

UNITED NATIONS



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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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**REMARKS AT STANLEY FOUNDATION CONFERENCE
ON “IMPLEMENTING THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT”
Tarrytown, 15 January 2010**

President Stanley,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you, Dick, for those kind words.

You and the Stanley Foundation are good friends of the United Nations. Over the years, you have made invaluable contributions on many of the main issues on the UN agenda. Now, you are helping to improve international understanding on the responsibility to protect. Once again, you have convened the right group to talk about the right issue at the right time.

For the responsibility to protect, 2009 was a watershed year. Together, we – the Member States, civil society, and the Secretariat – worked to transform the responsibility to protect from a noble aspiration to a plan of action to prevent genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity.

This year, we have both an opportunity and an obligation to take further critical steps towards implementation. In doing so, we can send a clear signal that the United Nations is determined to turn words into deeds when it comes to protecting people from mass atrocities and other grave violations of human rights.

As you know, in July the General Assembly held a thoughtful debate on the ideas presented in my report on *Implementing the Responsibility to Protect*. Important questions were raised about how some parts of the strategy should be operationalized. But the points of agreement far outnumber the differences. The subsequent adoption of resolution 63/308 by consensus reflects the Assembly’s determination to move forward.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

There is still much we do not know about how to prevent atrocity crimes. To help fill the knowledge gap, my two Special Advisers, Professors Luck and Deng, are commissioning case studies of good and best practices from around the world.

We should also be modest about the capacity of international institutions to substitute for domestic ones. Our goal is not to undermine the sovereignty of the state but to help it meet its core protection responsibilities to its people. No government has renounced those responsibilities. Indeed, speaker after speaker at the Assembly debate reaffirmed the full range of commitments made at the highest level at the 2005 World Summit.

That said, we do know three things.

First, societies and economies take many years to recover from mass violence. The scars do not heal easily. Too often, they define the fault lines for future cycles of retribution. They can foster both domestic and transnational conflict.

The prevention of mass atrocities demands a system-wide UN effort. Goals related to the responsibility to protect should also inform our development and peacebuilding work, not just our efforts in the areas of human rights, humanitarian affairs, peacekeeping and political affairs.

This means we are in the market for good ideas on how to mainstream the responsibility to protect in the UN system's work. Member States should likewise focus on how to accomplish this in their national assistance policies.

Second, we know that regional and sub-regional arrangements have critical roles to play in both prevention and protection.

Earlier this week, I hosted a retreat with the heads of regional and other organizations. I was impressed by the prospects for strengthening such collaboration. In Africa and Europe, the possibilities for joint efforts to implement the responsibility to protect are well advanced, in other regions less so. I have asked my two Special Advisers to explore what more we can do.

Third, we know that while prevention must be our first and foremost objective, we need to be prepared to act "in a timely and decisive manner" should prevention fail.

As the 2005 Outcome Document and my report underscore, we should look to the full range of tools that are available under Chapters VI, VII, and VIII of the United Nations Charter. The key is an early and flexible response tailored to the specific circumstances of each case.

The outcome document also focused on another crucial element – early warning. The assembled leaders called on the international community to "support the United Nations in establishing an early warning capability."

The Annex to my report outlines how we might begin to go about this.

After all, the UN system does not lack information. The problem is assembling the relevant information in one place and assessing it from a responsibility to protect perspective.

In addition, the Office of the Special Adviser for the Prevention of Genocide already does this through the lens of one of the four atrocity crimes.

It would thus make sense to have a joint office on genocide prevention and the responsibility to protect, whose functions would include early warning and assessment and which would have direct access to me.

Moreover, an inter-agency mechanism will consider policy options to be presented to me and, through me, to relevant intergovernmental bodies in emergency situations.

My two Special Advisers have been consulting widely with relevant departments and agencies on how to go about this. Professor Luck will report on their conclusions and recommendations to the Policy Committee at the end of March.

Before closing, let me mention two issues that are before us in 2010.

The first relates to collaboration between Member States and the Secretariat.

In the conceptual development of the responsibility to protect, our ongoing conversation has proven remarkably productive. We have listened to and learned from you. As we move towards creating the joint office of the Special Advisers, however, we will also need some modest financial and human resources. We hope to have as constructive a dialogue with the Fifth Committee as we have had with the Plenary.

The second issue relates to the very credibility of the United Nations.

As you know, there are many critics who doubt that the world body can be a reliable protector of populations from atrocity crimes. And indeed, they have lots of history and several recent debacles with which to make their case.

Still, I remain convinced that the only way to endow the responsibility to protect with legal authority, moral weight and the promise of effective action is to keep it under the provisions of the UN Charter. This was made explicit in the Summit Outcome document.

Civil society – including some of you in this room – can keep pressing capitals and international institutions to act.

The Secretariat can help make prevention work, undertake Chapter VI measures, and ring the alarm bells when timely and decisive action is needed.

But in the toughest and most visible cases, when prevention fails and peaceful means are inadequate, it will be up to the Member States to prove their mettle as well as the value of the world body.

In this new decade, let us prove the doubters wrong and the believers in our collective institutions right. That is a New Year's resolution well worth keeping.

Many thanks and best wishes for the success of your deliberations.

Thank you.