



# ITALY

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**PLENARY DEBATE**

**REPORT OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL**

**ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT**

**STATEMENT BY**

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**TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

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**Check against delivery**

Thank you Mr. President.

Italy aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier by Sweden on behalf of the EU.

I warmly welcome the Secretary-General's report on implementing the responsibility to protect and, in particular, commend the balanced and insightful work of his Special Adviser, Professor Edward Luck. Today's debate on the report is a timely opportunity to build on the consensus achieved at the 2005 World Summit and focus on the concrete implementation of R to P.

The unanimous affirmation by our Heads of State and Government of the principle of the responsibility to protect is a cardinal achievement of the United Nations and one of the most innovative concepts to emerge in recent years. Europeans are particularly sensitive to this principle. The memory is still fresh of the atrocities perpetrated in the 1990s in the Western Balkans – which are a part of Europe culturally, historically and politically – as well as in the Great Lakes region of Africa. The Swedish Presidency of the EU, along with other speakers, has rightly referred to the genocide in Rwanda and the massacre of Srebrenica.

Mr. President,

I would like to structure my comments around the three-pillar strategy that the Secretary-General outlined to advance the agenda mandated by the 2005 Outcome Document.

Pillar one focuses on the protection responsibilities of States. RtoP fleshes out a notion of sovereignty that entails special responsibilities based on pre-existing and continuing legal obligations of States. Governments must protect their own populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. Prevention begins at home, through the promotion of human rights, rule of law, and democratic governance, which are universal principles shared by the international community today.

We thus welcome a number of the points elaborated by the Secretary-General: from the role of the Human Rights Council in advancing the R to P goals to the call for additional States to become parties to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. The link between accountability and prevention is clear: the purpose of international criminal justice is to bring to justice the perpetrators of international crimes; preventing such crimes is at the core of RtoP.

We also encourage the promotion of best practices such as the standards recalled in the African Peer Review Mechanism and those established for becoming members of the European Union.

Fostering individual responsibility is another key aspect of prevention. My Government supports the Network of Young People Affected by War (NYPAW), which is dedicated to helping former child soldiers from around the world reintegrate into society, improve their lives and tell their stories in order to prevent others from falling into the same trap.

Pillar two examines international assistance and capacity-building, in terms of the international community's commitment to help States protect their people. This commitment means availing ourselves of all bilateral, regional and multilateral instruments.

This crucial task involves the entire U.N. system. I would like to highlight, in particular, the Security Council's inclusion of civilian protection clauses in the mandates of peacekeeping operations as well as the Council's role in post-conflict institution consolidation. In this regard, we reiterate our strong interest in exploring the establishment of a Rule of Law Standing Capacity on the model of the Standing Police Capacity. Along these lines, we believe that development programs, security sector reform, and post-conflict peace-building means should complement the activities of States in crisis situations.

Building the capacities of regional organizations is a fundamental part of implementing RtoP. Very appropriately the Secretary General's report underlines

the relevance of Chapter VIII of the UN Charter as one of the main legal frameworks for operationalizing RtoP. In 2007 my Government launched the Italian African Peace Facility, whose purpose is to strengthen the institutional, operational and logistic capabilities of the African Union to prevent, mediate and resolve conflicts.

Pillar three is the responsibility of Member States to respond collectively in a timely and decisive manner when a State manifestly fails to provide protection to its own population. Allow me to restate that the responsibility to protect should not be perceived in a confrontational manner; it should be seen instead as an instrument available to the international community to overcome crises, provided that the conditions referred to in paragraphs 138 and 139 of the Summit Outcome Document are met.

Among the broad range of tools available, including peaceful measures under Chapter VI, VII and VIII of the Charter, we would like to focus on one suggestion by the Secretary-General. Recognizing the special responsibilities of the five permanent members of the Security Council, the SG urges them to refrain from employing or threatening to employ the veto in situations of manifest failure to meet obligations relating to the responsibility to protect and to reach a mutual understanding to that effect. Important voices of civil society and academia from the permanent members have raised similar instances. This is a very delicate issue driven by the concerns and expectations of international public opinion, and Italy believes that debate on it must continue.

Today's discussion shows that the UN can give hope to populations at risk of being victimized by international crimes that totalitarian regimes commit or foment against their own citizens. We are not here to debate philosophical, religious or ideological approaches: we are here to give concrete and credible answers that go well beyond the Westphalian model. Human dignity has greatly advanced since World War II thanks to the adoption of the UN Charter and the efforts of Member States.