

Group of Friends of R2P Geneva

Statement on Item 2 - Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General

19 June 2018

Mr. President,

I have the honor to deliver this statement on behalf of the 51 members of the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect.

We thank the High Commissioner for Human Rights for his tireless efforts to promote and protect human rights and for his strong voice on situations where his Office observed evidence of alleged atrocities. We call upon the next High Commissioner, in accordance with his or her mandate, to continue highlighting gross human rights violations and abuses and assisting the international community to fulfill its responsibility to protect and prevent atrocities.

The reports and updates of the High Commissioner and his Office, as well as of special procedures mandate-holders, can constitute early warning tools that should prompt States to prevent genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing both nationally and internationally. By addressing specific situations of concern, reviewing the human rights situations in States via the Universal Periodic Review, and making recommendations for action, the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms also play an important role in advancing the prevention of mass atrocities.

Mr. President,

Later this year the international community will observe the seventieth anniversaries of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, as well as the twentieth anniversary of the Rome Statute. Respect for the rule of law is especially important at a time when the basic tenets of international law are being violated by state and non-state actors.

As we reflect upon the international community's efforts to uphold the Universal Declaration and the Genocide Convention, we underscore the important role played by human rights mechanisms and independent investigations mandated by this Council in documenting gross violations and abuses of human rights, identifying those responsible, and offering options to address them and prevent them from reoccurring.

In that regard, the Group of Friends of R2P welcomes the Human Rights Council's attention at its 38th session to the situation of the Rohingya in Myanmar, the situation in Syria, and the situation in the Kasai regions of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mr. President,

Nearly 66 million people are currently displaced by conflict, persecution and mass atrocities. As the international community faces this global refugee and displacement crisis, we have witnessed worrying rising signs of xenophobia and incitement to violence based upon identity. As the UN Framework of Analysis for mass atrocity crimes notes, discriminatory and exclusionary practices or policies, as well as acts of incitement or hate propaganda targeting particular groups or individuals, may serve as a warning sign of mass atrocity risks. We acknowledge the preventative role of human rights mechanisms, including special procedures mandate-holders, in raising awareness of these risks in accordance with their mandates and encourage Member States to highlight national best practices for addressing racism, racial discrimination and rising levels of xenophobia and incitement to hate crimes while fully respecting human rights in their submissions to the Universal Periodic Review.

Mr. President,

The Group of Friends of R2P welcomes next week's General Assembly Debate on the Responsibility to Protect and the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity. We call for the formal inclusion of the Responsibility to Protect, including its full implementation, on the agenda of the UN General Assembly to enable its continued consideration in accordance with General Assembly resolution A/RES/63/308. We further welcome the 10th annual report of the Secretary-General on the Responsibility to Protect, "From early warning to early action," and strongly encourage Member States to highlight the critical role that the High Commissioner, the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms can play in providing early warning and mobilizing a response in accordance to their mandates.

The international community should continue to prioritise early warning and early action on preventing human rights violations and violent conflict in accordance with the UN Charter.

Thank you.