

Written submission: the UN's New Agenda for Peace

Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect*

The Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect would like to commend UN Secretary-General António Guterres for the initiative of developing a *New Agenda for Peace*, which provides an important opportunity to recalibrate multilateral approaches to conflict prevention and resolution, as well as to promote human rights and gender equality, and the Sustainable Development Goals – all themes that are closely linked to the Responsibility to Protect and prevention of mass atrocities. Prevention should include widespread systematic human rights education that concerns all ages in all parts of societies as foreseen in the *UN Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training*.

As the report on *Our Common Agenda* noted, in order to protect and manage global peace, we need to understand the underlying drivers and systems of influence that are jeopardizing peace, and invest in meaningful steps to manage emerging risks and in a renewed and reinvigorated engagement for more effective collective security responses, in accordance with the UN Charter.

As articulated in *Our Common Agenda*, the *New Agenda for Peace* should be focused on strengthening prevention, understanding key risk factors, and addressing all forms of violence, as well as the implementation of SDG16 on peace, justice and strong institutions. The Group of Friends of R2P would like to underline that in order for prevention to be effectively strengthened, it must be predicated on early warning signs and clarity on what early action must be taken to respond to such alarms. In this regard, effective early warning should be rooted in accurately identifying *all* factors that pose risks of violence, including the risk factors associated with atrocity crimes, rather than solely focusing on the risk of conflict.

Efforts to strengthen international foresight by the United Nations and invest in prevention would benefit from assessing situations through an atrocity prevention lens. This lens helps in holistically assessing societal structures and patterns of behavior that may precede systematic violations and abuses of human rights, identity-based violence and targeting, or mass atrocities. Such patterns may be missed in assessments that are strictly focused on conflict prevention or human rights promotion. By helping to contextualize the drivers of human rights violations and atrocities, this type of analysis also enables a broader understanding of how root causes and other aggravating factors give rise to such abuses and guides the actions that need to be taken at the international, regional and national levels to prevent their perpetration and better protect those who may be vulnerable or in vulnerable situations. The atrocity prevention lens can also help in assessing the capacity of institutions to prevent and mitigate risk factors. It can also encourage the development of resilience factors and increase attention to developments over time, which can help to identify escalations in violence and/or the severity of human rights violations.

Furthermore, in line with the emphasis on putting women and girls at the centre of peace and security, we acknowledge the contribution the Secretary-General has already made on this subject through his 2020 report on R2P and the Women, Peace and Security agenda. Many of the recommendations from that report merit consideration for inclusion into the New Agenda, particularly with regards to ensuring early warning signs are taken into account for the vulnerabilities of populations on the basis of gender as well as the unique and important role that they can play as agents of change in responding to atrocity risks.

In further developing the *New Agenda for Peace*, the Group of Friends respectfully urges the Secretary-General to take the following into consideration:

- Strengthen the prevention frameworks to enhance a focus on specific risks associated with atrocity crimes and ensure that such frameworks reflect the diversity of populations around the world and intersectional nature of risks they face;
- Recognize that violations of International Humanitarian Law and International Human Rights Law obligations are key drivers of or factors exacerbating conflicts and atrocities;
- Recognize that systematic marginalization and practice of discrimination against a population on any ground including race, religion or ethnicity, can lead to widespread violence and atrocities, and therefore should be eliminated through appropriate legal, political and social measures;
- Encourage Member States to prioritize building and strengthening of institutions at the national and local levels with a view to preventing, identifying and addressing factors that contribute to atrocity risks;
- Reinforce linkages between the UN's three pillars and examine how tools for the maintenance of peace and security can be better operationalized for the protection and promotion of human rights;
- Continue to break silos in the UN system and encourage holistic approaches to risk factors and greater cross-departmental collaboration, including partnerships between the UN Office on Genocide Prevention and R2P and other UN bodies;
- Ensure the inclusion of civil society organizations, affected communities, religious leaders, human rights defenders and victims and survivors of atrocity crimes in further developing and implementing this Agenda;
- Emphasize the importance of promoting the rule of law at the national and international levels, ensuring equal access to justice for all, and investing in justice, accountability and reconciliation for past atrocities as an effective way to contribute to the deterrence of future conflict and atrocities;
- Acknowledge the fundamental importance of investing in human rights education and training in contributing to the promotion, protection and effective realization of all human rights, which is the key preventive measure to protect populations;
- Ensure a gender perspective in the development of the *New Agenda for Peace*, including ensuring women's full, equal and meaningful participation in its implementation, as well as ensuring a gender perspective in early warning mechanisms and all atrocity prevention measures;
- Continue to provide support to the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda and Youth, Peace and Security Agenda.

*** Members of the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect**

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