

UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Informal interactive dialogue on the report of the Secretary-General on the responsibility to protect

Statement by HE Ms Philippa King, Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative of Australia to the United Nations

Thank you Mr Moderator, and we acknowledge your contribution to the cause of atrocity prevention, and that of your colleague Dr Jennifer Welsh.

We also thank the Secretary-General, the Deputy Secretary-General and the panellists for their insights. We would particularly like to welcome Dr Surin Pitsuwan, Chair of the High-Level Advisory Panel on R2P on Southeast Asia. The report of the Panel illustrates the contribution that regional approaches can make to preventing atrocity crimes.

Moving from broad acceptance of the R2P principle to mobilising the international community to assist States to meet their responsibility to protect – that is, Pillar 2 of R2P – is a collective responsibility.

And it is undeniable that *early* efforts to prevent atrocity crimes are vital. The current crises in Syria, Iraq, the Central African Republic and South Sudan – in which we are witnessing atrocity crimes that should shock the global conscience – did not erupt without warning. The international community must, and can, do more to respond to the early warning signs, such as human rights violations, social unrest, and weak rule of law.

As the Secretary-General notes in his report, events unfold differently in every context. We must be attuned to them. At each of the stages the SG mentions, where states request assistance, the international community must be ready to respond.

The Secretary-General refers to the example of RAMSI – the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands – in his report. This *was* a good example of how effective the combination of rapid military assistance and longer term development efforts can be for atrocity prevention.

It also underscores the benefits of an *early* request for assistance from a sovereign Government – in this case the Solomon Islands Government – which sought international assistance well in advance of any potential escalation of conflict. And it demonstrated the importance of national ownership and leadership, which is vital to the effectiveness of Pillar 2 assistance.

It is clear that assistance under Pillar 2 comes in many forms and at many stages.

A recent example of Pillar 2 assistance is the assistance provided to civilians in Iraq, at the request of the Iraqi Government. Australia is proud to have participated in airdrops to people trapped on Mount Sinjar and to the besieged inhabitants of the town of Amerli in an effort to assist Iraq to protect its people from atrocity crimes.

It is also clear that the UN is fundamentally important to atrocity prevention efforts. We very much welcome the Secretary-General's clear focus on human rights violations, given they are clear early warning indicators of atrocity crimes. The Human Rights Council and its Commissions of Inquiry have a key role to play in drawing attention to high risk situations. The

Commission of Inquiry report on the DPRK has very effectively drawn international attention to alleged crimes against humanity committed in that country.

The UN membership must get behind the “Rights Up Front Initiative” and we strongly support efforts by the Secretariat, including the Secretary-General, to draw to the Security Council’s attention issues of concern that the Council needs to take action on.

The Security Council must also live up to *its* responsibilities on atrocity prevention. Australia co-sponsored Resolution 2171, aimed at strengthening the Council’s response on prevention, where its record is mixed and where the Council needs to do better.

Mr Moderator

As the Secretary-General’s report notes, effective prevention requires the implementation of R2P “everywhere and at all times”. Much assistance is provided to states that is relevant to R2P – security sector reform, justice sector support, support for national human rights mechanisms. This is all going to support efforts to build resilience against the factors that lead to atrocities. We need to work together to strengthen states’ capacity to resist these factors.

Coordination of efforts is also important, and we encourage States to join the Global Network of National R2P Focal Points.

Mr Moderator

Pillar 2 efforts are conducted in partnership – this is essential – and they recognise and strengthen the sovereignty of states, and therefore, ultimately, states’ capacity to protect their own citizens, which is a fundamental responsibility that goes hand in hand with sovereignty.

Thank you.