Recommendations on promoting and operationalising the Responsibility to Protect by the EU and EU Member States

Living document – revised annually by the CONUN (this version was agreed by the CONUN on 3 May, 2018)

These recommendations are directed at the EU Focal Point on the Responsibility to Protect (RtoP), the EU and the EU Member States. The EU Focal Point and national counterparts ensure continuous political commitment to RtoP; raise awareness across their administrations on RtoP and promote the integration of RtoP in relevant EU and national instruments. These recommendations are aimed at advancing the development, acceptance and operationalisation of the concept of RtoP:

1) Under the guidance of the EU Focal Point, the EU should, where necessary, strengthen its capacities to adapt relevant instruments and initiatives to include RtoP as a cross-cutting and operational concept in foreign policy. This should entail close collaboration between thematic, geographic and crisis management departments, including with regard to specific country situations, in order to implement a culture of prevention and early action within the institutions, including in EU delegations.

2) In this context, the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the European Commission, with the support of Member States, should continue to use the EU conflict Early Warning System to identify RtoP issues and work for early action.

3) The EU RtoP – Atrocity Prevention Toolkit is a concrete step towards integrating RtoP into relevant activities of EU Delegations and other actors. The EU should organise workshops to familiarise relevant staff, as appropriate, with the RtoP tool kit and its practical application. The EU should also introduce Member States to the RtoP tool kit and explore opportunities for joint efforts to utilise this instrument.

4) Established references to RtoP and atrocity prevention, such as in the Global Strategy for the EU's Foreign and Security Policy, the new European Consensus on Development, the Implementation Plan on Security and Defence, and the Integrated Approach to External Conflicts and Crises, should receive practical follow-up within the Council as well as in the EU institutions, including with regard to country situations. The EEAS should, as appropriate, support these efforts by regularly updating, and mobilising support from, the Member States on relevant developments within the EU system.

5) Under the guidance of the EU Focal Point, EU institutions and Member States should step up the level of communication and cooperation on RtoP issues, notably by strengthening the RtoP network with additional meetings if necessary, discussing RtoP issues in CONUN or in other relevant Council working groups. RtoP should be applied as analytical tool to specific country situations in the Political and Security Committee and in geographic working groups of the Council. In order to strengthen the timely uptake of RtoP issues and allow for appropriate responses, the RtoP experts of the EU and EU Member States should exchange
regularly information and assessments about relevant developments, initiatives and opportunities, notably through the informal network of EU RtoP experts and contact points.

6) EU institutions and Member States should strengthen the cooperation with the UN on RtoP, in particular by supporting the UNSG's new Special Adviser on RtoP to further operationalise the concept, by working closely with the UN Joint Office on Genocide Prevention and the RtoP through regular joint meetings, and by providing, when necessary, EU and Member States’ inputs to UN meetings and reports, particularly the UNSG’s annual report on RtoP. The EU and EU Member States should encourage strengthened coordination of the various UN entities in order to use all the early warning tools at disposal.

RtoP issues should be discussed in EU-UN cooperation structures, such as the UN-EU Annual Partnership Meeting on Conflict Prevention and the UN-EU Steering Committee on Crisis Management. At the UN and in meetings of the Group of Friends of RtoP, the EU and Member States should work for retaining the specific importance of RtoP and underscore the value of the position of the Special Adviser on RtoP as key actor on the operationalisation of the concept.

7) EU Member States should step up outreach activities in order to advance the concept of RtoP and its operationalisation in multilateral fora, engaging strategically with other countries and regional organisations, including networks supporting atrocity prevention as well as states which are most antagonistic to RtoP. The EU and EU Member States should in particular maintain a dialogue with fragile states. EU member states can also be instrumental in promoting general awareness of RtoP through public awareness campaigns and educational programmes, and sharing national best practices in this regard. In this context, EU Member states and the EU as a whole should encourage the UNSG – together with the UN leadership – to be fully committed to advancing the concept of RtoP and its operationalisation.

8) The EU and EU Member States should continue to explore the possibilities to use UN human rights fora, including the Universal Periodic Review, to further advance the concept of RtoP and its operationalisation, recalling the recommendations set forth in the non-paper on RtoP and Geneva, as previously discussed by Member States in COHOM and CONUN meetings. The EU should continue to support the work of the Group of Friends in Geneva and in New York, and use both to their full potential. The EU also needs to continue highlighting the role of the ICC in safeguarding our common values and in contributing to the protection of populations in parallel to RtoP.

9) EU Member States, working together with the Group of Friends of RtoP, should support efforts to include RtoP as a permanent formal item on the agenda of the UNGA, and possibly support renewed efforts to table an UNGA-resolution, provided that such a resolution is likely to gather enough support to be adopted, and its language serves to solidify or advance the concept.

10) As part of operationalising RtoP's pillar 1, the EU and EU Member States should consider RtoP’s links to internal dimensions of EU and Member States policies with regard to harmful developments like targeting of minorities, hate speech and incitement to hatred, and
discrimination of minorities; as well as of policies promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women. The EU and EU Member States could encourage discussion of these issues and of potential responses from an RtoP perspective with national and international stakeholders, and include these into relevant national/EU reporting and documentation.