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President: Mr. Körösi (Hungary)

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Agenda item 132

The responsibility to protect and the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity

Report of the Secretary-General (A/77/910)

The President: In accordance with rule 70 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, I now give the floor to Mr. George Okoth-Obbo, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Responsibility to Protect, to make a statement on behalf of the Secretary-General.

Mr. Okoth-Obbo: The Secretary-General sends his apologies and best wishes for today's deliberations and has requested that I present his report (A/77/910).

Before presenting the report, let me underline that this debate of the General Assembly on the responsibility to protect (R2P) is most welcome. Every year, it provides a poignant occasion for us to reflect on the cardinal political and moral commitment that the world made 18 years ago to ensure that the contagion of mass atrocities would never again mark humankind. Yet as the debate takes place today, countless civilians continue to be caught up in situations of conflict, violence and egregious human rights violations that may constitute genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing. R2P therefore remains as evocative and imperative today as when the world resounded "Never again" in unison at the World Summit held in 2005. As we know, the keystone of R2P, which

has been underlined many times, is prevention. At the same time, in order to craft and deliver solutions that are effective for that purpose, it is crucial that the root causes, risks, triggers and multipliers of atrocity crimes be properly discerned and understood.

The report explores the relationship that was recognized as crucial from the very inception of the conceptualization of the responsibility to protect — that is, the intersection between development and R2P. Drawing on the foundational objectives of the Sustainable Development Goals, the report underlines that development can create the conditions for sustainable peace, equitable growth and accountable governance, and can thereby cement the prospects for realizing the fundamental purposes and objectives for which the responsibility to protect was agreed. On the other hand, the report highlights that, in situations of underdevelopment, poverty and societal inequality, a number of factors — including food insecurity; stressors on social resilience; governance, institutional and accountability failures; discrimination; violations and abuses of human rights; and conflict — can be root causes, and thereby signal risk factors, drivers and multipliers of atrocity crimes. The particular ways in which those problems and risks are manifested are examined at the national and global levels and in relation to the United Nations. In those contexts, measures are proposed so that development can be leveraged to avoid, diminish and eradicate those problems and risks.

Most crucially, the report calls on States in particular to comprehensively recognize, own and commit their political will in a whole-of-Government

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approach to the intersection between development and R2P and to leverage development policies, strategies and programmes across the spectrum of atrocity-risk assessment, early warning, preparedness and response in order to prevent, reduce and mitigate the related risks and occurrences. In particular, it calls for bilateral and multilateral development partnerships and cooperation, including among international financial institutions, which, when they overlook the R2P dimensions, cannot only fail to discern, notice and attend to atrocity risks and occurrences but even potentially enable them. As for the United Nations, the report looks forward to the continuation of deliberations and efforts concerning the role of development in the prevention of atrocity crimes and the contribution of the relevant United Nations departments, agencies, funds and programmes across the spectrum from warning to prevention. In all those efforts, the inclusion and agency of civil society, faith communities, traditional leaders, minority groups, including indigenous populations, women, children, young people, the media and other local actors, are fully recognized and underlined.

It is clear that not all questions and recommendation raised concerning the intersection between development and R2P lend themselves to easy interpretations or simple conclusions. However, it is a subject in which every State has both historical and real-time experience. There is therefore a lot to share, and it will be important to listen to the perspectives, experiences, challenges, good practices and even concerns that States may have about those questions and proposals. There is also the hope that this debate can point to some key convergences on the way forward in order to optimize and maximize the development agenda in the context of R2P — in other words, how to realize in concrete terms the interconnectedness that the report urgently recommends. The views of States will be particularly important for determining how the ideas and questions contained in the report can be carried forward or leveraged with respect to related agendas and initiatives, such as climate change, human rights, governance and accountability, conflict resolution and peacebuilding, both within the United Nations and in other regional and national contexts. It will also be extremely important to hear the views of Member States on the broader R2P landscape.

At the beginning of my remarks, I underlined that this annual debate reminds us not to drift away from our commitment, duty and responsibility to protect. It is a reminder that should ring even louder this year,

which marks the seventy-fifth anniversary of both the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. Millions of lives depend on that responsibility being given meaning. Let us today, in the context of the relationship between development and the responsibility to protect, catalyse every thought, idea and way forward that would advance building a more prosperous world in which all are free from the risk and reality of mass atrocities.

I look forward to a very vibrant discussion and debate.

The President: I thank the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Responsibility to Protect for his statement on behalf of the Secretary-General.

Mr. Šimonović (Croatia): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect, which consists of 55 Member States and the European Union and is co-chaired this year by Botswana, Costa Rica and Croatia.

We would like to thank George Okoth-Obbo, the responsibility to protect (R2P) mandate holder, for his statement.

Today marks the fourteenth year in which the General Assembly has convened to discuss how to implement the responsibility to protect, and the sixth time it has done so at a formal debate. We would like to thank the Secretary-General for his important thematic report (A/77/910), entitled “Development and the responsibility to protect: recognizing and addressing embedded risks and drivers of atrocity crimes”. We believe that such reports contribute to shaping a holistic outlook on R2P, but would like to once again encourage the Secretary-General to include in future reports assessments of the implementation of the recommendations of previous reports, as well as an analysis of trends with regard to the risks of genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, ethnic cleansing and their prevention, in line with what we asked for in our previous joint statements.

This year’s report and today’s debate provide an important opportunity for Member States to discuss how preventing atrocities and fulfilling the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development go hand in hand and how development cooperation, technical assistance and capacity-building can be utilized to address root causes and mitigate other factors that increase the risks of atrocity crimes. Violence and atrocities often cause

profound political, economic and social damage, which is sometimes referred to as development in reverse. They also disproportionately affect women and girls and exacerbate existing inequalities. Preventing atrocities must therefore be a global development priority, as well as a moral and political imperative. Implementing policies that help prevent atrocities not only improves respect for human rights but also strengthens the State's capacity for political, social and economic development.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides a framework for global cooperation to achieve a better and more sustainable future and can significantly contribute to atrocity prevention efforts. Addressing the failures of development and governance and building more resilient societies are critical elements of States' efforts to prevent atrocity crimes. Similarly, among other things, respect for the rule of law and respect for and the protection of all human rights, without discrimination, are critical. Legitimate, accountable and inclusive national institutions, good governance and ensuring that all populations have access to justice are key. Such efforts should be undertaken with an approach that supports diversity, gender equality, a strong civil society and a pluralistic media. Eradicating poverty, providing development assistance and supporting capacity- and institution-building can address the grievances and instability that may drive the perpetration of atrocity crimes.

Member States should ensure that development assistance and programmes seek to benefit all communities and strengthen resilience against atrocity crimes. Inhibiting the means to commit mass atrocities, including by establishing effective disarmament programmes and tackling the illegal flows and illicit trade, diversion and trafficking of weapons and their ammunition, can play a crucial role in prevention. The effective prevention of atrocities can be achieved only if the United Nations system responds holistically by using all the tools and mechanisms at its disposal. That includes the effective sharing of relevant information by all parts of the United Nations, which is then acted upon. Greater cross-department collaboration, including partnerships among the United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect and other United Nations bodies, will contribute to enhancing the collective capacity of the United Nations to prevent untold atrocity crimes.

Today's debate is being held at a time when the world faces alarming levels of violence, atrocities and

displacement, and conflict-related sexual violence continues to be used as a weapon of war. Despite national and global efforts to prevent the escalation of conflicts and protect populations, there are currently more than 108 million people displaced by persecution, violence and atrocities. That record number is not only demonstrative of the failures in the area of prevention but also of the inability to create the conditions for populations to voluntarily return home in safety and with dignity. It also demonstrates why the responsibility to protect needs to be at the heart of our shared mission to advance peace and security, human rights and development.

In that context, we would like to reaffirm our full support for the United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect. As underlined in our statements at previous General Assembly debates, we encourage the Secretary-General's two Special Advisers on the Prevention of Genocide and R2P to use their leadership roles to advance atrocity prevention and R2P and highlight risks in ongoing crises around the world. We urge the Special Advisers to strengthen those efforts, share their analysis with the wider United Nations membership and regularly provide the necessary early-warning assessments and recommendations on how to prevent atrocities, including to the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council. We also encourage the two Special Advisers to work with all relevant parts of the United Nations system to overcome silos and address atrocity risks holistically.

Since 2005, considerable progress has been made by the States Members of the United Nations and other stakeholders, including civil society, in operationalizing our commitment to R2P at the national, regional and international levels. International and national actors have been successful in creating frameworks for identifying risks, developing early-warning mechanisms, articulating the inhibitors of atrocity crimes and creating new institutional mechanisms.

This annual formal debate gives States an important opportunity to share national experiences and best practices and effective strategies for preventing atrocities. The expertise of civil society actors can — and should — substantively inform discussions among policymakers and decision-makers, including the United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and R2P, in relation to atrocity prevention and R2P, particularly through the inclusion of the voices and

needs of the local actors and communities that are directly affected by ongoing atrocities. We would like to thank the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect for its invaluable work as secretariat of the Global Network of R2P Focal Points and the Group of Friends in both New York and Geneva.

Over the past few years, the Secretary-General has launched various important initiatives in which the Group of Friends has closely engaged, including the New Agenda for Peace and *Our Common Agenda* (A/75/982). As those agendas are being further developed, the Group would like to note that these are pivotal moments for the United Nations and Member States to further advance R2P and strengthen atrocity prevention efforts. We also renew our call on all members of the Security Council to respond to and address the risk or commission of mass atrocities, noting in that context initiatives such as the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency group's code of conduct and the French-Mexican initiative on veto restraint in cases of mass atrocities.

Today, during this formal debate, we look forward to hearing from Member States on best practices to end the current climate of impunity and inaction with regard to the risk of atrocity crimes across the globe. Let this debate be a reminder of the importance of continuing this exchange of information and the need to strengthen our individual and collective prevention efforts.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the European Union, in its capacity as observer.

Mr. Gonzato (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. The candidate countries North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Bosnia and Herzegovina and the potential candidate country Georgia, as well as Andorra and San Marino, align themselves with this statement.

The EU and its member States would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/77/910) and the recommendations therein. We also thank the Secretary-General's Special Advisers on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) and their Offices, the work of which we actively support both politically and financially.

As we approach the Sustainable Development Goals Summit to be held in September, the report provides a timely and welcome input, which underlines how

critical it is to address atrocity risks in order to realize the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. There can be no peace without sustainable development, no development without peace, and neither peace nor development without accountable governance and the full and equal enjoyment of human rights.

The EU and its member States are strong supporters of the United Nations in this field, both in the operationalization and implementation of the R2P principle and in achieving the 2030 Agenda. Aligned with the 2030 Agenda, which remains the common global road map for a better and more sustainable future, *Our Common Agenda* (A/75/982), including its ambitious New Agenda for Peace, offers key opportunities for achieving the transformative changes necessary to address the challenges of the twenty-first century.

While we aim to address global challenges and build more resilient societies, operationalizing R2P requires tackling the underlying causes that provide fertile ground in which atrocity mindsets can grow. In the EU, through tools and policies such as the Atrocity Prevention Toolkit, our early-warning system, our horizon-scanning project and our conflict analysis screenings, we work to enhance our ability to identify and address early-warning signs. In addition, our bilateral human rights dialogues contribute to mitigating atrocity risks by addressing democracy and the rule of law, non-discrimination, torture prevention, hate speech and disinformation, to mention but a few examples. Our civilian common security and defence policy missions also contribute to that end — for example, by supporting security sector reform in Iraq and the Central African Republic and by monitoring the situation on the ground in the South Caucasus.

Lessons from those experiences underscore the importance of dedicating sufficient attention and resources to early action, preventive diplomacy, dialogue and mediation. Equally, working better across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus is key for ensuring strategic coherence, breaking vicious cycles of conflict and protecting hard-earned development gains. In that regard, EU conflict analysis is a powerful tool, as it gathers information from EU delegations and the relevant EU services working on development, peace and security, humanitarian affairs and human rights, helping to break silos and ensure that our development programming is sensitive to, and addresses the risks of, conflict and atrocities. We encourage the United Nations

and its Member States to link R2P and development through prevention and to consider detecting and responding to the early-warning signs of atrocity risks in their development plans and programming.

The EU backs the strengthening of early-warning and prevention mechanisms within the United Nations system and stands ready to provide support in that regard, as well as in the implementation of the youth and women and peace and security agendas.

The prevention of atrocities is a must. Preventing violent conflict is key to saving populations from the scourge of war and the resulting suffering. But if and when prevention fails, we must respond. The EU underscores, in that respect, the responsibility of the Security Council to act in situations of mass atrocities, and encourages all United Nations Member States to join the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency group's code of conduct and the French-Mexican initiative on veto restraint in cases of mass atrocities.

In conclusion, the EU calls upon the Secretary-General to include in his future R2P reports an analysis of trends regarding risks of genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing and their prevention, as well as a systematic follow-up of the implementation of recommendations for response and mitigation measures.

Mr. Pérez Ayestarán (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of Friends in Defence of the Charter of the United Nations. In that context, we reaffirm, first of all, the commitment of the Group's 20 member States to respect for, and promotion and protection of, all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Therefore, consistent with the provisions of our respective national laws, as well as our relevant international obligations, we express our categorical rejection of the commission of crimes against humanity, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and genocide, while emphasizing the central role of States as guarantors of the security and well-being of their respective populations.

The Group of Friends considers the Charter of the United Nations to be a milestone and a true act of faith in the best of humankind. It is the code of conduct that has governed international relations among States for the past 78 years, based on timeless principles that,

in addition to being the bedrock of international law, remain as relevant today as they were in 1945.

We therefore call on the countries gathered today in the General Assembly to defend the international system, with the United Nations at its core, as well as the international order anchored in international law and the basic norms of international relations, which are in turn underpinned by the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. In that context, we are also of the view that ensuring compliance with, and strict adherence to, both the letter and the spirit of the Charter of the United Nations is fundamental to ensuring the realization of the three pillars of our Organization, as well as progress towards the establishment of a more peaceful and prosperous world and a truly just and equitable world order.

In that context, we express our grave concern at the current and growing threats to the Charter of the United Nations. Those include, for example, attempts to promote or advance non-consensual and controversial notions, such as the responsibility to protect, among many others. Such approaches — coupled with, *inter alia*, the increasing recourse to unilateralism, claims of non-existent exceptionalism and attempts to ignore and even replace the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter with a new set of so-called rules that, to say the least, remain unknown — threaten to undermine multilateralism and the United Nations system as a whole.

Much attention has been devoted to the importance of prevention within the General Assembly and other principal organs of our Organization. And by the very act of signing its founding Charter, we States Members committed ourselves, among other things, to saving succeeding generations from the scourge of war, promoting social progress and ensuring respect for fundamental human rights. In that regard, no one should be opposed to the ideal of preventing conflicts and serious crimes under international law from being committed.

The Group of Friends believes that the Charter is both an important milestone and a genuine demonstration of faith in the best of humankind. The Charter's provisions, which are legally binding on all its signatories, also contain a set of cardinal principles for conducting our international relations, on which we have all voluntarily agreed, namely, the sovereign equality of States, the self-determination of peoples, refraining from the threat or use of force

against the political independence of any State, and non-intervention in the internal affairs of States.

The Group of Friends therefore cannot emphasize enough that early-warning and prevention efforts must fully respect each and every principle enshrined in the Charter, as well as the norms of international law. In that context, we believe that, instead of pushing for controversial and divisive approaches that could further increase tensions and mistrust around the globe, the international community should make greater use of the tools provided by multilateralism and diplomacy for the peaceful settlement of disputes, in accordance with the provisions of Chapter VI of the Charter, in order to collectively address the common challenges that we all face as a global community with a shared future.

The concept of the responsibility to protect may once have had purely altruistic intentions. However, time and the course of history have shown us the catastrophic consequences it can bring when it is invoked selectively, particularly in countries with vast natural resources, and we will continue to see more of its negative impacts as the concept continues to be used — or rather abused — to promote and justify interventionist agendas disguised as humanitarian initiatives, which in no way correspond to their purported intentions. Moreover, the discussion of the definition and scope of the concept, which is highly politicized and has also raised serious and legitimate concerns for a significant number of States, remains pending in the context of the need for a transparent and inclusive intergovernmental process.

Almost 20 years after the adoption of the 2005 World Summit Outcome, doubts still persist and many questions remain unanswered, especially those raised by developing nations. For instance, if the concept genuinely intends to protect people, why does it not first aim to promote and strengthen international solidarity and cooperation in combating poverty, hunger and inequality? Why not begin by addressing the root causes of conflicts? Why not focus on dialogue, negotiation, tolerance, mutual understanding and respect? Why are we not collectively calling for an end to the illegal application of unilateral coercive measures? Why are we not calling for accountability for the multiple crimes that are committed on a daily basis in the State of Palestine?

It is the lack of answers — and in many cases the deafening silence — in the face of such doubts and concerns that demonstrates that the responsibility to

protect is riddled with double standards and that the concept seems only to serve agendas of a dubious nature that are promoted by certain Governments, whose only aim is to maintain their domination by, *inter alia*, pursuing neocolonial practices, including the weaponization of human rights, the economy and the international financial system, particularly to the detriment of sovereign nations that have freely decided to control their own destiny and remain politically independent. Therefore, in view of the possible launch of consultations on a New Agenda for Peace, we believe that it is necessary to refrain from including controversial elements, including notions or concepts that have not been agreed internationally, such as the responsibility to protect.

Based on the points I have made, I would like to conclude by reaffirming our commitment to preserving, promoting and defending the prevalence and validity of the Charter, while also calling on all responsible members of the international community to stop engaging in the practices I mentioned and finally promote win-win cooperation and good-faith commitment in order to effectively honour the aspirations of we the peoples of the United Nations.

Mrs. Dime Labille (France) (*spoke in French*): France aligns itself with the statement made earlier by the observer of the European Union, and I have the honour to deliver the following statement on behalf of Mexico and France.

We welcome the report of the Secretary-General (A/77/910) and reaffirm our support for his Special Advisers on the Prevention of Genocide and the Responsibility to Protect.

In 2005, we unanimously reaffirmed that States have the primary responsibility to protect their own populations from genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing. That is not a matter of political will but an inherent obligation of sovereign States under international law. Our collective priority remains to operationalize the political commitments on which the responsibility to protect is based, with full respect for international law, in particular the Charter of the United Nations. The prevention of mass atrocities must remain a top priority of the United Nations system. In that regard, France and Mexico take this opportunity to highlight four key points.

First, mass atrocities do not occur spontaneously. They result from a convergence of progressive

violence, structural factors and political dynamics. There are clear drivers, which are deeply rooted in economic, social, human rights and armed conflict contexts, that exacerbate conflicts and increase the risk of atrocity crimes. The efforts to effectively prevent mass atrocities must therefore acknowledge that sustainable development has the power to mitigate the multidimensional vulnerabilities caused by overlapping crises, fragility and systemic exclusion. Preventing the four atrocity crimes covered by the responsibility to protect entails addressing sustainable development concerns when operationalizing the concept's first and second pillars. Addressing root causes entails a prevention-centred approach based on the complementary and mutually reinforcing nature of human rights and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Secondly, prevention and response must be supported by an effective multilateral system. The veto must not be used with the aim of paralysing the Security Council's fulfilment of its mandate to maintain international peace and security. It is in that spirit that the French-Mexican initiative for a voluntary and collective agreement to suspend the use of the veto in the Council in the event of mass atrocities was launched in 2015 — now supported by 106 States. The initiative strikes at the core of inaction. We propose that the five permanent members of the Council pledge not to use the veto in situations of mass atrocities when crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity or war crimes on a large scale are committed, in order to enable the Council to take effective action. It is high time for us to raise our voices given the challenging times we face, in which multilateralism and international law are being put to the test. The initiative's voluntary approach strictly respects the prerogatives of the Security Council and its members and does not require a revision of the Charter; rather, it requires political commitment. Therefore, we take this opportunity to call on all States that have not yet done so, in particular the other permanent and elected members of the Security Council, to join the initiative.

Thirdly, accountability is vital to the prevention of atrocities and essential in order to provide a measure of justice to victims. Impunity for grave human rights violations is a significant risk factor for atrocities and cripples the rule of law and development objectives. We renew our call for Member States to support and cooperate with the International Criminal Court, as well as with fact-finding missions and commissions of inquiry, with a view to strengthening accountability

mechanisms and exchanging best practices. We also reiterate our support for the ongoing process towards adopting a convention on the prevention and punishment of crimes against humanity. We call on States that have not yet done so to join key international instruments, including human rights instruments, the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

Fourthly, preventing mass atrocities entails inhibiting the capacity to commit them. That includes addressing the illegal flows and trade of small weapons and their ammunition in order to prevent perpetrators from accumulating the means to commit atrocities. Respecting United Nations arms embargoes is also crucial in that regard.

Mexico and France recognize the efforts to operationalize the concept of the responsibility to protect. Today's formal general debate is of great importance for discussing and deepening our common understanding of the linkages between atrocity prevention and sustainable development. It underscores the need to ensure that sustainable development strategies be informed in such a way as to be supportive of social resilience and to ensure that they do not exacerbate the risks of atrocities. Today's message is clear: there can be no sustainable development without peace, and no peace without sustainable development.

In conclusion, allow me to underscore that no responsibility is higher than that of protecting our populations. We owe it to them, to ourselves and to the United Nations to demonstrate our capacity to live up to our responsibilities.

Mr. Pildegovičs (Latvia): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the eight Nordic-Baltic countries, namely, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Lithuania, Norway, Sweden and my own country, Latvia.

We would like to join those thanking the Secretary-General for the fifteenth thematic report, entitled "Development and the responsibility to protect: recognizing and addressing embedded risks and drivers of atrocity crimes" (A/77/910). We fully support his recommendations, including the recommendation to continue deliberations on the role of development in the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. We will share the report with development actors in our own systems in order to

further strengthen the nexus between the responsibility to protect and development in practice.

We welcome today's opportunity to discuss the new responsibility to protect report with the United Nations Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect. We underscore the importance of the Special Adviser's regular presence in New York for helping to advance the implementation of the responsibility to protect, together with both Member States and the Secretariat.

As we navigate the complexities of a rapidly changing world, we reaffirm our commitment to the essential principle of the responsibility to protect. Today violent conflicts and serious human rights abuses continue to plague all parts of the world, including in the form of the unprovoked war of aggression against a fellow United Nations Member waged by the Russian Federation. Every day we witness the suffering of innocent civilians who yearn for peace and face atrocities. As Members of the United Nations, we have a shared responsibility to prevent and respond to acts of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and ethnic cleansing. It is in such times that the responsibility to protect demands our attention, our active contributions and our unwavering resolve.

We call on the Special Advisers on the Responsibility to Protect and on the Prevention of Genocide and their joint Office to develop and share practical recommendations on atrocity prevention that provide Member States and the United Nations organs with concrete, timely and practical advice on how to better implement the responsibility to protect and genocide prevention when atrocity risks emerge or atrocity crimes are committed in specific countries. We also call on the Office to develop and share regular updates about the root causes and warning signs of new atrocity crimes. Practical examples will help increase our understanding of how to more effectively translate the responsibility to protect principle into concrete action and will provide new opportunities for collaborating and preventing them in the first place.

Moreover, we must recognize the vital role of regional organizations in implementing the three pillars of the responsibility to protect. Regional cooperation can contribute to effective early-warning, rapid response and long-term stabilization efforts in order to help prevent new atrocities. Member States must work hand in hand with regional bodies to address the recommendations contained in the report.

Finally, looking ahead, we take this opportunity to stress the importance of a forward-looking assessment of the state of the responsibility to protect and its implementation at the national, regional and global levels, as part of the preparations for the twentieth anniversary of the 2005 World Summit Outcome, to be commemorated in 2025.

Mr. Peñalver Portal (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Our delegation aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of Friends in Defence of the Charter of the United Nations. We wish to make the following remarks in our national capacity.

Cuba is of the view that it is a mistake to speak of the responsibility to protect as a principle, as it does not constitute a foundation or axiom of international law. That so-called responsibility is only a notion whose scope, rules of implementation and evaluation mechanisms are still far from being defined and agreed upon by Member States. In that regard, it is inappropriate to speak of strengthening the implementation of the responsibility to protect without the existence of a consensus on its implications that would resolve differences with regard to its interpretation, guarantee its universal recognition and acceptance and confer legitimacy on the actions proposed for its implementation.

Cuba considers that the term "atrocity crimes" continues to be used erroneously, while placing it among the four crimes agreed upon in resolution 60/1. In that regard, we recall once again that numerous delegations have expressed their disagreement with the use of that term or the term "mass atrocities", due not only to their legal ambiguity but also to the absence of consensus on the definition of those crimes, which must be decided by the Member States. This is not the first time that concerns have been raised in this Hall about the selective and politically motivated use of those terms to refer to various situations that are sometimes conceived as emerging challenges that require protection and that can be easily manipulated, especially if they do not have the unanimous acceptance of the General Assembly. Neither do we consider it appropriate to give mandates to other bodies, such as the Human Rights Council, for evaluating States on matters that are still being analysed and in respect of which consensus is lacking. The duty of the international community lies, as appropriate, in encouraging and assisting States to exercise that responsibility, which is primarily theirs.

Although more than 20 years have passed since the Millennium Summit, the issue of the responsibility to protect continues to raise serious concerns for many countries, particularly small and developing States. In an international system as undemocratic as the one that prevails today, our main concerns lie in determining who decides when there is a need to protect; who determines that a State does not protect its population; who, and based on what criteria, determines the forms of action; and how to prevent the issue from being used for intrusive, interventionist purposes. There is absolutely no clarity on how to guarantee that the option for taking action is carried out with the consent of the affected State in order to prevent the concept from being used as a justification for an alleged and non-existent right to intervene.

International efforts to prevent the occurrence of acts of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity should contribute to strengthening the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law, in particular sovereign equality, territorial integrity and self-determination. However, the ambiguities of the concept and the implications of the exercise of its so-called “three pillars” contradict those purposes and principles. Cuba has always shared the goal of fighting against those crimes, and we consider that to that end the priority of the principles of voluntariness, prior request and consent of States must be recognized in the context of the so-called responsibility to protect.

If the intention is prevention, then the root causes of those situations should be addressed. Those causes include underdevelopment and poverty, the unjust international economic order, inequality and social exclusion, marginalization, food insecurity and other structural problems that determine the outbreak of conflicts that escalate into extreme situations. Unfortunately, those causes are not addressed with the same energy by many of those who advocate the advancement of the concept. Preventing the international community from remaining impassive in the face of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity is a noble effort, which Cuba supports. However, in many cases the promotion of, and attempts to implement, the responsibility to protect merely conceal the objective of having one more tool to facilitate interference in internal affairs, regime-change agendas and subversion in other countries, usually small and developing States.

Ms. Chan Valverde (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Costa Rica expresses its gratitude to the Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect for the presentation of the fifteenth report of the Secretary-General on this topic (A/77/910), as well as for the work undertaken by his Office to advance the conceptualization and implementation of this principle, despite resource constraints.

Costa Rica aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Croatia on behalf of the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect.

We welcome today's report and its emphasis on development, which is essential to preventing the most severe crimes against humanity. Addressing the root causes of conflict, promoting social justice and strengthening institutions significantly decrease the risk of mass atrocities. In that regard, I wish to mention three points.

First, inclusivity is crucial for both conflict prevention and development. Inclusivity encourages social cohesion and decreases the possibility of violent conflicts. When individuals and communities feel valued, respected and represented, it fosters the feeling of ownership and belonging and enhances trust and cooperation among various groups, which in turn reduces feelings of marginalization and grievance and paves the way for effective conflict management and violence prevention. Inclusivity is a vital component of sustainable development. Equal access for everyone to education, health care, employment and other critical services reduces poverty, inequality and exclusion. It also fosters a sense of shared responsibility for development goals, encouraging a collaborative approach and reducing potential tension and conflict due to disparities. That makes it less probable that individuals will resort to desperate measures or that individuals will become vulnerable to the manipulations of extremist groups.

In that context, Costa Rica deems it crucial to emphasize the role of environmental sustainability in preventing conflicts. As climate change worsens, environmental degradation is exacerbated, potentially leading to conflicts over scarce resources, such as water and land resources. Therefore, ensuring sustainable resource use and taking collective action to mitigate and adapt to climate change are essential to conflict prevention, as are promoting inclusive economic growth, eradicating poverty and fostering social cohesion, with a view to creating an environment in

which the grievances and frustrations that fuel violent conflict are addressed, thereby reducing the risk of atrocities.

Secondly, Costa Rica concurs that institutions and the rule of law reinforce development and are vital to preventing and addressing the most serious crimes against humanity. Efficient Government structures, transparent legal systems and robust institutions contribute to ensuring the protection of human rights, accountability and the application of justice. In turn, that deters potential perpetrators and helps build trust within communities, which encourages peaceful coexistence and averts the conflict escalation that could result in mass atrocities. Placing victims and their special status at the centre of the design and implementation of justice processes is crucial to guaranteeing a sustainable peace. For Costa Rica, the question is not whether accountability is possible, but what is the best way to achieve it.

Thirdly, while the report acknowledges the pressing need to inhibit the means to commit mass atrocities, including through security sector reforms, effective disarmament and regulation of arms flows, in particular by deterring the supply of arms to terrorist actors or the storage of weapons and military material that could be used to carry out acts of mass violence, it neglects to assess the socioeconomic impact of armed violence on development, including the role of ammunition.

Armed violence poses a severe threat to the socioeconomic development of many States. It not only results in loss of human life but also undermines the social fabric of communities, hindering their potential growth and creating an environment of fear and insecurity, which deters foreign investment and tourism. That further aggravates the economic problems the affected countries face, which have long-term effects on human development. However, the impact of armed violence on development is the result of the unregulated proliferation and illicit trafficking of not only small arms and light weapons but also their ammunition. The destructive power of a weapon is realized when it is loaded with ammunition, the availability of which determines whether violence is sporadic or escalates into a more prolonged conflict.

The diversion of conventional ammunition, including small arms and light weapons and their ammunition, also plays a central role in initiating, exacerbating and sustaining armed conflict and widespread violence, as well as acts of crime

and terrorism. Moreover, the explosive nature of ammunition makes that material very attractive for the manufacture of improvised explosive devices by non-State actors. Therefore, a comprehensive approach to conflict prevention and resolution must address not only the weapons themselves but also the ammunition that fuels them. That includes measures to prevent the illicit trade and misuse of ammunition, improve stockpile management and ensure the effective disposal of surpluses. To meet that challenge, Costa Rica welcomes the recent historic adoption of a global framework on conventional ammunition management to develop a set of political commitments as a new global framework that will address existing gaps in through-life ammunition management.

The responsibility to protect is not only pivotal to preventing and responding to the worst crimes but is also an essential component of our human security and conflict prevention and mitigation platform. That principle encapsulates the fundamental ideals of this Organization and the obligations of all Member States. That principle belongs to and serves everyone.

Mr. Sekeris (Greece): Greece aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier by the observer of the European Union and would like to add the following in its national capacity.

Mr. Dang (Viet Nam), Vice-President, took the Chair.

On the occasion of the sixth formal General Assembly debate on the responsibility to protect, I would like to reiterate Greece's commitment to the responsibility of United Nations Members to protect their populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. We welcome this year's report of the Secretary-General (A/77/910), which showcases the interconnections between sustainable development and the responsibility to protect. We also express our full support for the work of the two Special Advisers to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide and on the Responsibility to Protect.

This year's debate gives us an opportunity to contemplate the vicious circle between underdevelopment and atrocity crimes. Conversely, sustainable development generates conditions that are conducive to peace, inclusion and prosperity, as it aims to address the root causes of extreme poverty, inequalities and conflicts, thereby transforming

societies and working as a key preventive mechanism that leaves no space in which mass atrocities can occur.

Nonetheless, the international community should add extra atrocity prevention layers and early-warning systems into its development policy programmes that are sensitive to the drivers of tensions and conflicts, while assessing atrocity risks. To that end, fostering transparent governance structures and healthy institutions, while enhancing social inclusion frameworks in developing countries, should be a priority. Support for the development of economic opportunities and basic social services at the community level is also crucial in order to address the needs of local populations, including through the re-establishment or strengthening of State institutions and services in fragile areas.

Although prevention remains key to the elimination of atrocity crimes, through the promotion of international humanitarian law and human rights, in cases in which we do not succeed in preventing atrocities, the promotion of justice and accountability should be the only alternative in order to make sure that no crime and no perpetrator goes unpunished. We also recognize the decisive role that the Security Council can play in case in which populations become victims of atrocity crimes, and we invite it to act accordingly.

As we approach the Sustainable Development Goals Summit in September, we are convinced that addressing the root causes of atrocity crimes could contribute significantly to the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the goals of *Our Common Agenda* (A/75/982) and the New Agenda for Peace. The need to strengthen the triple nexus approach becomes more relevant than ever in that regard.

In conclusion, I wish to reassure the Assembly that Greece will continue to support the operationalization of the responsibility to protect and the promotion of sustainable development, as we have been doing, including in our capacity as a member of the Economic and Social Council for the past two years.

Ms. Webster (Australia): In recent years, our world has seen the devastating and lasting impacts of Russia's illegal and immoral invasion of Ukraine; worsening conflicts in Africa, most recently in the Sudan; a rise in global inequality; and the biggest conventional military build-up since the Second World War in Australia's own region. Peace, prosperity and stability are far from guaranteed. Women and girls, LGBTQIA+ persons

and persons belonging to minorities are systematically denied their human rights and safety in many parts of the world. That has a devastating impact on individuals and can reverse years of hard-earned development gains.

Where States are unable or unwilling to protect their populations, the risk of atrocity crimes being perpetrated increases. That is why the principle of the responsibility to protect (R2P) and its three pillars remain integral to the United Nations peace and security architecture, the international human rights framework and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Australia thanks the Secretary-General for his 2023 report on development and the responsibility to protect (A/77/910). We welcome the report's emphasis on national ownership of R2P and the importance of a whole-of-Government approach. The fate of at-risk populations is not preordained — it never was and it never is. States have a wide range of tools to significantly reduce the risk factors that can lead to atrocities, including through efforts to achieve gender equality. We urge the Secretary-General to focus his future reports on the practical implementation of R2P and to follow up systematically on the recommendations contained in previous reports. We also stress the need for the report to assess and address atrocity risks in specific country situations. We look forward to the forthcoming Framework for Action on the Responsibility to Protect developed by the Asia-Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect and the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, which outlines practical actions that all States can take to build resilience and implement R2P.

Australia continues to support the Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect and its dual mandate. We emphasize the need to equally advance in practice both genocide prevention and R2P. We encourage both the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide and the Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect to regularly conduct and share early-warning and atrocity risk assessments of crises on the ground and to develop and share actionable recommendations on atrocity prevention and response with Member States.

Atrocities do not happen without warning — they escalate over time. For that reason, Australia strongly urges States to address the growing levels of hostility and violence towards women and girls, including those facing intersectional inequalities. For that reason, we also urge States to collectively act now to stop the

criminalization and abuse of LGBTQIA+ people that continue in many parts of the world and call for the repeal of laws that violate their human rights. For that reason, we encourage the Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect to collaborate with other United Nations bodies and mechanisms and follow up their recommendations. We cannot let at-risk populations fall further out of sight and mind. We need to stand beside them so that they enjoy universal human rights and protections.

Mr. Ghorbanpour Najafabadi (Islamic Republic of Iran): I would like to align myself with the statement delivered by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of Friends in Defence of the Charter of the United Nations and would like to deliver the following remarks in my national capacity.

The Islamic Republic of Iran reaffirms its unwavering commitment to the protection of its civilians and the prevention of all atrocity crimes. The Islamic Republic of Iran is of the strong view that the international community, notably the United Nations, is still far from a consensual understanding of the responsibility to protect (R2P) as a notion. However, the controversies around that notion are not rooted in the protection of civilians and the prevention of the atrocity crimes, but rather on its definition, implementation and scope of application. Furthermore, the most important aspect that is a matter of serious legitimate concern for the international community concerns the scenarios in which different kinds of interventions in the internal affairs of sovereign States are prepared under the guise of the responsibility to protect, as well as the introduction of country-specific draft resolutions with the same aims. We also believe that the efforts to clarify the scope and implementation of this notion should not be carried out in such a way as to reinterpret or renegotiate the well-established principles of international law as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and other existing legal frameworks.

My delegation reiterates its long-standing position that the failure to effectively prevent atrocity crimes can be attributed more to the failures of the Security Council than to the lack of a relevant normative framework. However, any attempt to divert the responsibilities of the Security Council to another United Nations organ due to the Security Council's failure to meet its responsibilities, including by providing noble interpretations of the articles of the United Nations Charter, as well as non-consensual practices, is

unequivocally rejected. Therefore, in fulfilling its responsibilities, the defined and agreed division of labour, the distinct mandate and the impartiality of the various United Nations principal organs must be respected. In that regard, we are very concerned about the encroachment by one organ on the mandates and duties of another, which would undermine the very basic purposes of the establishment of the Organization.

I would like to express the dissatisfaction of my delegation that the report of the Secretary-General (A/77/910) does not address the main root causes of the commission of atrocity crimes, such as occupation, foreign military and non-military interventions in the internal affairs of States and unilateral coercive measures. I would like to reiterate my delegation's position that, since at least 2005, a number of countries have raised their concerns and questions time and again with regard to the new concept of the responsibility to protect, specifically with regard to its scope and application, as well as its occasional arbitrary interpretations. It is necessary that those concerns be afforded vigilant attention and be considered in a report of the Secretary-General under this agenda item. The United Nations should address all Member States' positions and treat them equally. We should bear in mind that R2P is a new concept, not an established principle, and it still needs to be considered by Member States.

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not mention the outstanding role of some mainstream media in the hands of certain States and lobbies, along with their misuse and misinterpretation of the R2P concept, which wilfully portray humanitarian situations while manipulating the realities on the ground. That non-constructive role manifests in an exaggeration of particular situations, while downgrading or censoring certain critical conditions. Furthermore, the destructive role of those media provokes insurgencies and dissatisfaction among those in the targeted countries, specifically by fuelling incitement to violence, identity-based hate speech, hate crimes, racism and racial discrimination, while also calling attention to religious differences. Ultimately, those actions result in provoking the commission of violence and terrorism, as witnessed in many countries in the Middle East, and are a matter of concern. While we caution against that malign practice, we fully have it under observation and scrutiny.

Mr. Margaryan (Armenia): The responsibility to protect rests on a fundamental pledge made by the international community to prevent genocide, war

crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity and to protect vulnerable populations from such crimes.

Within the United Nations, Armenia has consistently campaigned to reinforce the implementation of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide and to advance the prevention agenda. The International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of Genocide and of the Prevention of this Crime, which was established on Armenia's initiative, has evolved into a platform of dialogue and cooperation to foster the prevention of atrocity crimes. The Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect has a key role to play in advancing international efforts and prevention mechanisms through the effective monitoring of grave human rights violations and assessing the risks of potential atrocities.

While the conceptual debates and deliberations on this agenda item are important and we appreciate the presentation of the report of the Secretary-General (A/77/910) on recognizing and addressing the embedded risks and drivers of atrocity crimes, it is imperative to reflect on and address the situations in which violations are committed by one perpetrator that is a United Nations State Member. Since 12 December 2022, a vital transportation corridor connecting Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia and the outside world has been essentially disrupted, leaving a population of 120,000 people cut off in conditions of a deteriorating humanitarian crisis. The ongoing blockade of the Lachin corridor, in violation of the existing legal obligations and the order of International Court of Justice continues to endanger the lives of innocent civilians, contrary to the fundamental tenets of international humanitarian law, which clearly prohibit the targeting of civilian populations, the imposition of collective punishments and the use of starvation as a method of warfare.

On 22 February, the International Court of Justice indicated a provisional measure, at the request of Armenia, according to which Azerbaijan

“shall take all measures at its disposal to ensure unimpeded movement of persons, vehicles and cargo along the Lachin corridor in both directions”.

To date, that country has failed to comply with the legally binding order of the Court and continues to impose a medieval, barbaric siege upon the population of Nagorno-Karabakh, in violation of the rights to life, health and an adequate standard of living, as

enshrined in numerous international human rights instruments. That Member State would claim that there is no blockade, that the Court's order regarding the Lachin corridor is a matter of interpretation and that humanitarian cargo and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) are allowed to operate. While the ICRC, whose operations have been periodically disrupted, has a crucial role in transporting patients and medicines, medical equipment and food, the very fact that only the Red Cross has been able to move along the corridor is clear evidence that there is no free and safe access to and from Nagorno-Karabakh.

It has been more than six months since Armenia appealed to the United Nations to dispatch an inter-agency mission to assess the humanitarian, security and human rights situation of the affected population in Nagorno-Karabakh, in line with humanitarian principles. We have also consistently requested that UNESCO send a fact-finding mission to Nagorno-Karabakh and the adjacent areas in order to help preserve the vast and unique cultural heritage of the region.

The continued violations of the fundamental human rights of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh and the denial of an international humanitarian presence on the ground reveal the intent to inflict maximum harm on the population by creating unbearable conditions of life—a clearly detectable warning sign of a premeditated genocidal policy. At this time of existential threat to the people of Nagorno-Karabakh, the international community, represented by its most collective institution, the United Nations, has a responsibility to act and to protect. The international community can no longer look the other way when faced with the clearly detectable warning signs of genocide, when grave and systematic human rights violations are routinely perpetrated. The United Nations and its respective organs and structures, as duty-bearers, have yet to meet their obligations vis-à-vis the rights holders—ordinary people, women, children, the elderly and the most vulnerable—who remain entrapped, confronted with the genocidal policies of Azerbaijan.

The latest report of the Secretary-General makes the salient observation that:

“Accountability is vital for the prevention of atrocities. Impunity that is historical in a society or persists across leadership and institutions undermines the rule of law, sows the seeds for

future violence and increases the risk of atrocities.”
(A/77/910, *para.* 15)

Those words cannot be truer in relation to the actions of the neighbouring country when one follows the official narrative and the hate speech emanating from there at all levels. The international community has a shared responsibility to prevent and protect populations from atrocity crimes and to ensure that grave violations do not go unchecked. Impunity for violations of international norms and principles has emboldened Azerbaijan to resort to new provocations and military escalation. The Azerbaijani armed forces continue to violate the ceasefire regime, targeting civilians carrying out agricultural work and border communities, in an attempt to terrorize, inflict psychological pressure and deprive the population of the means of their subsistence.

Armenia is fully committed to efforts to effectively address and combat impunity, including through international criminal jurisdiction mechanisms. We also support the process of the elaboration and adoption of a universally accepted treaty on the prevention and punishment of crimes against humanity. We will continue to work with all international partners and the United Nations system in order to uphold the principle of the responsibility to protect as a critical framework for preventing atrocities, promoting human rights and upholding peace, security and justice.

Mr. Kim (Democratic People’s Republic of Korea): My delegation expresses the hope that discussions at the current meeting under the agenda item entitled “The responsibility to protect and the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity” will be in conformity with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. I take this opportunity to clarify my country’s position with regard to the responsibility to protect (R2P).

The responsibility to protect people from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity falls entirely under the sovereignty of each State, and the international community should encourage States to fully exercise that responsibility. However, despite the absence of intergovernmental agreement on the concept of R2P, some countries continue to misuse and apply the concept selectively for their political purposes. By nature, the concept of R2P is a variant of humanitarian intervention that was rejected by the international community in the past. As such, it is nothing but a political tool to ignore and violate sovereignty and the right to self-determination

and to broadly interfere in the internal affairs of other sovereign States. We are deeply concerned that some Western countries unilaterally pursue political, economic and military interventions to undermine the social system of other sovereign States under the pretext of R2P.

It is due to the unlawful interference in internal affairs by Western countries that great upheavals such as armed conflicts, terrorism, genocide and mass destruction are long-standing in the Middle East and some African countries. As reality proves, it is a self-evident truth that small and developing countries will fall victim to R2P. Consequently, genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity are not attributable to a State’s inadequate ability to protect its people but to flagrant infringements of the sovereignty of a sovereign State. Sovereignty is sacred, and respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in internal affairs is the cornerstone of international relations. R2P, which violates those principles, is none other than a sophism to justify the interference in internal affairs of small and developing countries. R2P must not be applied to interfering in the internal affairs of a State under any circumstances.

In conclusion, my delegation reiterates that the principle of respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in internal affairs should be strictly observed, and the issue of R2P should be dealt with in keeping with the common demands and interests of all Member States.

Mr. Gertze (Namibia): In the 2005 World Summit Outcome, Member States recognized that each State has the responsibility to protect its populations from atrocity crimes — namely, genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. Together with the subsequent establishment of the Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect, that filled a critical gap in the United Nations prevention and protection architecture. However, as always, we note that, despite that critical gap being filled, there is still much to be done to operationalize the responsibility to protect and ensure its consistent application.

Legitimate concerns remain, with discrepancies in the interpretation of the doctrine continuing to hamper discussions on the matter, specifically in the context of the third pillar of the responsibility to protect doctrine, and as such its interpretation remains a serious concern. Accordingly, we continue to call for those concerns to be addressed through dialogue, while

assessing lessons learned, engagement and practice. Nevertheless, Namibia remains seized of, and engaged in, the continuing discussion of this issue. While underscoring respect for fundamental human rights and the principles of international law, we maintain that there is no pretext for the use of force against States, and safeguards must be put in place to protect against the vulnerability of sovereign nations to surreptitious interference in their internal affairs.

We thank the Secretary-General for his report, in particular for the theme that focuses on recognizing and addressing the risks and drivers of atrocity crimes. Namibia would like to emphasize the linkage between development and sustainable peace. As the report of the Secretary-General importantly notes:

“As an integrated agenda, the Sustainable Development Goals are a recognition that ‘[t]here can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development’”. (A/77/910, para. 2)

Building on that linkage and drawing special attention to food insecurity as a driver of atrocity crimes, as highlighted in the report, Namibia would like to emphasize the link between climate change and security. Climate change is a global phenomenon of great concern shared by all today, but its impact has already been felt for decades in countries that are afflicted by drought, desertification, land degradation and floods. As those conditions worsen, it is our experience that soil productivity is lost and the ability of farmers and rural communities, especially women, to continue living off the land is severely compromised. Such patterns and dire struggles for human survival can result in bloody confrontations that ultimately can threaten peace and security or outright wars.

In the context of this debate, my delegation would further like to reaffirm the right to development as set out in the 1986 United Nations Declaration on the Right to Development, which addresses many of the root causes of conflict by establishing a normative framework through which conflict and militarization can be transformed into international cooperation and human-centred development, with a view to achieving equality, justice and peace. Through international cooperation, States can capitalize on the savings from disarmament and global peace to further development and the realization of human rights for all.

We would also like to use this opportunity to reiterate the call for a reformed Security Council that is reflective of the realities of the twenty-first century, and that is therefore able to effectively implement its mandate of maintaining international peace and security, including through the prevention of atrocities and regulating the collective use of force. As the United Nations continues in its endeavours to develop a New Agenda for Peace, it is my delegation's fervent hope that our efforts will be geared towards strengthening the global peace and security architecture by leveraging the lessons learned and effectively addressing emerging issues.

In conclusion, Namibia remains committed to defending human rights and ending human suffering through globally supported and internationally recognized multilateral bodies and institutions.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The responsibility to protect (R2P) is a concept that was developed by Western think tanks to rebrand the well-known "humanitarian intervention" concept under a new veneer and to legitimize interference in the internal affairs of States. When that concept began to be advanced persistently by a group of countries, the international community made significant adjustments to its understanding, including criteria for when it can be invoked, references to the role of the Security Council and the need to provide States with assistance and support. Moreover, the need for further discussion of its specific content was established. However, those States did not wait for that discussion or take into account the criteria that were agreed upon. They decided to apply it in practice just as they had conceived of it, for the purposes of destroying the statehood of a country that met with their disfavour — Libya.

It is noteworthy that sustainable development is the focus of the latest report of the Secretary-General on the subject of the responsibility to protect (A/77/910). Last year's subject was "children and young people". We see attempts to whitewash the reputation of R2P by artificially tying it to subjects that are popular in the United Nations. When it comes to sustainable development, such a link looks particularly absurd. The events of 2011 in Libya clearly demonstrated that R2P is not a charity and that the States that apply it are certainly not Mother Teresa.

We must also recall the role of several international institutions in the Libya tragedy. We recall how the International Criminal Court (ICC), in carrying out the political order of its Western patrons, fabricated

charges and issued an arrest warrant for Muammar Al-Qadhafi literally in the space of three days. The argument that the Libyan leader was allegedly planning atrocities was widely imposed by propagandizing Western media and social networks. The critical mass of lies thereby accumulated was then used to describe the actions of NATO as based on R2P — actions that constituted military aggression against a sovereign country. Even if the clumsy fakes authored by the ICC and attributed to Al-Qadhafi had turned out to be true, it would have paled beside the actual atrocities carried out by the United States-led NATO coalition in Libya. A once flourishing country and its civilian population were quite literally bombed back to the Stone Age by the collective West. The consequence of that was a long and brutal civil war that continues to this day. How many Libyan civilians have died during that civil war? How many have died at sea trying to escape the country, which NATO destroyed? How many of those people did the countries of the European Union that directly participated in the events of 2011 refuse to host or simply treat humanely, having branded them as "illegal migrants"? The numbers have long run into the hundreds of thousands of ruined, broken and destroyed lives.

We remember well how in 2011 the entire Western legal doctrine described the triumphant "first application" of R2P. However, time has set the record straight. It has become clear that the events in Libya were certainly not a question of responsibility to protect, but rather another example of the West's irresponsible protection of its own geopolitical ambitions. Immediately following the NATO intervention, the question of responsibility actually disappeared from the ICC agenda. The ICC and its Prosecutor, it turned out, were entirely uninterested in the war crimes of Western soldiers in Libya, as they had been uninterested in those committed in Iraq and Afghanistan. And at the ICC itself, which was directly complicit in the crimes against Libya and its people, no one bore responsibility for the fabrication of misinformation in the Al-Qadhafi case. Now the events of those years are shamefully being "swept under the carpet". When it comes to R2P, they are trying to "turn a page" and "start from a clean slate", but that will not work.

Returning to the subject of the report, we would like to underscore that the concept of R2P is perhaps the last one that would be suitable for a role as a development assistance mechanism. Assistance to developing countries is effective only when it is provided upon

their request and takes their priorities into account, as well as their historical, cultural, legal and other specificities. By its very definition, R2P is not suitable for that. That concept is a tool for imposing someone else's will. Under the pretext of adhering to R2P, States will have Western approaches and solutions imposed on them that not only do not take into account their desires and priorities but also directly contradict local cultural, religious and social norms. A good illustration of that is the aggressive imposition by the West of neoliberal values. Today it is not ashamed to explicitly advance those values as a condition for the provision of assistance. Those are truly neocolonial practices.

In that connection, we are concerned about the zeal with which the specialized offices of the Secretariat are signing onto that process. We would specifically like to address the recommendations in the report to all international development institutions to adhere to the principle of "do no harm". That involves refusing to allocate funds if doing so would increase the probability of the commission of the most dangerous crimes covered by R2P. We are not talking about crimes as such, but rather a sort of "probability". That leads to the reasonable question of who will evaluate that probability, on what basis and according to what criteria. In practice, at the very least, that implies open interference in the internal affairs of developing States, with information about the state of affairs in a country being acquired without that country's consent by entities and organizations that do not have a mandate to do so. That information will be analysed on the basis of one-size-fits all Western criteria that do not take into account local specificities. Following the results of that process, alleged rescue solutions and reforms that have been created according to well-known neoliberal templates will be imposed. In general, under the pretext of the principle of "do no harm", additional conditions for the provision of development assistance will be advanced, and it is first and foremost the countries that are already in the most vulnerable position that will suffer. In that connection, we call upon developing States not to agree to attempt to artificially link R2P and development assistance and to undertake an objective evaluation of that concept.

Mr. Szczerski (Poland): Building on the heritage of the Polish lawyer Rafał Lemkin — creator of the notion of genocide — Poland reaffirms its long-standing commitment to the promotion and full implementation of the principle of the responsibility to protect (R2P). As a Member State elected to the Economic and Social Council for the 2024–2026 term, we particularly

welcome the focus of this year's report of the Secretary-General on the interrelationship between sustainable development and R2P, along with its recommendations (A/77/910).

We believe that sustainable, inclusive development is both a goal in itself and the world's most productive form of conflict and atrocity prevention. Combining the provisions of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with the ongoing discussion on enhancing the United Nations development system to deliver prosperity and peace puts the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the centre of international efforts to properly equip the United Nations to mitigate and end conflicts, rebuild institutions and infrastructure and provide respect for human rights, as well as well-being for societies.

One of the key objectives of the 2030 Agenda is to build resilience to future crises. In that context, taking into account SDG 9, we underline the significance of infrastructure investments. We believe that quality infrastructure is a tool for building resilience to shocks and crises and atrocity prevention. In that context, I wish to recall resolution 77/282, on building global resilience and promoting sustainable development through regional and interregional infrastructure connectivity, which was initiated by Poland and unanimously adopted by the General Assembly in April. The resolution, which is anchored in the idea of developing in solidarity, explores the interrelations among sustainable development, disaster risk reduction and security perspectives. We believe that there is a strong interdependence and connection between the various socioeconomic areas covered by the Sustainable Development Goals and that only their harmonious development will guarantee the stability and harmony of societies. We would like to emphasize that only the comprehensive implementation of each of the SDGs, with universal respect for human rights, allows for the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, as well as lasting post-conflict reconstruction.

This year's report on R2P lists the major risk factors and drivers of atrocity events, which are rooted in the economic, social, governance, conflict and human rights development contexts within States, such as food insecurity, discrimination and other violations and abuses of human rights or the presence of armed conflict. Taking into account the complex interrelationship of risk and vulnerability in conflict

settings, we cannot remain silent as the war beyond our eastern border continues. We are gravely concerned by the situation in Ukraine, where the Russian army is targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure and uses starvation and blockades. We are horrified by the accounts of sexual violence used deliberately by Russian soldiers as a tactic of war and as a tool of terror and intimidation. We are gravely concerned by the situation of the children who have been abducted and forcibly displaced from the territory of Ukraine to temporarily occupied territories and to the territory of the Russian Federation. Once again, we call upon the international community to act in order to protect the civilian population, stop the atrocities committed by Russia in Ukraine and bring their perpetrators to justice.

In conclusion, let me underline what we have heard today many times: without sustainable development there can be no peace, and without peace there is no development. It is crucial that both conflict and atrocity prevention and post-conflict reconstruction be anchored firmly in the principles of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The holistic and universal nature of the SDGs make them an important framework through which to address the major drivers of conflict, as they set out essential preconditions for lasting peace.

Mr. Alavi (Liechtenstein): Liechtenstein welcomes this opportunity to advance the discussion and operationalization of the responsibility to protect (R2P) principle and aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Croatia on behalf of the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect.

R2P continues to evolve both politically and legally. It has been invoked by the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Human Rights Council in more than 200 resolutions. The primary responsibility of each State to protect its population from crimes against humanity, war crimes, genocide and ethnic cleansing remains uncontested. Similarly, there is strong support from the international community to help and assist States in preventing such crimes and protecting populations at risk. Yet the gap between our expressed commitment to protect civilians and our action has grown significantly.

With its chosen war of aggression, a permanent member of the Security Council has distorted the R2P principle. The Russian Federation has destroyed critical infrastructure, targeted civilians and abducted children in Ukraine. The International Criminal Court has

responded by issuing arrest warrants for the war crime of unlawful deportation. And the war's impact is felt not only in Ukraine and Europe but around the world, having caused a record increase in forced displacement, economic disruption and global food insecurity. This year's report by the Secretary-General (A/77/910) clearly demonstrates the harmful effects on development that the failure to uphold R2P has had. To mitigate those negative impacts, the Black Sea Grain Initiative has been an important achievement of the United Nations. We call for its extension beyond July and deplore any attempts to abuse it for political purposes.

We further underscore the point made in the Secretary-General's report that accountability is vital for the prevention of atrocities. Ensuring accountability for the most serious crimes under international law is today a critical component of our responsibility to protect civilians tomorrow. We must therefore ensure accountability for the crimes committed in Ukraine, including the crime from which all the atrocity crimes in Ukraine have flowed: the crime of aggression. In many ways, the atrocities we are witnessing in Ukraine are from the same playbook written in Syria where — after more than 12 years of conflict — impunity continues to reign. The United Nations-mandated International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism is one of the few hopes for ensuring accountability in Syria. And similar accountability efforts are under way for Myanmar and the Sudan, among other situations in which the authorities in charge are unwilling to live up to their responsibility to protect.

Last month, we celebrated the tenth anniversary of the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency (ACT) group. Its code of conduct, now signed by 129 countries — two thirds of United Nations States Members — represents an essential commitment to take measures to prevent and end atrocity crimes when serving on the Security Council. In order to enhance the practical application of the code, we encourage the creation of focal points in the Security Council supported by non-Council member focal points in order to better coordinate and implement the ACT code of conduct. The Security Council has time and again failed to address R2P challenges and to prevent and respond to atrocity crimes. Resolution 76/262, also known as the veto initiative, has offered more policy options to act in that respect and to strengthen institutional accountability among the principal organs of the Organization. With continued institutional innovations such as the veto initiative, we are hopeful that we can

strengthen the R2P principle to prevent and end the worst forms of violence.

Ms. Rodríguez Mancia (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): We welcome the convening of this plenary meeting to discuss the responsibility to protect, an issue to which Guatemala attaches great importance. We take note of the report entitled “Development and the responsibility to protect: recognizing and addressing embedded risks and drivers of atrocity crimes” (A/77/910), and in that context we would like to make a number of comments.

This annual debate is held in an international setting, one that requires us to take up the standard of international security and human rights as set out in resolution 60/1, which was adopted at the 2005 World Summit, with a view to helping to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. Guatemala welcomes this formal debate on the responsibility to protect in the General Assembly.

We recognize the effort made by all the Member States that supported resolution 63/308, on the responsibility to protect, which empowers the Secretary-General to issue an annual report on the matter and includes the consideration of the responsibility to protect as a standing General Assembly agenda item. The adoption of the resolution was a reflection of the interest of Member States in raising awareness and sharing best practices on how to individually and collectively improve our capacity to prevent genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing.

The world today faces unprecedented levels of violence, atrocities and displacement. The responsibility to protect remains the most effective principle for preventing threats of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. Every State has the primary responsibility to protect its population and to prevent atrocities such as those we have seen in the past from being committed. That serves to highlight the emergence and relevance of the responsibility to protect and why it is observed today. It is a principle that is supported by the purposes of the Charter of the United Nations, particularly in terms of preserving future generations from the scourge of war and in terms of promoting peace among peoples and nations.

This year we celebrate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. That is why the responsibility to protect

must be recognized as an exceptional way to defend populations from mass atrocities. And that is why it must be strengthened given the new sources of tension, in which similar patterns predominate and which lead in the worst cases to the commission of new crimes against humanity and cases of ethnic cleansing.

We underscore that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides a framework for global cooperation to achieve a better and more sustainable future and can contribute significantly to atrocity prevention efforts. The eradication of poverty and the provision of development assistance can address the instability that can drive the perpetration of atrocity crimes. Member States must ensure that development assistance programmes benefit all communities equally and strengthen resilience.

Allow me to recall that Guatemala has supported the resolution on the responsibility to protect from its inception. In addition, since 2006 my country has been part of the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect, whose purpose is to highlight the relevance of that important principle, the prevention of atrocities and their connection to United Nations programmes. From our national perspective, the responsibility to protect is a principle that aligns with our Constitution, as the State of Guatemala is structured in such a way as to protect individuals and families, with the realization of the common good as its supreme goal. In that regard and in order to support the protection of civilians, Guatemala is honoured to be a country that contributes to United Nations peacekeeping.

My delegation reiterates the call to uphold the international obligations stemming from international human rights law, as well as international law and international refugee law, since they are intrinsically linked to the protection of the civilian population. Guatemala recognizes that the principle of the responsibility to protect is complemented by the concept of sustainable peace, since it prioritizes respect for and observance of human rights and is based on a preventive approach to avoid confrontations.

With regard to Russia's unjustified and unprovoked aggression against Ukraine, we have condemned Russia's flagrant violation of the United Nations Charter, international law and international human rights law. We have also condemned the military decisions and actions of the Russian Federation that have caused the unnecessary loss of human life, including the lives of men, women and children, all victims of that unjustified

action that continues to threaten that region, as well as global stability and security.

In conclusion, we welcome the coordinated efforts and work of the Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect. We must take advantage of the inputs generated by the Special Advisers, which can be of great value to the work of United Nations intergovernmental bodies, including the Security Council and the Human Rights Council.

Mr. Moon (Republic of Korea): Ever since the responsibility to protect (R2P) was included in the annual agenda of the General Assembly, this debate has played a key role in reminding us of the responsibility of States and the international community, as well as in strengthening the common understanding of the importance of concrete actions based on R2P. My delegation supports this annual debate on the formal agenda, and it is now time to further ponder what we should do on the road to 2025, the twentieth anniversary of R2P, which was historically recognized in the 2005 World Summit Outcome.

I would like to express our gratitude for the efforts made by the Secretary-General and his Special Advisers on the Prevention of Genocide and the Responsibility to Protect and to commend the latest report of the Secretary-General on development and the responsibility to protect (A/77/910). As pointed out in the report, the causes of mass atrocities and obstacles to sustainable development are closely interconnected. In the implementation of the responsibility to protect, it is essential to address root causes, which are inherently intertwined with development issues. It is deeply concerning that only about 12 per cent of Sustainable Development Goals targets are currently on track to be met by 2030.

Mass atrocities are deeply rooted in key development concerns, including societal inequalities, weak institutions and political instability. Underdevelopment and food insecurity can trigger conflicts between communities. Policies of exclusion, patterns of human rights violations and discriminatory societal structures established in peacetime can be transformed into structures of violence during atrocities. Unaccountable leadership, closed and undemocratic societies and rampant impunity often perpetuate such structures as uniquely vulnerable to atrocities. Actions based on the responsibility to protect must address those realities. In that regard, Member States and all stakeholders working in international development should reflect on the recommendations contained in the report of the

Secretary-General, whose priorities include prevention. Against that backdrop, my delegation would like to emphasize the following three points.

The first point concerns strengthening the R2P-development nexus. It is absolutely crucial to prevent the conditions for atrocities from being exacerbated by duly considering the risks and drivers of atrocities in sustainable development programmes.

The second point relates to synthesizing multiple early-warning mechanisms. There are various systems that communicate early signals on food insecurity, discrimination and human rights violations and impunity, which in future should be carefully analysed through an R2P lens.

The third point concerns participation and inclusiveness. Atrocity prevention can be achieved through participation in the development and implementation of programmes by civil society; faith communities; traditional leaders; minority groups, including indigenous populations; women, children and young people; the media; and other local actors.

Before concluding, I would like to reiterate the Republic of Korea's strong commitment to R2P. As we have repeatedly said, sovereignty entails the responsibility to protect one's population. Therefore, it is up to us — each State and the international community — to translate the commitment to R2P into real action and change. The Republic of Korea has participated in the R2P focal point network and will continue to work with others to strengthen the implementation of R2P.

Mrs. Al-halique (Jordan): At the outset, I would like to express my gratitude for the opportunity to debate this important subject. It is clear that the struggle to protect is ongoing. Current conflicts and the climate crisis amplify the imbalances that shape the nature of atrocities. To fulfil our responsibility, we need strategies that are centred on climate action, credibility and collaboration.

Turning first to climate, in Jordan and the region, significantly rising temperatures, drier and more frequent droughts and massive population growth — 200 per cent over the past two decades — act as environmental accelerants for land degradation and poverty, fuelling the drivers of conflict. Forced migration inevitably decreases food security, increasing competition over jobs and dwindling natural resources. The success of United Nations

endeavours to prevent conflict, protect civilians and safeguard the most vulnerable communities hinges on whether we consider how climate change dramatically widens the gaps in scarce resource allocation. A rapidly deteriorating environment accentuates the distribution of wealth along existing lines of inequality, obstructing our path to sustainable peace. Unequal water access, exacerbated by environmental factors, disproportionately affects women and girls, especially in refugee and rural communities.

Jordan's national policies — aimed at improving access to education, inclusion in political processes and economic participation among vulnerable groups such as women and young people — have boosted production and helped tackle institutionalized sources of inequality. Investing in green growth that promotes inclusion equips institutions with the necessary instruments to relieve the pressure imposed by overlapping crises. Every day, humanitarian workers, national and international stakeholders and the staff of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees confront the grim reality of how the enduring impacts of the coronavirus disease pandemic, armed conflict and climate emergencies combine to hinder development. Shocks to food systems will become more frequent and severe, gravely aggravating the depravations that place millions at heightened risk of atrocity.

Historically, with United Nations support, Jordan has treated blockades to humanitarian aid as an early sign of mass atrocity and has sheltered millions seeking protection, shouldering the responsibility to host refugees on behalf of the international community. It is in Jordanian refugee camps and in Jordanian cities — not in empty commitments to respond to humanitarian crises — that the urgent need to design long-term strategies to prevent conflict is present and unavoidable. Conflict, which is the most significant atrocity risk, continues to displace people on a scale that removes any doubt that current commitments to the responsibility to protect (R2P) do not match the force with which the drivers of instability sow the seeds of future violence.

Turning next to credibility, the United Nations is adrift, and the Security Council is frozen at the helm. The current structure of the Council undermines its capacity to respond to R2P crimes. Serious violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law continue to slip past the Council, which is mired in political disunity. Selectively

referring situations to the International Criminal Court or using the veto has only benefited politicians seeking impunity. As the Secretary-General's recent annual report on R2P (A/77/910) affirms, prioritizing accountability in our political institutions ensures that an environment complacent with atrocity will never fester in the United Nations.

With respect to collaboration, sharing expertise and best practices at all levels of Government relies on the active engagement of local communities and civil society organizations. Stakeholders in international development can incorporate atrocity indicators into financing mechanisms in order to help determine if their activities exacerbate human rights issues. In Jordan, international support for overhauling and upgrading the security sector has enabled police forces to better regulate the flow of weapons, thereby preventing actors from accumulating the means to commit mass atrocities. For example, the knowledge and experience of the international community proved invaluable in implementing community policing in the Zaatari refugee camp and other Jordanian communities. Sensitizing Government reforms to atrocity risks opens opportunities for investing in activities that alleviate that risk. As one of 61 Member States hosting an R2P focal point, Jordan remains committed to learning from its peers and coordinating national plans to institutionalize the tools for atrocity prevention.

Ms. Stoeva (Bulgaria): Bulgaria aligns itself with the statements made by the observer of the European Union and on behalf of the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) and would like to add a few points in its national capacity.

The nexus between development and peace is now widely acknowledged. We welcome the focus of the report of the Secretary-General (A/77/910) on the relationship between the challenges to sustainable development and the risks, causes and drivers of the four atrocity crimes covered by R2P, and we support its findings and recommendations.

I would also like to reiterate the support of my country for the joint office of the Special Advisers on the Prevention of Genocide and on the Responsibility to Protect and to welcome their tireless work to further operationalize the responsibility to protect and ensure its consistent application.

While the responsibility to protect is the primary responsibility of States, and it is therefore critical to

build effective national institutions and mechanisms for identifying and tackling atrocity risks, the commitment to bring to the next level the toolbox of the Organization for the operationalization of the R2P is equally important. Resuming the horizon-scanning exercise on atrocity risks by the Security Council and the regular conduct of field visits to meet and listen to all stakeholders would be welcome steps in that direction.

While we call on the Security Council to regain its focus on prevention, along with its focus on humanitarian and peacekeeping activities, we would also like to touch on the issue of the engagement of the United Nations system with Governments and the mobilization of the early-warning response within the United Nations system. The organs of the United Nations and the entities of the United Nations system have distinct but complementary functions in speaking up as soon as elements of atrocity risks surface. Any delay might be at the cost of prevention and might lead to human suffering.

With the number of armed conflicts worldwide increasing, we witness an alarming trend of undermining significant development progress. There is a strong call in the report of the Secretary-General to maximize all opportunities in the work programmes of the Economic and Social Council and the Peacebuilding Commission to invest in peace through development. In an effort to energize the United Nations system around peace and development, the Economic and Social Council held a special meeting in January to consider the potential of social and economic measures for preventing genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. A joint meeting of the Economic and Social Council and the Peacebuilding Commission on the importance of the Sustainable Development Goals in linking peace and development on the ground is under preparation and will be held on 29 June. A broad consensus is emerging from those discussions that sustainable development plays a critical role in building social resilience, mitigating the multidimensional vulnerabilities generated by overlapping crises and preventing atrocities. Development promotes inclusive democratic societies and fosters accountable and representative political leadership.

As 2025 nears, we are approaching the twentieth anniversary of our commitment to the R2P principle, with the interconnectivity between R2P, the development agenda and peacebuilding activities and the women and peace and security agenda clearly

established. In that regard, I would like to reaffirm the commitment of my country to the three pillars of R2P, with a special emphasis on the second pillar, and to call for a comprehensive review of R2P implementation as a step towards fulfilling the promise for a future free of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

Ms. Wallenius (Canada) (*spoke in French*): Canada supports the statement made on behalf of the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P). We thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/77/910) and welcome the fact that it focuses on the links between sustainable development and the responsibility to protect. The pillars of the United Nations — peace and security, development and human rights and the rule of law — are mutually reinforcing. That is our collective responsibility to our own populations and the global community. They need collective action.

(*spoke in English*)

Progress towards the vast majority of Sustainable Development Goals targets is off track. Multiple and overlapping crises, the coronavirus disease pandemic, conflict and climate change, to name only a few issues, have exacerbated tensions. They are not precursors for, or causes of, mass atrocities, but they are an important warning sign that must be heeded in our efforts to prevent genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. Moreover, where atrocity crimes are committed, there is often a significant backsliding in progress on important indicators of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. By supporting international development cooperation, we can address underlying risk factors for atrocity crimes and preserve hard-won development gains worldwide.

While Canada takes careful note of the report's efforts to highlight the relationship between sustainable development and R2P, we reiterate our call for future reports by the United Nations to focus on country situations, including assessments of risks and recommendations. Canada will continue to demand accountability for violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in Haiti, Syria, Myanmar and Ukraine. Those situations call for bold, unwavering commitment to the principles and the application of R2P. We must all firmly recommit to upholding the principles of R2P, not only in theory but in practice, with respect to prevention and early warning, response and ensuring accountability.

R2P is a responsibility of all States in preventing and punishing genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, wherever they may occur. It is a collective, shared responsibility. It is not an infringement or an impediment on the sovereign right of nation States, or a justification for military intervention. Importantly, that responsibility is not limited to the members of the Security Council. We reiterate our call for constraints on, and limits to, the use of the veto, particularly as a barrier to upholding the mandate of the Security Council for maintaining international peace and security. Continued progress and implementation of the veto initiative is a welcome development. We must support reform efforts that strengthen the ability of the Security Council to discharge its mandate, including through a limit on veto powers. R2P is a collective effort that requires cooperation among all actors. No single organ has exclusive purview over the maintenance of international peace and security. For its part, Canada welcomes the ongoing consideration of the role of the General Assembly and other organs and bodies across the United Nations system and the role that they can play in upholding and applying R2P and its principles, including through the early identification of risks.

Civil society also has an important role to play. Human rights defenders are often best placed to identify early warnings and responses. Canada would be remiss not to highlight the particular role of women and girls in R2P. We must recognize not only their particular vulnerabilities but also their potential as agents of change. We must take into account the voices of victims and survivors in efforts aimed at accountability and ensure a gender-inclusive, survivor-centred approach.

(*spoke in French*)

This year we will mark the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, as well as the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Those anniversaries afford us a moment to reflect on our successes and require us to consider where we have failed. As we approach the twentieth anniversary of R2P in 2025, we have an opportunity to determine how R2P can be commensurate with the threats and challenges that we face today. Canada looks forward to the General Assembly continuing its in-depth consideration of R2P at the current session, and we will play our role in the implementation of that principle.

Mrs. Llano (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): Our delegation aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of Friends in Defence of the Charter of the United Nations.

We believe that the real danger of the responsibility to protect concept is that it has been, and continues to be, manipulated by interventionists in disguise, who try to justify interference in the internal affairs of States in various ways, as well as the use of force to destabilize and change legitimate Governments. Nicaragua remains firmly against genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, which must be combated by following up on commitments to development and peace, while respecting sovereignty and multipolarity.

The responsibility to protect is a notion that continues to cause serious doubts for many countries, particularly small and developing countries, due to the ambiguity of various elements that are easily manipulated for the political ends of the selfish imperialist and neo-colonialist agenda. Those who advocate that notion without international consensus do not promote with the same conviction the urgent need to address and resolve the fundamental causes of terrible situations such as underdevelopment and poverty and the structural problems that determine the outbreak of the conflicts that lead to extreme situations. Only through genuine multilateralism, with respect for international law and the Charter of the United Nations, will it be possible to counteract the impacts of the other pandemics imposed by some Powers, to the detriment of peace, international security, independence, State sovereignty and the self-determination of the peoples.

Nicaragua condemns the application of coercive unilateral interventionist measures, in violation of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. We call for the complete elimination of those measures, which are obstacles to the eradication of poverty and to progress on sustainable development. A comprehensive reform of the United Nations system is therefore urgent to ensure that a multipolar world prevails in which the voices of all peoples are taken into account with a view to realizing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, international peace and security and the reform of global governance.

Mrs. Chanda (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Switzerland welcomes the fact that the responsibility to protect (R2P) is on the agenda of the General Assembly today. The principle of the responsibility to protect

was adopted in 2005 by all United Nations States Members with the aim of halting and preventing mass atrocities. As a member of the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect, Switzerland reaffirms its full support for that principle.

Switzerland thanks the Secretary-General for his report (A/77/910), which rightly emphasizes that development deficits are early risk factors for atrocity crimes. Development must be understood in all its dimensions, and the report rightly refers not only to socioeconomic aspects but also to governance issues. However, no State, whatever its level of development, is immune to atrocities. In view of that, allow me to make the following points.

First, in accordance with the first R2P pillar, it is the responsibility of each State to protect its population from mass atrocity crimes. Prevention at the national level requires national strategies, mechanisms and structures for identifying risk factors and acting in a timely manner. We call on States to take appropriate measures to that end. As a member of the R2P focal point network, Switzerland takes that responsibility seriously. Based on the recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review, Switzerland commissioned a study that recommends strengthening measures to combat racism, which has been identified as one of the main risk factors in Switzerland. We hope that the Swiss Human Rights Institution, which was founded in May, will be able to contribute to raising awareness and preventing and identifying risk factors in that area in Switzerland. We will work closely with it to that end.

Secondly, Switzerland is committed to dialogue and the exchange of best practice on the prevention of atrocities, in particular within the framework of the international network known as Global Action Against Mass Atrocities, which provides a platform between States and civil society, and thereby contributes to the second R2P pillar. Switzerland calls on all States to join it in order to strengthen the atrocity prevention community.

Thirdly, Switzerland supports numerous development projects in fragile contexts, in particular to prevent atrocities. For example, in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Switzerland works with local authorities and the media sector to promote citizen participation and good governance. Switzerland is convinced that civil society makes a fundamental contribution to social cohesion, and is committed to,

and plays a role in, monitoring and early warning on atrocity crimes.

The responsibility to protect and the prevention of atrocities are cross-pillar concerns that engage the entire United Nations system. Switzerland welcomes the fact that those two issues are currently being discussed in several multilateral forums, including the Economic and Social Council, the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly. Allow me to conclude by recalling the importance of the Office on the Prevention of Genocide and the Responsibility to Protect. Switzerland calls on the two Special Advisers to share their recommendations on crisis situations with the Member States so that the United Nations and its various bodies can respond collectively to them.

Ms. Jurečko (Slovenia): Let me express our appreciation for the convening of this annual debate on the responsibility to protect (R2P). My delegation thanks the Secretary-General for his report entitled “Development and the responsibility to protect: recognizing and addressing embedded risks and drivers of atrocity crimes” (A/77/910).

Slovenia aligns itself with the statements made by the observer of the European Union and by the representative of Croatia on behalf of the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect, and we would like to add some comments in our national capacity.

Slovenia emphasizes human rights, democracy and the rule of law among the pillars of development. By upholding those principles, a country aims to create an environment that minimizes the risk of atrocities and ensures the protection of its citizens. Slovenia aims to promote and contribute to the development of R2P. The hosting of biannual academic conferences on R2P in theory and practice is an important contribution in that regard. Those conferences — the most recent of which was held in May — provide an opportunity for participants to share experiences, analyses and research and to exchange information on practices and recommendations for preventing processes that can lead to atrocities.

We cannot stress enough the importance of a robust system of international law that provides stability and predictability while ensuring justice and accountability. We remain committed to the fight against impunity and to bringing justice to the victims of atrocities on all levels. As one of the founding members of the International Criminal Court (ICC) and a member of

the core group for the adoption of a new convention on international cooperation in the investigation and prosecution of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and other international crimes, Slovenia hosted a diplomatic conference in Ljubljana in May that resulted in the adoption of the new Ljubljana–Hague Mutual Legal Assistance Convention, which will significantly enhance cooperation among all States parties at the national level. It will also contribute significantly to the promotion of the rule of law and the fight against impunity at the global level. We would like to encourage all United Nations States Members to join that new treaty.

This year’s report rightly urges us to recognize that chronic underdevelopment, extreme poverty, food insecurity, inequality, vulnerability and the effects of climate change and environmental degradation present possible drivers for mass atrocities. In turn, mass atrocity situations exacerbate existing sources of fragility and hinder development. Time and again, we see that vicious cycle repeating itself. It is therefore essential that States apply the R2P lens in their domestic development programmes, their strategies for international development cooperation and their engagement with the multilateral system.

As the report emphasizes, development programmes must be sensitive to the risks and drivers of atrocities, such as extreme poverty, impunity, weak institutions, human rights violations and armed conflict. It is of crucial importance that such sensitivity be taken into account at every stage — decision-making, policy-planning, implementation and evaluation of development activities. The implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development can significantly contribute to atrocity-prevention efforts, and Slovenia will do its part through our development cooperation and capacity-building to build resilience and thereby prevent processes that may in certain circumstances lead to mass atrocities.

We believe that the best way to reduce human suffering resulting from atrocities is to prevent conflict from happening in the first place. However, when conflicts do happen, it is the Security Council that has the primary responsibility and should act accordingly. In that regard, as a member of the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency group, Slovenia strongly supports and advocates for the code of conduct regarding the use of veto, and we also support the French-Mexican political declaration on the suspension of veto powers

in cases of mass atrocity. We encourage other Member States to join those important initiatives as well.

Let me conclude by reaffirming Slovenia's strong commitment to R2P and our strong support for the mandate of the Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect.

Mr. Gafoor (Singapore): I join others in thanking the President of the General Assembly for convening this important meeting. We also thank the Secretary-General for his report entitled "Development and the responsibility to protect: recognizing and addressing embedded risks and drivers of atrocity crimes" (A/77/910), which provides substantive recommendations on advancing the responsibility to protect (R2P) agenda in the context of sustainable development. It is also very timely, as the world is unfortunately witnessing a dramatic increase in the frequency and scale of mass atrocity crimes.

Singapore is a founding member of the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect. We joined that Group because we subscribe to the core principle of R2P — that fundamentally each State has the sovereign right and responsibility to protect its own population from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. It is also important that the international community be prepared to take collective action in a timely and decisive manner in order to help to protect populations against such crimes should national authorities manifestly fail to do so.

The issue of R2P has been controversial because it has often been politicized and selectively applied. More fundamentally, there has been a gradual erosion of trust around the concept. The General Assembly has a crucial role in that regard, as it provides a platform for dialogue and on which to rebuild trust, especially around the R2P concept. What we need at this stage is an approach of patient dialogue and informal discussions in order to build understanding and trust among all delegations. Therefore, we would not be comfortable, as Singapore, with any approach that seeks to push for the adoption of a draft resolution or an approach that seeks to impose on Member States a specific interpretation of R2P. We believe that such an approach would be unhelpful for building trust and understanding. We would therefore urge all delegations to continue the process of dialogue, especially through informal discussions, in a spirit of mutual respect and respect for the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

In that context, Singapore would like to restate our understanding of the three pillars of R2P.

First, the primary responsibility for the protection of populations from atrocity crimes lies with States. This year marks the midway point of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The onus is on Member States to implement its goals and targets, particularly Sustainable Development Goal 16, on the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies. Instability and extremism flourish when the needs and aspirations of citizens are not met. Therefore, a focus on human development is absolutely vital.

The second point we wish to make is that the international community has a responsibility to support States in their national efforts to improve resilience. In line with the Secretary-General's vision for networked multilateralism, the United Nations, regional organizations and civil society stakeholders must work together to build the necessary institutions and capacities for resilient and inclusive societies. Within the United Nations system, the two Special Advisers to Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide and on R2P must work in consultation with one another in order to enhance the collective capacity of the United Nations to prevent atrocity crimes. In particular, the Special Adviser on R2P should continue to perform his primary role of conceptual development and consensus-building on that divisive topic.

That leads me to the third pillar of R2P — that the international community has the responsibility to protect should national authorities manifestly fail to protect their populations. In that regard, the Security Council has an important role to play. Unfortunately, the veto has been used too often to prevent action to address crimes of atrocity at the expense of many innocent lives. We welcome initiatives that call on members of the Security Council to respond to the risk of atrocity crimes, including the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency group's code of conduct and the French-Mexican initiative on the use of the veto in case of mass atrocities. We call on the permanent members of the Security Council to make a commitment to stop using the veto to block action aimed at preventing or ending atrocity crimes.

Mr. Al-Thani (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): We thank the President for convening this important meeting, which is a part of our common efforts to develop and strengthen the principle of the responsibility to protect.

The State of Qatar aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Croatia on behalf of the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect.

The State of Qatar is committed to that principle, based on our deep-rooted belief in the importance of international cooperation to strengthen collective security, as well as our respect for international law, the Charter of the United Nations and relevant United Nations resolutions. Based on that unwavering commitment, the State of Qatar continues its efforts to promote the principle of the responsibility to protect at all levels. We take this opportunity to express how proud we were to have been the co-Chairs of the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect from 2018 to 2020. During that period, we witnessed a number of fruitful achievements in supporting and strengthening that principle.

We welcome the annual report of the Secretary-General for this year (A/77/910), which provides Member States with an important opportunity to discuss the prevention of atrocities while implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It also sets out a coherent conceptual framework and constructive recommendations on how to benefit from developmental cooperation, technical assistance and capacity-building in order to address the root causes of atrocities and mitigate other factors that increase the risks of crimes of atrocity.

In that regard, the State of Qatar would like to underscore the close link between development and the responsibility to protect. Development ensures the necessary conditions and requirements for lasting peace. We underscore that those pillars are part of the priorities of State of Qatar's foreign policy, which is underpinned by preventive diplomacy and an integrated approach to addressing the root causes of conflicts. In that context, the State of Qatar has continued its humanitarian and development efforts to support many projects in developing countries that are affected by conflicts and wars. Millions of people around the world benefit from those projects, which were undertaken in partnership with the United Nations and regional and international partners.

This meeting is being held while the need for international multilateral action is increasing in many fields. Meanwhile, concerted efforts are being made to address the increasing and dangerous regional and international conflicts that remain without effective and sustained political solutions. The numbers of displaced

persons and refugees and victims of violations of human rights and international crimes of atrocity have doubled worldwide. That requires the international community to adopt more effective and consistent measures in order to meet its responsibility to protect civilians, particularly the weak and marginalized.

Once again, we underscore that the Security Council, through the mandate entrusted to it by the Charter of the United Nations, has a specific responsibility to prevent atrocity crimes based on the principle of the responsibility to protect. It should also refrain from using the veto in the case of such crimes.

The success of the international community in addressing atrocities requires the mobilization of all parts of society, including women, girls and young people, who make up the majority of our societies. Accordingly, we stress the need to include them in all efforts towards achieving sustainable peace and development. They are essential for promoting the principle of the responsibility to protect.

In conclusion, the State of Qatar reaffirms its steadfast commitment to the principle of the responsibility to protect and to strengthening it through the work of the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect, with the support of multilateral efforts and initiatives in that regard.

Mr. De Bono Sant Cassia (Malta): We thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this meeting.

Malta aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union. We would like to add some remarks in our national capacity.

This debate provides us with an opportune moment to recall our collective commitment at the 2005 World Summit, in which we pledged to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. In that regard, we welcome the report of the Secretary-General (A/77/910) and its focus on the interrelationships between sustainable development and R2P.

Development deficits — such as poverty, food insecurity, institutionalized discrimination, lack of access to educational opportunities, economic and gender inequalities and social exclusion — have the potential to exacerbate existing grievances and give rise to mass atrocity risks. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides us with a framework for global

cooperation to achieve a better and more sustainable future. By implementing our commitments in that regard, we can build the conditions for sustainable peace, equitable growth and accountable governance and stability. That will cement the prospects for realizing the fundamental objectives of the responsibility to protect and protecting civilians from atrocity crimes. As the report painfully illustrates, much remains to be done. We must focus on strengthening prevention, understanding key risk factors and addressing all forms of violence. In that vein, we welcome the recommendations of the report, which focus on early detection, early warning, prevention and response to atrocities, as well as its call for development programmes that are sensitive to the risks and drivers of atrocities.

Malta emphasizes that atrocity prevention strategies can be effective only when affected populations are involved in their development, implementation and monitoring, and when the voices of victims and survivors, women and young people are listened to. The current conflicts in the Sudan, Ukraine, Myanmar, Syria, Afghanistan and elsewhere lend even more urgency to the need to narrow the gap between Member States' obligations under international law and the reality faced by populations at risk of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. It is our collective responsibility, including in the Security Council, to take timely and clear action to prevent atrocity crimes. In that regard, Malta supports the French-Mexican initiative on veto restraint in the case of mass atrocities, the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency group's code of conduct and the veto initiative. In contexts in which the international community fails in its commitment to prevent the commission of atrocity crimes, it is vital to prioritize accountability and promote justice. The International Criminal Court, as well as other international judicial bodies, play a crucial role in that regard.

Let me also reiterate Malta's full support for the Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect and the two Special Advisers to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide and on the Responsibility to Protect. Their efforts to fulfil their complex mandates and to provide Member States and United Nations organs with concrete and timely advice on the implementation of the three pillars of the responsibility to protect are commendable. We are also thankful for the contribution of other actors to the prevention of atrocity crimes, including civil society,

human right defenders and humanitarian workers, who monitor risks and provide us with early warnings.

In conclusion, I emphasize that any initiative that seeks to advance the realization of our pledge made in 2005 and that seeks to ensure that the international community is not a bystander to atrocity crimes and large-scale human rights abuses is commendable.

Mr. Hollis (United Kingdom): Let me begin by thanking Special Adviser Okoth-Obbo for his statement today and for his and Special Adviser Nderitu's continuing contribution to the prevention of atrocities and our understanding of the responsibility to protect. And let me also thank the Secretary-General for his report on the relationship between the responsibility to protect and sustainable development (A/77/910).

The challenge confronting advocates of the responsibility to protect today is vast. As set out in the Secretary-General's report, intersecting issues — including climate change, the long-term impact of the coronavirus disease pandemic and food and energy crises — are having a particularly serious impact on the most vulnerable populations, thereby reducing their resilience to atrocities. Since the debate held last year, we have seen atrocities spread. Most recently, as the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide noted, we have seen deeply troubling reports of an increase in ethnicity-based violence in Darfur, the Sudan. The international community must not let history repeat itself. In addition, since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, there have been appalling reports of atrocities, including the intentional targeting and forced deportation of civilians.

As atrocities continue, we should recall our collective responsibility to protect civilians and ask ourselves what more can be done to achieve that. The United Kingdom has no doubt that development plays a crucial part. It is clear that countering socioeconomic inequality and promoting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 16, with its focus on building strong institutions, are actions that can also play an important part in tackling the causes of atrocities. With that in mind, development actors, including within the United Nations system, must be sensitive to the impact of their work on atrocity risks. Indeed, it is important for all to remain clear-eyed about the links and overlaps among building and sustaining peace, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and atrocity prevention.

It is critical that we work to prevent those agendas from becoming siloed, while recognizing and protecting their different tools and objectives. In that regard, we call on the United Nations to apply an atrocity-prevention lens to its work, where relevant, and to take into account populations' voices and needs in the development and implementation of programmes. The Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect should play a key role in ensuring that atrocity prevention is an essential part of the toolkit of United Nations teams working in a country. We also call on the Office to prioritize drawing information from across the United Nations system in order to inform a robust approach to early warning. While early warning must be handled sensitively, it is also critical that the alarm be sounded before it is too late.

The United Kingdom remains committed to atrocity prevention and upholding the responsibility to protect. Among other initiatives, we are currently working on strengthening monitoring and analytical capability at the country, regional and global levels and harnessing the potential of open-source intelligence for early warning. We are also acutely aware of the gender dynamics of atrocities and their unique impact on women and girls. Atrocity prevention efforts must be survivor-centred and gender-sensitive. The United Kingdom is working on prevention and accountability, including for conflict-related sexual violence, through the new Accountability Commission and Task Force for Survivors initiative, which focuses on strengthening accountability at the national level, as well as through our support for the adoption of a convention on the prevention and punishment of crimes against humanity.

In conclusion, turning back to the words of the 2005 World Summit Outcome, the United Kingdom remains committed to protecting populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

Mr. Spasse (Albania): The responsibility to protect (R2P) is one of the most significant normative advancements in the past two decades, especially as it reframes sovereignty as responsibility. It provides concrete guidance to the world community in upholding fundamental norms and values and addressing gross violations.

We welcome the report of the Secretary-General (A/77/910) and its recommendations and commend the work of the Special Advisers to the Secretary-General

on the Prevention of Genocide and on the Responsibility to Protect.

Unfortunately, today we are confronted with unprecedented levels of violence and atrocities. That is what is happening in Ukraine, the Sudan, Ethiopia, the Sahel, Yemen, Myanmar, Haiti and elsewhere. Poverty, discrimination, poor education, economic and gender inequalities, lack of good governance, corruption and impunity are all risk factors for atrocity crimes. Albania believes that States have the primary responsibility to protect the rights of people in their territory and to ensure sustainable development. Building more resilient societies is critical for preventing mass atrocity crimes. Prevention requires reforms and close synergy among national and international stakeholders, States and civil society in order to address the causes of recurring conflict and violence that can lead to mass atrocities.

We are encouraged by efforts to further strengthen and mainstream the responsibility to protect (R2P) across the United Nations system. The international community and States need to address the drivers that perpetuate human suffering, including climate change, and to invest in prevention in order to protect their people from atrocities. We support the application of all three pillars of R2P — development, human rights and peace and security. We also support all efforts to further strengthen their development. Failure to consider early warnings, threats and the key risk factors associated with atrocity crimes would undermine the protection of civilians, conflict prevention and sustainable peace.

Attaining the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 is essential for the international community to address the root causes of mass atrocities, as well as a cornerstone for atrocity prevention. Responsive and transparent institutions are indispensable to uphold the rule of law and ensure respect for human, social, economic, political and cultural rights. But none of those efforts will bear fruit if we do not ensure accountability for mass atrocities and prevent risks from escalating. The persistence of impunity for mass atrocities means the destruction of the rule of law and institutions that are necessary to protect the basic interests of human beings.

Let me conclude by emphasizing that it is for those reasons that Albania fully supports the further strengthening of R2P and its robust application where needed.

Ms. Jimenez de la Hoz (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Spain aligns itself with the statements made by the observer of the European Union and by the representative of Croatia on behalf of the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect.

We would like to thank the Secretary-General for his latest report (A/77/910), and we also welcome the work of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Responsibility to Protect. The Secretary-General's report considers the link between the challenges for sustainable development and the risks, causes and drivers of atrocity crimes. That link, which was already highlighted in the framework of analysis of atrocity crimes, is particularly relevant in the current context of multiple crises and alarming setbacks in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It also reveals the cross-cutting nature of the concept of the responsibility to protect.

Spain agrees with prioritizing the link between the responsibility to protect and development in order to operationalize the concept of the responsibility to protect. That link in turn is closely related to the triple nexus approach — namely, the necessary complementarity between humanitarian action, development and peace and security. Spain incorporated that approach in its recent law on cooperation for sustainable development and global solidarity. The approach will also be integrated in the next medium-term plan for Spanish cooperation for the period 2023–2026. The SDG Summit provides an opportunity to inject fresh impetus into the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which contributes to strengthening more just, peaceful and inclusive societies. The outcomes of the Summit must be commensurate with the scale of the challenges, and we must adequately follow up on those results.

The report also recalls how the processes that lead to mass atrocities are often characterized by certain

patterns of human rights violations. It is essential that we protect and strengthen the Human Rights Council's early-warning function and that we combat impunity, which is another driver that increases risk.

Spain has always been actively committed to the principle of the responsibility to protect. We have demonstrated that commitment at the international level through our participation in the Group of Friends and in the Global Network of the Responsibility to Protect Focal Points. That commitment was also reflected in the importance we accorded to that matter during our membership of the Security Council in 2015–2016, as well as our participation in interactive debates and dialogues of the General Assembly.

Nationally, Spain has been striving to incorporate the principle of the responsibility to protect in our domestic legislation, so that the Spanish criminal code now criminalizes genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, in line with the provisions of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. Furthermore, the current foreign policy strategy and the recently adopted Spanish humanitarian diplomacy strategy centre the responsibility to protect in their priorities and action. Spain will continue to prioritize a preventive, anticipatory and deterrent approach to conflicts that is focused on diplomacy, mediation and development cooperation, in accordance with our commitment to the principle of the responsibility to protect.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item for this meeting. We shall hear the remaining speakers this afternoon here in the Hall, after the items already scheduled for consideration.

The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 132.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.