



minority
rights
group
international



Rt Hon William Hague MP
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
King Charles Street
London
SW1A 2AH

4 September 2012

Dear Foreign Secretary

On behalf of the Aegis Trust, Minority Rights Group and the United Nations Association of the United Kingdom (UNA-UK), we are writing with respect to the 5 September 2012 informal interactive dialogue of the United Nations General Assembly on the Responsibility to Protect (RtoP). We welcome the opportunity the dialogue provides for Member States, regional organisations, and civil society to reflect on the recent Report of the Secretary-General, *Responsibility to Protect: Timely and Decisive Response*. In light of ongoing protection crises in Sudan and Syria, the report is welcome in that it examines the various dimensions of the third pillar of the Responsibility to Protect, timely and decisive response and the role of local, national, and regional and international actors in the protection of populations from genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing.

We encourage Her Majesty's Government, most especially with your privileged position as a permanent five member of the United Nations Security Council, to make a strong contribution to the 2012 dialogue. We call on you to speak in support of the Responsibility to Protect, to convey the need for the UN to strengthen the mechanisms available to protect populations from mass atrocities.

We encourage Her Majesty's Government to consider the following key points in its intervention:

- The United Kingdom should affirm its support for the Responsibility to Protect and reflect on how the government is working to operationalise RtoP through various agencies, policies and activities.
- The United Kingdom should also make clear that it is committed to developing national capacity to implement the Responsibility to Protect through its national focal point on the

Responsibility to Protect and should outline the measures being undertaken in relation to the role of the focal point.

- The United Kingdom should emphasise the understanding that the Responsibility to Protect is primarily a preventative doctrine which utilises all of the three pillars. In the initial articulation of the three pillar framework, the Secretary-General did not call for the chronological sequencing of the pillars, but rather established them together as representative of the full range of measures necessary to protect. The relationship between the three pillars is interactive and mutually supportive.
- The third pillar of the Responsibility to Protect includes a broad range of non-coercive and coercive measures that actors at the national, regional and international level can utilise for the protection of populations.
- The risk and occurrence of RtoP crimes are in their very nature threats to international peace and security. There are never situations in which states do not have a responsibility to protect their populations from these crimes. Therefore, the question is not whether RtoP applies to a situation, rather, how best to operationalise the norm.
- Governments, sub-regional and regional organisations and UN bodies should continue to engage in dialogue as well as collaborative efforts, including with civil society organisations, to more fully establish and deepen their mutual commitments and to agree upon viable strategies to protect populations from RtoP crimes.

Regarding the second bullet point, the role of the national focal point within Her Majesty's Government is of vital importance as the prevention of mass atrocities cuts across a diverse range of governance institutions and requires the focus of a wide array of policy actors. To date, sixteen governments have appointed national focal points¹. It is our understanding that the United Kingdom has appointed a national focal point within the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, yet there is limited information available on the role and activities of the focal point since appointment. The Aegis Trust, Minority Rights Group and the UNA-UK would welcome further information on the role and activities of this focal point.

We thank you for your consideration of these suggested points as the General Assembly continues to make critically important contributions in the pursuit of mass atrocity prevention.

Yours respectfully,

Dr James Smith
Chief Executive Officer
The Aegis Trust

Mr Carl Soderbergh
Director of Policy and Communications
Minority Rights Group

Mr Phil Mulligan
Executive Director
UNA-UK

¹ See <http://globalr2p.org>