

*The Responsibility to Protect- International Ecumenical Consultation  
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## **THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT AT THE UN**

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Responsibility to Protect-Engaging Civil Society (**R2PCS**)  
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For this discussion on the role of the churches in conceptualizing, supporting and advancing the responsibility to protect, I was asked to highlight some of the other developments that the United Nations and civil society have been engaging in over the past year on the issue. I first want to provide some background on the project I have been working on, and then to offer some of the operational challenges the NGO community has identified in advancing this evolving norm, and finally to present two new global initiatives by NGOs on the responsibility to protect.

It is our hope that the ecumenical community-- while still internally reflecting on the issue-- will follow the developments closely and contribute where possible. The momentum for moving the responsibility to protect from principle to practice is growing rapidly and it is critical that the voice of the church community is heard at each level of the process.

### I. The **R2PCS** project and the role of Civil Society Organizations in advancing R2P

The **R2PCS** project started in 2002 when the government of Canada approached WFM-IGP with conducting a series of consultations with NGOs to gauge interest in the 2001 International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) report. In general, NGOs were supportive of the idea but had three primary concerns:

1. The principles could be misused to justify intervention, especially short of Security Council action
2. There was uncertainty of how R2P was different from prevention of genocide and human rights in general
3. Some were resistance to the use of force, even as a last resort. Some groups could not support the norm in any possible way and others felt that they could support it but did not want to emphasize the military aspects. They preferred to spend their time and resources focusing on prevention and non-military responses.

Through these consultations, our organization was able to work with a close group of NGOs in New York and elsewhere to build support of governments and the UN for the responsibility to protect. In 2005, world leaders agreed that there was an international responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing when they included this language in paragraphs 138 and 139 of the World Summit Outcome Document.

It is important to note that compared to the ICISS report, the World Summit language downplays the use of force in that it does not set criteria for when and how force should be used. It also differs from ICISS in that it places greater authority on the Security Council as the “decider” when force is to be used in R2P situations. Finally, the two documents differ in that there is no specific reference to the “responsibility to rebuild” in the World Summit language and only to the Peacebuilding Commission. Although the World Summit language is not considered a binding document, NGOs have used the language of the World Summit for the purposes of advocacy at the United Nations level as it was agreed to by world leaders.

## II. Challenges to the R2P agenda

While there is a growing understanding of the significance of the international community’s acceptance of sovereignty as responsibility and an international community’s responsibility to take action, there is still need for an effective system of protection to be put in place by the international community. Since the end of the World Summit, NGOs have identified several next steps for the R2P agenda:

### 1. Raising awareness while protecting the integrity of R2P

One challenge that remains even after the 2005 endorsement is that few officials in government or civil society, much less the general public, know that governments have accepted a responsibility to protect. Among those who are familiar with the term, there is still substantial misunderstanding of what it is intended to address. It is often misperceived too narrowly as an agenda solely about military intervention and also too broadly as a doctrine for the protection of populations from all threats, including global warming and HIV/AIDS.

### 2. Articulating the responsibility to react

In addition to the need for the UN, governments and civil society to articulate what criteria should be when force can and cannot be used, it is equally important for each of these actors to outline what measures short of use of force (including economic, political, diplomatic, legal) should be considered tools for R2P.

### 3. Establishing R2P architecture within the UN, regional organizations and governments

While much has been written about the potential of the Summit outcome on R2P, it remains only an abstract acceptance of these principles. Governments are not yet committed to frameworks and guidelines to implement these principles at the UN or in their own policies and practices. Recent steps have been taken by the UN with Ban Ki-moon’s recent appointment of Francis Deng as Special Representative on Genocide and Professor Edward Luck as the new Special Adviser on R2P. Once there is broader acceptance that a responsibility to protect norm does exist, what remains is still the greatest challenge: determining where R2P will apply and putting the mechanisms and guidelines in place so that the concept is operationalized at the UN, regionally and nationally.

## III. Two global initiatives to advance R2P

A core group of international non-governmental organizations have been meeting regularly since the Summit Outcome to consider how to advance the responsibility to protect norm,

achieve greater implementation at the UN and increase the resources dedicated to this agenda. These organizations have agreed to promote a two-pronged approach: the creation of a Global Centre for R2P and an NGO Coalition for the responsibility to protect.

#### 1. Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect.

The Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect is a joint initiative of International Crisis Group, Oxfam International, Refugees International, Human Rights Watch and the World Federalist Movement-Institute for Global Policy. Expected to be launched in February 2008, it will be housed at the Ralph Bunche Institute for International Studies at the City University of New York. The Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect (GCR2P) will also have several Associated Centres based in Europe, Asia and Africa.

Co-chaired by Gareth Evans and Mohammed Sahnoun, GCR2P seeks to tackle many of the challenges listed above. The Global Centre is supported by a distinguished group of Patrons, including Kofi Annan, Joschka Fisher, Lee Hamilton, Desmond Tutu, Mary Robinson, Romeo Dallaire, Lloyd Axworthy, Jan Eliasson, David Hamburg, Prince El Hassan bin Talal, Sadako Ogata, and Fidel Valdez Ramos.

Although the workplan for the Centre is still under discussion and formation, it will likely undertake the following types of activities:

- Promote research and provide a common knowledge and information base on R2P, publishing freely available monographs and reports and maintaining a high quality website;
- Recommend and support strategies for norm consolidation and capacity building worldwide;
- Support and assist efforts to generate the political will in governments and intergovernmental bodies to respond effectively to new R2P situations as they arise;
- Develop close working relationships with key NGOs and relevant units of governments and international regional institutions working on R2P, including in particular the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for the Prevention of Genocide and his Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect; and
- Establish linkages worldwide with a wide variety of civil society, academic, governmental, and international bodies involved in relevant analysis and research.

#### 2. Global NGO Coalition/Network for the Responsibility to Protect

In the decision to create a Centre, NGOs also recognized that the agenda to advance R2P cannot rest solely with a centralized primarily research-driven institution. They recognized the need for a mutually reinforcing "bottom up" initiative that would link NGOs on the ground to NGOs in New York and other strategic capitals around the world.

It is clear that civil society and non-governmental organizations have a very important role to play in the implementation of R2P: 1) through building an effective advocacy movement to lobby for firmer action on the part of the UN, the Security Council and member states when genocide and mass atrocities are either imminent or underway; 2) through strengthening constituencies in various parts of the world to pressure states into accepting their

responsibility to protect; and 3) through generating widespread awareness of the norm amongst the public so that the norm becomes better entrenched as a practice to which states are expected to adhere.

Several NGO supporters of R2P – namely the NGOs listed above – have formed a consultative group dedicated to increasing the support of NGOs internationally for the responsibility to protect.

This consultative group, headed by my organization, the World Federalist Movement-Institute for Global Policy, intends to hold a series of NGO roundtables in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe to (1) raise awareness and support for the R2P agenda among a cross-section of NGOs; (2) identify partners to join a core group of R2P supporters; and (3) elaborate goals, principles and activities for NGOs working together to advance the norm.

Once the coalition is established, we envision several long-term priorities to advance the R2P norm:

- Develop common messages and advocacy strategies to ensure the consistent and proper use of R2P;
- Ensure against misuse of the R2P concept;
- Coordinate activities to educate governments and international and regional officials and to press for public endorsements of R2P in national, regional and international policy statements and forums.
- With regard to conflict specific situations, facilitate the exchange of information between NGOs and coordinate lobbying efforts so as to apply pressure on the UN and member states to act
- Organize discussions and recommendations on policy frameworks that are necessary to implement R2P, including criteria for determining when an R2P situation exists and guidelines on the use of force;
- Monitor effectiveness of policy frameworks adopted by governments, regional organizations and the UN;
- Liaise with UN actors tasked with implementing R2P, including the UN Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect and the Under Secretary-General for the Prevention of Genocide
- Liaise with NGO and academic initiatives including the Global Centre on the Responsibility to Protect.

We are hopeful that the ecumenical community in Europe and beyond will participate in these roundtables by sharing ethical and theological perspectives currently missing in the larger debate. Specifically, we would welcome contributions regarding the criteria for military intervention (by sharing theological insights from the Just War theory) and on emphasizing prevention and the need to encourage non-lethal coercive measures as the primary form of "reaction". Beyond the conceptual level, we would also welcome additional thoughts on how the church community can help with on-the-ground prevention (through early warning, mediation and negotiation capacities, and other communication functions) of genocide and mass atrocity crimes. The partnership between human rights and humanitarian organizations, women's groups, think tanks, academia and the religious community—and of

course the UN, governments, and regional organizations-- is the key to the success of this important principle.