Mr. President,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the EU and its Member States.

The Candidate Countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Serbia* and Albania*, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

The European Union welcomes the inclusion of today's debate on the Responsibility to Protect in the formal agenda of UNGA 72. It is very topical to discuss our responsibility at a moment when there are allegations of mass atrocities being committed in various corners of the globe.

The European Union, like the United Nations, was born after the horrors of World War II, in a spirit of "never again". The Responsibility to Protect is at the core of our primary goal, namely to allow our populations to live in peace and security. By failing in our Responsibility to Protect, we fail our very reason for being here.

It is a well-established principle that preventing is far more effective than reacting, and this is where the European Union concentrates the implementation of its Responsibility to Protect. Our efforts, and the international community's, must now focus on making prevention more effective. In this context, we support the Secretary-General's broad focus on prevention, which fully resonates with the
European approach to security, as envisaged in the Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy. In the wider agenda of preventing conflict and sustaining peace, atrocity prevention must become central. The ongoing reform of the United Nations should enhance synergies, capacities and accountability across the system, to make it fit to address the multi-sectoral challenges of atrocity prevention.

In this context, the European Union welcomes the focus of this year's Report of the Secretary-General on the Responsibility to Protect "From Early Warning to Early Action". Improving our early warning capacity and, based on our assessments, quickly moving to early action is the key to effective prevention of crimes against humanity, war crimes, genocide and ethnic cleansing. The European Union and its Member States will take all relevant recommendations of the Report under consideration to inform our policies and actions.

The European Union welcomes, in particular, the three-fold strategy for strengthening early action proposed by the Secretary-General in his Report. We will continue strengthening our capacity to prevent atrocities and supporting partner countries in strengthening their own. Through a multi-dimensional approach using all available policies and instruments, the Responsibility to Protect has been made an integral part of the Global Strategy for the European Union's foreign and security policy. Our Conflict Early Warning System includes the risk of mass atrocities into European Union policy considerations. Atrocity prevention has been integrated into our field missions and operations working for the protection of civilians, as well as into capacity building programmes guided by the new European Consensus on Development. We are preparing a dedicated, evidence-based toolkit on atrocity prevention, to provide staff of our diplomatic, military and civilian missions with hands-on knowledge on how they can assess the risks of and what they can do to support atrocity prevention.

In our experience, and as stressed in the Secretary-General's Report, regional organisations can have an added-value in atrocity prevention, thanks to their specific early warning mechanisms, to their conflict prevention and resolution capacities, and to their potential for channelling assessments, good practices and lessons learnt. The European Union encourages relevant regional organisations to embed the principles of Responsibility to Protect in their practice and priorities, and to take appropriate action to help preventing atrocity crimes. Appointing a focal point on the Responsibility to Protect, as the European Union has, would be a useful and necessary step for regional organisations to raise awareness about the principle internally and among their membership, with a view to consolidating and enhancing atrocity prevention activities. The European Union stands ready to share its experience with other regional actors.

Guidance, coordination and support by the United Nations to its Member States are crucial in preventing atrocities. The European Union will continue supporting the Secretary-General's Special Advisers on the Prevention of Genocide and on the Responsibility to Protect in their efforts at mainstreaming prevention of atrocities across the United Nations. We would like to thank former Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect, Ivan Šimonović, for his work in this direction. Following the end of his mandate, we welcome the intention of the Secretary-General to appoint swiftly a new Special Adviser. In our view, the next Special Adviser should preferably have relevant experience in making atrocity prevention operational. Once the next Special Adviser is appointed, we encourage the Secretary-General to allow him/her access to all those information and decision-making processes necessary to inform and support his/her assessments and actions in favour of the Responsibility to Protect.

Mr. President,

As stressed by the Secretary-General in his three-fold strategy, we must continue promoting accountability for atrocity prevention. The European Union and its Member States remain committed
to the efforts to end impunity for mass atrocities at the national and international level. States have 
the primary responsibility to investigate and prosecute crimes committed within their jurisdiction, 
while international courts and hybrid tribunals can play an important role where States are unwilling 
or unable genuinely to do so. We promote actively the universality of the Rome Statute and, through 
our support for the International Criminal Court, we foster capacities for accountability and 
reconciliation, which are key elements for non-recurrence.

Within the system of the United Nations, the Security Council should use all available tools in the 
exercise of its responsibility to protect populations from mass atrocities. The General Assembly, the 
Human Rights Council, and human rights treaty bodies and mechanisms as well as the Security 
Council must also be mobilised in preventing these atrocities. The Secretary-General's "Human Rights 
Up Front" initiative works as an enabler of enhancing system-wide capacity in the United Nations to 
prevent mass violations of human rights and international humanitarian law.

The European Union wholeheartedly endorses the third dimension of the Secretary-General's 
proposed strategy for early action, through expanding civilian action for atrocity prevention. We have 
been encouraging dialogue among a wide spectrum of national and international civil society actors; 
and we have been supporting their efforts in conflict and atrocity prevention, mediation and 
peacebuilding. We support the role that women and youth can play in de-escalating tensions and 
building peace in their communities. We acknowledge the importance of engaging religious leaders 
and faith-based actors in the fight against discrimination of minorities, hate speech and other risk 
factors for mass atrocities.

Mr. President,

The European Union expects a rich and fruitful debate today. We encourage States to voice their 
support to the principle of the Responsibility to Protect; and, once out of this room, to devise and 
exchange views on ways to strengthen preventive capacities. In view of the challenges that the world 
faces today, we would welcome the inclusion of the Responsibility to Protect as a formal item in the 
agenda of the General Assembly's coming sessions.

The European Union has been from the outset a staunch supporter of the principle of the 
Responsibility to Protect. In partnership with other States, and with regional and international 
organisations - in particular the United Nations, we will continue working to make prevention of mass 
atrocities effective, thereby responding to our Responsibility to Protect.

I thank you.

* The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part 
of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

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