

Calling for young peoples' voices to be harnessed to inform atrocity prevention efforts



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Thank you Mr. President,

I'd like to begin by thanking Special Adviser Nderitu for her statement

today. We also welcome Special Adviser Okoth-Obbo to his new role

and wish him every success.

And let me also thank the Secretary-General for his timely report on

advancing the Responsibility to Protect, with its focus on children and

youth. It is a stark reminder of the challenge ahead, as well as the

imperative for us to succeed. I will make three points today in this

regard.

First, on the importance of the responsibility to protect and prevent

mass atrocities. The world is facing alarming levels of violence and

displacement, with children and youth disproportionately affected.

Millions of children are suffering now and millions more face the risk of

mass atrocity crimes. Their safety, protection, dignity and welfare are

fundamental to humanity and the responsibility to protect provides a

framework for helping them.

Young people are powerful agents of peace and security, and their

voices must be heard and harnessed to inform atrocity prevention

efforts. Youth-led movements are demanding change to shape the world

they will inherit.

All States can contribute to the prevention of atrocities by identifying

drivers, triggers and risks of atrocity crimes, institutionalizing early

warning and prevention mechanisms, and by coming together to break

this cycle of violence. As part of the Security Council Working Group on

Children and Armed Conflict, we support the United Nations in its efforts

to get parties to conflict to enter into concrete action plans.

Which takes me to my second point. We can no longer accept

hesitation or inaction. Russia's unjustified and unprovoked attack on

Ukraine has resulted in appalling and horrifying violations against

children, including credible allegations of sexual violence by the Russian

military. In Myanmar, abhorrent violence has been committed against

children, with credible reports of the military regime killing and torturing

children. In Syria, children born in the last decade have been subjected

to terrible hunger, deprivation and violence. And in northern Ethiopia, the

situation for women and girls remains deeply concerning and there are

reports of the continued use of sexual violence in Western Tigray.

Those responsible for these atrocities must be held accountable whether

through domestic prosecutions, the International Criminal Court or

otherwise. The United Kingdom will do all it can to hold these criminals

to account.

Third, the UK remains committed to atrocity prevention and response. To give a couple of examples:

Last November we launched the Call to Action to Ensure the Rights and

Wellbeing of Children born of Sexual Violence in Conflict. This is a first

step in galvanising international action to improve the situation for this

vulnerable group. We call upon all states to endorse this Call to Action.

In addition, the United Kingdom is building international action on conflict

related sexual violence in a way that supports survivors and strengthens

existing structures. In particular, we are seeking to strengthen the

international legal architecture; build global political will; and drive action

and best practice on accountability for relevant crimes.

To conclude, there is a vocal minority that wishes to debunk the

responsibility to protect by ignoring the unanimously agreed World

Summit Outcome and by claiming falsely that it is a cover for illegal

interventions. We must not let this distract us. Atrocity crimes are

happening right now and there are risks of further crimes elsewhere. The

responsibility to protect simply calls on us to seek to prevent and

respond to these crimes. That is why the United Kingdom will call out

atrocities and atrocity risks. We expect others to do so too and, in this

vein, we would like future reports of the Secretary-General on R2P to

cover specific country situations. How can we protect children and youth

from atrocities if we only speak about them in the abstract?
We need

practical case-by-case actions and not a debate about theory.

Thank you, Mr President.

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