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New Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect Opens

A new global institute dedicated to improving international responses to genocide and mass atrocities will open in New York on February 14, 2008. The Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect will support a groundbreaking principle agreed to in September 2005 by heads of state from around the world: the international community has a responsibility to take action – diplomatic, legal and as a last resort, military, when a state fails to protect its populations from genocide or mass atrocities. The “Responsibility to Protect” (R2P) is a call to action on behalf of populations at risk, and seeks to eradicate a legacy of inaction that has led to the loss of millions of lives during the Holocaust and in Cambodia, Rwanda, Srebrenica, and Darfur. The Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, an independent research and advocacy organization, will make this doctrine a reality.

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"I welcome the establishment ... of the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect at the Ralph Bunche Institute. The new Centre can become an effective advocate in the struggle to prevent the world's most heinous mass crimes," said UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon.

With support from governments, NGOs and academia, the centre will be officially launched at the United Nations on February 14 and will then be housed at the Ralph Bunche Institute for International Studies at the Graduate Center, the City University of New York. <http://www.GlobalCentrer2p.org> Initially, the center will be funded by the governments of Australia, Belgium, Canada, Netherlands, Norway, Rwanda, and the United Kingdom as well as the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Open Society Institute, and private donors Scott and Elena Lawlor.

The Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect will generate research, conduct high-level advocacy, and facilitate activities of those working to advance the R2P agenda. It will work to:

- gain greater understanding and acceptance of the R2P norm;
- ensure that the R2P norm is invoked accurately and effectively by a wide-range of governmental, international and non-governmental actors;
- advance the debate on the limitations and possibilities of using military force to protect against mass atrocities;
- support endeavors to build capacity to within international institutions, governments, and regional organizations to fulfill their protection responsibilities; and

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- contribute to the mechanisms and strategies necessary to generate an effective political response as new R2P situations arise.

The R2P concept originated in a 2001 report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, and the findings became the basis of the R2P principles adopted by the UN General Assembly at the 2005 World Summit. The commission's co-chairs, Australian Gareth Evans and Algerian Mohamed Sahnoun, will serve as co-chairs of the new Centre's International Advisory Board.

"With a strong North/South character reflected by its links to associated centers throughout the world and affiliated research network," said Evans, "the GCR2P will be a catalyst for implementing the commitment of all countries to protect people around the world from genocide, crimes against humanity, ethnic cleansing, and war crimes."

The timing of the launch coincides with the designation by The Elders of February as "R2P month" as part of a year-long campaign to mark the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

A number of global leaders have pledged their support for the centre, including: Kofi Annan, former secretary-general of the United Nations and Nobel Peace Prize winner; Lloyd Axworthy, president and vice chancellor of the University of Winnipeg, former member of parliament and foreign minister of Canada; Roméo Dallaire, senior fellow at the Montreal Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies, at Concordia University, and force commander of the UN mission to Rwanda; Jan Eliasson, former president of the United Nations General Assembly and foreign minister of Sweden; Joschka Fischer, former minister of foreign affairs (more)
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for Germany; **David Hamburg**, former president of the Carnegie Corporation of New York; **Lee Hamilton**, president and director of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, director of The Center on Congress at Indiana University, longtime U.S. congressman, co-chair of the Iraq Study Group, and vice-chair of the 9/11 Commission; **Prince El Hassan bin Talal** of Jordan; **Sadako Ogata**, president of the Japan International Cooperation Agency, formerly UN High Commissioner for Refugees and chairman of the executive board of UNICEF; **Fidel Valdez Ramos**, former president of the Philippines; **Mary Robinson**, former president of Ireland, founder and chair of Realizing Rights: the Ethical Globalization Initiative and a member of The Elders; **Desmond Tutu**, founder, along with Nelson Mandela and Graça Machel, of The Elders, and Nobel Peace Prize winner.

International Advisory Board co-chairs **Gareth Evans** and **Mohamed Sahnoun** will be joined by: Kwesi Aning, head of the Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution Department Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre; **Kenneth H. Bacon** (president of Refugees International); **Radhika Coomaraswamy** (UN Under-Secretary-General, Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict); **Jan Egeland** (director of the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs); **Rama Mani; Juan Méndez** (president of the International Center for Transitional Justice); **Barbara Stocking** (director of Oxfam); **Ramesh Thakur** (distinguished fellow at the Centre for International Governance Innovation in Ottawa); and Graduate Center Professor **Thomas G. Weiss** (awarded the “Grand Prix Humanitaire de France 2006” and author or editor of some 35 books on international relations).

The Ralph Bunche Institute for International Studies is headed by Thomas G. Weiss, and (more)
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