they have also been determinants of other problems related to the use of R2P in the future. We must therefore guard against the misuse of such a doctrine.

Additionally, the abuse of resolution 60/1 has also reinforced a lack of confidence among non-Western countries, which believe that R2P is only another cover

for neo-imperial dominance. Resolution 60/1, ratified by the General Assembly in 2005, tried to overcome those tensions, but it still recognized the ultimate authority of the Security Council. Each State had a responsibility to protect its population, the resolution said, but collective action was to be taken through the Security Council — in accordance with the Charter, including Chapter VII — on a case-by-case basis. In other words, only the Security Council could decide whether the international community should undertake an intervention, which implied not only the veto rights of the five permanent members but also that the universal humanitarian legal principles supposedly established by the R2P resolution were still subordinate to the principles of national sovereignty and to the rights of the permanent members in particular.

Why is that relevant? It is relevant because it points to the fact that, as one academic puts it, R2P is a mere aspiration, as opposed to a real principle of international norms or even law. Sometimes it not only runs counter to the practices of practical politics but, more importantly, is also at odds with the fundamental principle of the United Nations itself, which is the ultimate legal deference to national sovereignty decided by members of the Security Council. The Council may approve of the concept in one case but not in another, because certain permanent members are at cross purposes. After all is said and done, R2P is not really a principle but, I repeat, an aspiration — and a rather weak one at that. Its defenders often say that it cannot be truer that intervening in the face of mass murder is an option not to be relinquished, but surely we do not need R2P in order to exercise that option. Members should ask themselves that question. Moreover, whether or not the Security Council authorizes such an intervention will always be a practical judgment at the discretion of sovereign members of the Security Council and dependent on all sorts of circumstances. It is those exceptions that show up the weaknesses of R2P as a principle.

The problem with R2P is that it never really lives up to its high-sounding principles. If it had wanted to, the Security Council could have intervened to stop genocide at various times in various parts of the world. The reasons that it did not are the same ones that will likely keep it from doing so elsewhere in the future. Ultimately, R2P is riddled with too many contradictions and practical problems to make it a serious doctrine for implementation. It mainly comes down to an argument

for moral persuasion to intervene against mass murder and genocide, which one can make without resorting to complicated arguments about supposed international principles or even the proper purposes of warfare, and certainly without damaging the vital notion of national sovereignty. After all, we have a cocktail of mechanisms available to us to deal with these problems effectively, as the Ambassador of the Republic of Korea was pleased to observe this morning (see A/75/PV.64).

Mr. Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, we would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/75/863), of whose recommendations we take note, and the President for convening this important meeting on the responsibility to protect. We will limit ourselves to making four general observations in our statement.

First, we would like to point out that while it is true that the General Assembly unanimously established the concept of the right to protect 16 years ago, it is also true that the concept still does not enjoy global consensus. We believe that in order for the responsibility to protect to be more widely accepted in the international community, we must define the scope and parameters of its application, thereby avoiding confusion with other, existing international principles and norms that share the same objectives and relate strictly to acts of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

Secondly, with regard to the principle's *modus operandi*, especially of its third pillar, recent history compels us to emphasize the fact that the responsibility to protect should not be invoked to justify an armed intervention whose ultimate purpose seems to be to provide a cover of legitimacy for the use of force to destabilize or overthrow existing regimes, as has happened in several countries in our region and others. Such unjustified and disproportionate interventions have terrible and long-lasting consequences that are difficult to repair, not just for populations but for their countries, their neighbours and their regions as a whole. Those consequences are currently being experienced in some subregions of our continent as a result of a resolution adopted by the Security Council in 2011.

Thirdly, we should point out that the primary responsibility for protecting civilian populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity rests with the State, as a fundamental element of national sovereignty. It is States that in the

exercise of their sovereignty must ensure the promotion of a peaceful and inclusive society. The fundamental role of the United Nations in conflict prevention, and the importance of its support to States during and after armed conflicts and through its peacekeeping missions, is evident. However, there is still a clear need to strengthen and deepen collaboration at an early stage with regional and subregional organizations, as well as neighbouring countries, in order to build trust, identify risks, share analysis and find viable and depoliticized joint responses based on citizens' real needs.

Fourthly, Equatorial Guinea shares the view that early warning plays an important role in the prevention of atrocity crimes and represents the basis for early action. In that connection, we commend the continental early-warning system launched by the African Union as part of the African Peace and Security Architecture, which has contributed considerably to mitigating large-scale political violence across the continent, as well as the significant progress that has been made in improving the capacity of the entire United Nations system to prevent and respond to atrocity crimes. It is in that context and on that understanding that Equatorial

Guinea will vote in favour of today's draft resolution A/75/L.82, on the responsibility to protect civilian populations against war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, with the assumption that this is always in accord with and in support of Governments and not a subterfuge to destabilize or overthrow regimes that protect the victims of such actions.

We would like to conclude by reaffirming our position that the international community's responsibility to protect should be closely linked to policies of preventive diplomacy and to encouraging States — and the United Nations — to continue to implement the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech and fight racism, xenophobia and racial discrimination, all of which constitute threats to democratic values, social stability and peace.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item for this meeting. We shall hear the remaining speakers tomorrow at 10 a.m. in this Hall.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.