

## General Assembly agrees to hold more talks on responsibility to protect



General Assembly

14 September 2009 – The General Assembly today adopted by consensus its first resolution on the responsibility to protect, agreeing to hold further discussions on the international understanding to intervene to stop atrocities from taking place.

The resolution noted “with appreciation” Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon’s July report calling for speedy action “to turn the promise of the responsibility to protect into practice.”

Agreed at a summit of world leaders in 2005 and sometimes known as ‘R2P’, it holds States responsible for shielding their own populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and related crimes against humanity and requires the international community to step in if this obligation is not met.

“It is most significant that this resolution was adopted by consensus,” Mr. Ban said in a statement. “I welcome it as an important step as we chart a common path towards meeting the commitment made at the 2005 World Summit.”

He said he looked forward to further deepening the dialogue on how best to implement R2P. “It was heartening to hear so many Member States, from every part of the world, reaffirm in a constructive and forward-looking debate the commitment made in 2005,” he added. “I found the statements by Member States that had suffered such traumas to be particularly meaningful.”

Mr. Ban asked his Special Adviser Edward Luck and Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide Francis Deng to continue their wide-ranging consultations with Member States, relevant departments and agencies, regional and sub-regional organizations, and civil society on the many implementation questions still outstanding.

“In all our efforts, we should be guided and united by the ultimate purpose of the responsibility to protect: to save lives by preventing the most egregious mass violations of human rights,” he added.

In July outgoing Assembly President Miguel D’Escoto, a former Nicaraguan foreign minister, warned that could pose a threat to national sovereignty, He told the Assembly that the

legacy of colonialism gave “developing countries strong reasons to fear that laudable motives can end up being misused, once more, to justify arbitrary and selective interventions against the weakest States.”

Citing the case of Iraq as an example of the lack of accountability for “those who might abuse the right that R2P would give nation States to resort to the use of force against other States,” he also questioned whether adoption of R2P in the practice of collective security would undermine respect for international law.

The principle is “applied selectively, in cases where public opinion in P5 States [the five permanent members of the Security Council: China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States] supports intervention, as in Darfur, and not where it is opposed, as in Gaza,” he said, referring respectively to the conflict between the Government and rebels in Sudan and Israel’s campaign against Hamas in Gaza last December and January.

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