



Permanent Mission of Germany to the United Nations

Summit Outcome 2005" - "Unsettled Events" - "Human and Governmental
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Statement

by
H.E. Mr. Thomas Matussek
Permanent Representative of Germany

General Assembly Debate

on the report of
the Secretary-General
"Implementing the Responsibility to Protect"

24 July 2009

(Check against delivery)

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... as well as... have a lot to... respect

Mr. President,

in the World Summit Outcome 2005, the assembled Heads of State and Government unanimously recognized the responsibility of each State to protect its population from genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing. They also recognized the responsibility of the international community, through the United Nations, to help to protect populations from such crimes and stressed the need for the General Assembly to continue consideration of how best to achieve this.

In January the Secretary-General delivered his report "Implementing the Responsibility to Protect". Germany warmly welcomes the report, which in our view is an excellent starting point for the debate in the General Assembly on how to implement and operationalize the concept of Responsibility to Protect. We especially welcome the practical measures for implementation proposed in the report.

The report outlines a three-pillar strategy to implement the concept: the primary obligation of States to protect their population; the commitment of the international community to assist States in meeting their obligations; and the responsibility of the international community to respond in accordance with the UN Charter when a State is manifestly failing to protect its population.

Mr. President,

Germany fully aligns itself with the statement made by Sweden on behalf of the European Union. For the sake of brevity, let me just turn to one point that in our view is crucial:

Although all three pillars are integral to the strategy for fulfilling the Responsibility to Protect, it is in our view pillar two which is the most innovative of the three. Germany firmly believes that cooperation and prevention are the basic principles of the 'Responsibility to Protect'. It recognizes the sovereignty of states when it stresses that responsibility for the protection of civilians rests first and foremost with the state whose population is threatened. It aims at strengthening these states' sovereignty and capacity as a state actor when it stresses the responsibility of the international community to cooperate with these states and to help to meet their obligations.

We believe that the strong focus on cooperation in prevention is the reason why many states who have been suffering from conflict and RtoP-situations see the emergence of this concept as an opportunity. This has clearly been shown in our debate so far. They know that the acceptance of this common responsibility gives them leverage to say: we do our part, now you do yours. This is the real challenge of Responsibility to Protect: to start working together early enough to prevent mass atrocities and to provide real protection.

In short, individual States and the international community have a common responsibility to help prevent genocide situations occurring in the first place. That is why we fully support the proposal of the report to address ways to define and develop the partnership between States and the international community in the field of assistance and capacity-building as described in pillar two of the report. We have already heard some interesting ideas and proposals during our debate and we stand ready to further develop these proposals. Developing the instruments for early-warning, crisis management and conflict prevention will be crucial. I am confident that the EU as well as other regional organisations have a lot to contribute in this respect.

Within this concept, the third pillar of the RtoP is of a complementary nature, and only arises when both the individual state and the international community have failed in their obligations to prevent genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity or ethnic cleansing.

Mr. President,

Let me conclude by saying that the fact that the General Assembly is discussing ways and means to implement the concept of the Responsibility to Protect almost four years after the World Summit Outcome, is a success in itself. In retrospect, this debate may even one day be considered as the historical beginning of a process, which eventually led to a world free of mass atrocities. But that will only happen, if we genuinely continue to try to find common ground. I'm encouraged by the positive contributions we have heard in the debate so far. It is therefore essential that the debate about the implementation of the Responsibility to Protect in the General Assembly continues.

Thank you

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