



High Level Panel and Press Conference on the "Responsibility to Protect"

AU Summit, Accra Ghana 27th June 2007



"The acceptance of the Responsibility to Protect principle is no more than a reaffirmation of the inherent right of citizens to the protection and security of the nation-state. To be legitimate, the exercise of state power by political leaders must ensure the protection of life and property of the citizens in whom reside the sovereign will of the state"

Nana Akufo-Addo, MP

Ghana Minister of Foreign Affairs: Accra, 25 October 2006

On the occasion of the 9th African Union Head of States Summit to be held in Accra, the West African Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) in collaboration with The Civil Society Coalition – Ghana African Union Summit, July 2007, with the support of Oxfam GB is organizing a High Level Panel Discussion on the Responsibility to Protect and a press conference.

BACKGROUND OF THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT

At September 2005's UN World Summit, world leaders made a historic commitment recognizing their collective responsibility to protect civilians from genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing, including a willingness to take enforcement action where the national government – which has primary responsibility – is manifestly failing in this regard. This was a crucial step in building international agreement that sovereignty brings responsibility; that governments must not leave their own citizens unprotected from the worst crimes humanity can commit; that the rest of the world must not turn a blind eye but be ready to take action to save human lives

R2P can then be defined as an emerging international norm, which sets forth that states have the primary responsibility to protect their populations from genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing, but that when the state fails to protect its populations, the responsibility falls to the international community.

The responsibility to protect expresses a commitment to series of actions, from prevention to reaction and rebuilding, with an emphasis on prevention. A 2001 report by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty entitled *The Responsibility to Protect* (R2P) recommended that governments adopt these principles. In September 2005, the international community in the UN Summit declaration endorsed key elements of the *Responsibility to Protect*.

With the World Summit 2005 outcome document, world leaders made a commitment to the responsibility to protect – to take action in response to threats of genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing when governments are unable or unwilling to protect their populations. The responsibility to protect norm is also being advanced as an important principle for collective action by regional organizations to confront threats of violence to populations in their region.

The Responsibility to Protect or similar principles have been incorporated into African regional and sub regional instruments more than in any other region, including in the African Union constitutive act, the ECOWAS Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security, the SADC Protocol on Politics, Defence and Security Co-operation.

Objectives of the Panel

- *Raise awareness of the international commitment on the Responsibility to Protect Civilians in armed conflicts and its relationship to efforts in Africa to prevent conflicts and protect civilians*
- *Engage discussions on how African leaders may use the Responsibility to Protect to mobilize national, regional and international resources to respond efficiently to the ongoing conflicts in the continent.*

Speakers:

- *Hon. Nana Akufo-Addo, MP, Ghana Minister of Foreign Affairs (TBC)*
- *Dr Hon. Usman Bugaje, Former Chairman, House Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, Abuja, Nigeria (TBC)*
- *Dismas Nkunda, Director, International Refugee Rights Initiative, Kampala, Uganda*
- *Emmanuel Bombande, Director, West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP)*

Participants:

- *Key officials in Ghana for the AU Summit*
- *CSOs*
- *Embassies and International Organizations*
- *Media*
- *Parliamentarians*

Contact:

Diana or Elizabeth on 021-221318/88 for further details

Venue: Coconut Groove Regency Hotel, Accra

Date: 27th June, 2007

Time: 3 - 5pm