



MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN
AFFAIRS OF FINLAND

The Responsibility to Protect, Finland's policy decision 2016

1. The *Responsibility to Protect* (*RtoP* or *R2P*) is a concept that underlines the responsibility of every state and the joint responsibility of the international community to prevent, suppress and halt mass atrocity crimes (genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing).
2. *The Responsibility to Protect* is not a legal term and does not create new legal obligations. Instead, it relies on the existing rules of international law which protect human dignity and the physical integrity of the individual to strengthen the effective implementation of these rules under all circumstances. The implementation of the *RtoP* must always be consistent with international law.
3. Promoting the *RtoP* is one of the priorities in Finland's UN policy. Finland works to consolidate the concept, to strengthen its broad acceptance and to ensure its effective implementation. Finland supports the efforts to limit the use of the right of veto to hamper effective action by the UN Security Council in situations of mass atrocities.
4. Finland supports the work of the UN special advisers on the Responsibility to Protect and on Prevention of Genocide. Finland is a member of the cross-regional Group of Friends of *RtoP* operating in New York and Geneva. Finland participates also in the global network of National Focal Points for *RtoP*. Finland's Focal Point for *RtoP* is placed in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.
5. Finland considers it important that the European Union continues to provide active support to the promotion of *RtoP* while creating and promoting cross-regional partnerships. The EU should use the available tools of, inter alia, early warning, crisis management, and development policy effectively to prevent and suppress mass atrocity crimes. Finland supports the activities of the EU's Focal Point for *RtoP*.
6. Finland emphasises the significance of preventive measures, as well as international cooperation to strengthen the capabilities of states to prevent and suppress mass atrocity crimes. Of major relevance in this respect are conflict prevention, mediation, support to fragile states, strengthening of the rule of law structures and civil society, focusing on the human rights of women and girls as well as other measures strengthening respect for human rights, better use and observation of the analysis produced by human rights mechanisms, as well as countering impunity for the most serious international crimes.
7. While Finland is not a high-risk country for *RtoP*, efforts are required both from the central government and NGOs to prevent social exclusion, support the status of minorities, prevent mounting confrontations in migration issues and combat violent radicalisation and extremism. On the national level, Finland's work to promote *RtoP* is preventive. Finland's national operating models may be of international interest as examples of 'best practices' of the Responsibility to Protect.