

Monsieur le Vice-Premier Ministre Didier Reynders (et Ministre des affaires étrangères de la Belgique),

Mesdames et Messieurs les ministres,

Excellences,

Mesdames et Messieurs,

Je remercie le Gouvernement et le peuple belges d'avoir organisé cette réunion.

Nous rendons hommage à la mémoire des victimes par le souvenir et la réflexion. Mais c'est peut-être par nos efforts de prévention et de protection que nous les honorons davantage.

Nous avons progressé dans l'exécution de ces responsabilités.

L'avènement de l'ère de la responsabilité est de plus en plus proche.

Des condamnations exemplaires d'anciens chefs d'État qui s'étaient rendus coupables de crimes contre l'humanité révèlent sans équivoque que l'état de droit ne cesse de gagner du terrain.

Le Tribunal pénal international pour le Rwanda – conjointement avec les tribunaux nationaux – a poursuivi les principaux auteurs de tels actes.

Les tribunaux et tribunaux spéciaux pour l'ex-Yougoslavie, le Cambodge et la Sierra Leone ont enregistré des percées analogues dans la lutte contre l'impunité. La responsabilisation a joué un rôle clef en permettant à la Sierra Leone de se lancer dans un processus de relèvement, de réconciliation et de consolidation de la paix.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the face of the violence in Rwanda, the Security Council withdrew the UN peacekeeping operation, thereby taking away the sorely needed international "eyes and ears" on the ground.

The UN was also deeply tarnished by its actions and inactions at Srebrenica.

So we have worked hard to draw on the lessons of those failures.

My Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, Mr. Adama Dieng, and my Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect, Ms. Jennifer Welsh, scan the world for signs of the precursors of genocide and

atrocities, sound the alarm when necessary and work with countries and regions to enhance prevention. They continue our efforts to operationalize this principle, a milestone on its adoption almost a decade ago.

The goal of both is to help build resilient, inclusive, transparent and well-governed societies that protect their people.

The UN's most recent initiative to prevent atrocities is the Rights Up Front exercise. Rights Up Front aims to improve prevention through an intense and early focus on human rights violations. We learned from the case of Sri Lanka. It obliges those within the Organization to be frank in telling Member States what they need to hear, rather than what they might want to hear, about serious violations and emerging crisis situations.

The Rights up Front approach has been on display in recent months in South Sudan, where the United Nations opened the gates of its peacekeeping installations, offering shelter to people fleeing violence.

Twenty years ago, such steps would have been unthinkable. Today, it was done as a deliberate matter of policy – a lesson of Rwanda made real.

The situations remain fragile and tense. These acts of protection could prove unsustainable.

But the broad thrust is clear: more protection, not less. A greater sense of responsibility to act, not less. And ultimately, earlier action, well before situations spin out of control.

Ladies and gentlemen,

No part of the world can consider itself immune to the risk of genocide.

Preventing genocide means establishing legitimate and accountable national institutions that are inclusive and credible in the eyes of the population. It means ensuring that the rule of law is respected and that all human rights are protected, without discrimination. It means eliminating corruption, managing diversity and supporting pluralistic media and strong civil society, including human rights defenders.

I applaud those Member States that have put in place national institutions that focus on the prevention of genocide and other atrocities. I urge others to follow suit and do even more.

I also welcome the efforts states have made to share best practices and strategies. Slowly but surely, we are seeing the emergence of a community of commitment for the prevention of atrocities

Still, we have yet to face the biggest challenge of all: to mobilize political will.

There are grounds for encouragement. No longer can it be claimed that atrocity crimes are only a domestic matter, outside the realm of international concern.

At the same time, there are far more reasons for worry. The international community often proves reluctant to act, at times even when atrocity crimes are happening. The reasons may vary, from competing definitions of national interest, to the complexities and risks of a given situation, to a perceived lack of capacity. There may be little appetite for new financial or military commitments.

But is that sufficient reason to look away? Is that not merely an echo of what we heard twenty years ago?

The conflicts in Syria and the Central African Republic are nightmares for the vulnerable most directly affected. But they are also a challenge to everything we have put in place – the pledges, the mechanisms – to exercise our collective responsibilities to prevent such crimes from happening or recurring.

All of us should be thinking about what more we can do about the atrocity crimes taking place before our eyes -- and what more we can do, much earlier, to keep societies from splintering and descending into destruction and violence.

Mesdames et Messieurs

La prévention du génocide et des atrocités criminelles est un effort de tous les secteurs.

C'est en premier lieu aux gouvernements qu'il appartient de prendre leurs responsabilités fondamentales – à savoir, écouter leur peuple et lui apporter des réponses. À défaut, c'est la communauté des nations qui doit intervenir. Mais à titre individuel, nous avons aussi, chacun d'entre nous, à assumer notre part de responsabilités – en tant que témoins, électeurs, ou citoyens du monde.

Telle est notre tâche, pour chacun d'entre nous, jour après jour. Efforçons-nous, ensemble, de prévenir les atrocités de masse et les crimes contre l'humanité – relançant ainsi un appel pour qu'ils ne se reproduisent plus jamais. Je vous remercie