

**73rd Anniversary of the Convention on the Prevention and
Punishment of the Crime of Genocide and the International Day of Commemoration and
Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide and of the Prevention of this Crime**

Chair,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Western European and Others Group.

At the 73rd anniversary of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide of 1948, the landmark instrument by which the crime of genocide was codified for the first time under international law, we commemorate and honour all the victims of the Crime of Genocide. Commemorating those who passed away leads us to think of those that witnessed and survived. In the words of Assumpta, a Rwandan genocide survivor:

“I see their faces in my nightmares. They are always running after me, and, when I wake up, it’s as if they are still there. Life will never be the same again for me.”

For the survivors, the only hope for a better tomorrow is to work together towards reconciliation and the assurance that mass atrocity crimes never happen again. This is our shared responsibility. Today, there is a stronger need than ever before to reaffirm our commitment to the 1948 Genocide Convention. A need to prevent, protect and bring those responsible to justice. In this regard, I would like to highlight three points:

First, no country or region is immune to the risk factors for atrocities. We are increasingly concerned about the rising levels of incitement to discrimination, hostility and violence in all its forms, as well as hate speech, xenophobia and other atrocities in many parts of the world. In this context, we welcome the fourth international Global Action Against Mass Atrocity Crimes conference held in November. It offered a multi-stakeholder dialogue on “Strengthening national efforts to address hate speech, discrimination and prevent incitement”. The meeting underlined that we must constantly remind future generations and ourselves what terrible consequences the discrimination and exclusion of others can have.

Second, justice is a central tenet of preventing further atrocities. There are a wide range of tools and measures, judicial and non-judicial, restorative and retributive that help societies and the international community in working towards this goal. Including victims, survivors, family members, youth and women actively in these processes is essential. So is recognising the injustice and the suffering of the victims and survivors of the crime of genocide and holding perpetrators accountable.

Third, the imperative to prevent genocide lies at the heart of the UN’s mission. Strengthening the UN’s capacities for mediation, fact-finding, preventive diplomacy, the peaceful settlement of disputes as well as all efforts to put human rights and tolerance at the core of the organisation’s work, such as through the Secretary-General’s “2020 Call to Action for Human Rights”, are important contributions. The Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect has an important mandate to support national efforts and advance international endeavours to protect populations from genocide and other atrocities,, and strengthening atrocity prevention capacities. We strongly support its work and wholeheartedly thank Special Advisor Alice Wairimu Nderitu and all former Special Advisors on the Prevention of Genocide and the Responsibility to Protect, for their tireless efforts. We also look forward to working with the newly nominated Special Advisor on R2P.

Genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing need to be addressed comprehensively and with the purpose of fostering sustainable peace. We are firmly convinced of the need to strengthen our individual and collective prevention and accountability responses. This will only be possible by promoting tolerance, inclusive societies, respect for human rights, including those of members of minority groups and the rule of law.

I thank you.