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Rt Hon William Hague MP
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
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4 September 2013

Dear Secretary of State,

The UN Association in the UK, which I chair, is carrying out a major project to help establish the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) as a firm principle of international behaviour. So I am writing to you about the 11 September 2013 informal interactive dialogue of the UN General Assembly on R2P, which many UNA-UK members across the UK want to see make solid progress.

We welcome the opportunity the dialogue provides for member states, regional organisations and civil society to reflect on the Secretary-General's fifth report on R2P, which this year focuses on "State responsibility and prevention". Escalating crises and situations of constant concern in countries like Syria, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burma demonstrate the importance of entrenching an international norm of preventing atrocity crimes, as well as a need for raising awareness of the risk factors and root causes for these crimes, themes addressed in the Secretary-General's report.

UNA-UK hopes that the UK, as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, will make a strong contribution to the 2013 dialogue. We call on the Government to reinvigorate its support for R2P and to convey the need for the UN, individual member states and regional organisations to strengthen the mechanisms available to protect populations from mass atrocities.

UNA-UK recommends that HMG should consider the following key points in its intervention:

- The United Kingdom should reaffirm its support for the Responsibility to Protect and highlight how the government is working to operationalise R2P and integrate a mass atrocity prevention policy lens across government through various agencies, policies and activities;
- The United Kingdom should also make clear that it is committed to developing national capacity to implement R2P and mass atrocity prevention through its national focal point, and should outline the measures being undertaken in relation to the role and activities of the focal point;

- The UK should outline that the risk and occurrence of R2P crimes are, by 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 R2P applies to a situation, rather, how best the norm may be operationalized;
- The United Kingdom should emphasise the understanding that R2P is primarily a preventative political doctrine founded in international law, which utilises all three pillars as outlined in the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document and subsequent reports of the Secretary-General;
- The UK should outline its commitment to assist states in building national resilience, protecting human rights and upholding their primary responsibility to protect through pillar two;
- The UK should lead by example as a responsible state and continue to support and participate in peer review processes such as the UN Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review;
- The UK should outline its commitment to engage in collaborative efforts, including with civil society organisations, to promote and deepen international mutual commitments, to agree upon viable strategies to protect populations from mass atrocity crimes and to support states in their primary responsibility to protect their populations.

Regarding the first and second bullet points, integrating an atrocity prevention lens across government through various agencies, policies and activities is of crucial importance; the prevention of mass atrocities, including the provision of assistance to states at risk of atrocity crimes, cuts across a diverse range of foreign, development, defence and international trade policies. The government's focal point should have a key role in supporting the development of a national plan of action for the prevention of atrocities, integrating R2P within existing national policies and ensuring coordination and coherence between departments.

While the UK has appointed a national focal point within the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, there is limited information available on the role and activities of this position. UNA-UK would welcome a clearer public explanation of these.

I very much hope that you will see these as constructive points for the interactive dialogue, and that you will give your personal encouragement to the FCO team to take them on board.

Yours sincerely,



Sir Jeremy Greenstock
Chairman, UNA-UK