



All Party Parliamentary
Group on Genocide
Prevention

All Party Parliamentary
Group on the Great
Lakes Region of Africa

All Party Parliamentary
Group on the United
Nations

Dr. Francis Deng UN Special Advisor on Genocide Prevention

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- ▶ Stephen Crab MP | Chair, APPG on Genocide Prevention and Vice Chair of the APPG on the Great Lakes Region of Africa

We often get criticised in parliament for the proliferation of the number of All Party Groups, but this event with three Groups working together to put on this public event is true collaboration. We are really privileged to be hosting Dr. Francis Deng, UN Special Advisor on Genocide Prevention, a role he has held since May 2007. He has done numerous things over his distinguished career – most recently he was the Director of the Sudan Peace Support Project; he has held Professorships at various prominent universities; and, was Director of the Africa Programme at the Brookings Institute, which he ran for 12 years. He served as Sudan’s ambassador to various countries around the world, and also Minister of State for Foreign Affairs.

One of the areas of particular interest to Dr. Deng which is also of interest to me is the concept of the responsibility to protect (R2P), which the UN has been trying to take forward in recent years. This is a new development in the thinking around international law which Dr. Deng has been at the forefront of pioneering. I look forward to hearing how this can be moved forward and operationalised rather than just being a concept the international community has signed up to, to being a really practical tool for policy making which we know how to implement.

I will now hand over to another distinguished diplomat, Lord Hannay, who will chair this event.

► Lord Hannay of Chiswick | Chair, UN Association of the UK

Just before giving him the floor, it should be known that our guest should really be known as the father of R2P. It was his writing which first began to crystallise this concept; we are very privileged indeed to have him with us. Without further ado, I shall ask him to tell us a little about his work and thoughts.

► Dr. Francis Deng | UN Special Advisor on Genocide Prevention

Thank you very much for the very kind introduction. I have to say this is the last in a long day of presentations and talks, so I hope my words won't come across as tired.

I have to begin with how I got into this position. I received an email message that the Secretary-General was about to decide on and appoint to replace my predecessor, Juan Mendez. He wanted to know if I would consider it should it be offered to me. I said I would consider it a call of duty, and a service to humanity which I cannot take lightly. Four days later my appointment will be announced.

I had to think back to my time as Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Internal Displaced Persons. This is a problematic role: reconciling the word "internal" in terms of conflict and with national sovereignty. This was an issue I felt strongly about, not just as one which affects my home country, but also the entire African continent. Yet, I realised that internal displacement is by its very definition an internal issue, and is therefore a very sensitive issue because it falls under sovereignty. I had to think how to deal with this very provoking and sensitive mandate: I see sovereignty as responsibility.

At the end of the cold war, we had to challenge our perceptions of conflict and how to manage it. We used to see conflict, whether internal or regional, as part of the proxy wars and responsibility of dealing with it lying with the superpowers. When the cold war came to an end, we could begin to see wars in their proper context. By

the same token, we would have to reassess the responsibility to protect – the first layer would have to fall with the states themselves. Our analysis started here and then progressed to the sub-regional, regional and ultimately international level. Concerns of human rights and humanitarianism would become paramount: states can no longer barricade themselves behind sovereignty. I see sovereignty in a positive light: taking responsibility for its people and, where help is required, states should call on the international community. Should people be suffering and dying, and the state is unable to provide protection, the world is not going to watch. They will find one way or another of getting involved. The best way to protect your sovereignty is to live up to your responsibility.

This link between sovereignty as responsibility and the responsibility to protect has been made by the Secretary-General on many occasions.

Genocide is such a heinous crime we would expect humanity to be totally united in its prevention. As the same time, it is such a sensitive issue people tend to be in denial. For those who perpetrate genocide, it is understandable they will be in denial, but those called upon to stop it are also in denial. The idea of intervention carries certain risks which is why cases of genocide take place. This is why it is so important to place the emphasis on prevention, demystifying the whole idea of genocide.

When I come with a title of Special Advisor on Genocide Prevention people – even my own colleagues inside the United Nations – find it complicates their work. Whether they are working in human rights, dealing with development, diplomatic engagement in order to solve problems, mediating in order to resolve conflicts, genocide is something they don't want to touch. One of the things we have been trying to do is to demystify genocide and bring it down to the level of what it is: an extreme form of identity related conflict. It is not the nature of the differences that generate conflict but the implication of those differences: sharing power and wealth, discrimination, marginalisation, exclusion, denial of rights, which causes reaction and violent rebellion.

It is often said the war on terror means most rebellions are led by warlords and people with little or no cause. It is true there are obvious warlords and rebel leaders who exploit this, but it is my belief that people don't go to war to kill or risk being killed without some completion. It is only when peaceful methods have been exhausted that people feel compelled to resort to other means.

If identity related conflict based on diversity, disparity or inequality are the point of entry, then you would say almost all countries in the world have the potential for that kind of identity related conflict. There is nowhere that that is total homogeneity. Even where you have homogeneity like we say about Somalia, you have identities based on clan systems – these become sources of conflict. We know what that means in Somalia. The potential for identity conflict is global. Not all countries diverse have genocidal wars. We have countries that perform well, and countries that perform dismally. We can study cases to develop models of good practices which can be emulated, and countries which provide us with models to be avoided. We have been working on a framework of analysis which looks at eight sets of factors, give us a lens to analyse countries, and the potential for genocidal explosions. We have been doing this in consultation with a number of experts in the field who have been developing their own indicators. This is just about to be finalised, it will be a living document we will revisit it from time-to-time and reassess in light of what we are finding on the ground. When fully finalised it could even be used as a preventive tool, for states to look at themselves in the mirror and ask “how am I performing? Where are we risking the potential for genocide? What do we need to do to correct the slide into genocide?”

Our mandate is to collect information, analyse it, and make recommendations to the Secretary-General and through him to the Security Council. By the same token we work as a catalyst to alert those in a position to respond as an early warning mechanism. Preventions, whether it is IDPs or genocide, is everyone's responsibility. We need to mobilise those who are equipped to do the job which needs to be done.

Using the framework we will be monitoring developments globally. We classify countries into those where there are no problems where we don't need to put time and those who have problems which aren't yet exploded, where we get engaged

first of all using the notion of sovereignty as responsibility. That means to press on governments that their legitimacy and position in the international community depends largely on discharging responsibility. No one really quarrels with this, but do they fully recognise what that entails? What is expected of them? What would happen to their standing in the international community by failing to live up to those standards? This is what we want to press upon them in a constructive way. If you need help call on the international community, but where people are dying the world is not going to watch.

Sovereignty as responsibility and the responsibility to protect rest on these three tiers: state responsibility, support for the state to build capacity, and the responsibility of the international community to intervene where required through all means available – and as a very last resort, military action. Countries of the third world fear that R2P will be a tool for more powerful countries to intervene where they like. This is often misplaced, in reality the reluctance of powerful states to intervene in the weaker ones is what prevails. The problem is the reverse – reticence and reluctance. Peacekeeping operations today are mostly run by third world countries for obvious reasons. States do not want to risk the lives of their young people unless there is a strong national interest or the country where you are intervening is so weak that there is hardly any risk.

Myself and my colleagues on R2P have been asked to create a joint office, initially co-existing in some hybrid form, but ideally fully integrated to build on the framework of analysis. It is longer than I intended, but I will stop here and wait for questions.

Thank you.

► Lord Hannay of Chiswick

Well thank you very much, that's a wonderful introduction to a very complex and difficult subject which you know so much about.