



**Strategies for Preventing Genocide and Mass Atrocities**

**Talking Points by Francis M. Deng**

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**I. Introductory Remarks:**

As some of you may know, I spent several pleasant and productive years as the Sudanese Ambassador to Ottawa in the late 1970s and early 1980s. It is a great pleasure to be *back* in Ottawa and address this meeting that is sponsored by the All-Party Group for the Prevention of Genocide and Other Crimes Against Humanity.

Many thanks to MP Paul Dewar for generously hosting this event; to the vice-chairs of the Group, in particular my colleague Senator Romeo Dallaire, who is a member of the UN Advisory Committee on the Prevention of Genocide; and to Parliamentarians for taking time out of their very busy schedule to attend this event. I would also like to acknowledge the many members of civil society who are present today.

**II. Genocide Prevention: An impossible mandate that must be made possible.**

Someone asked me the other day why the U.N. always assigns me such difficult mandates, first the protection of the internally displaced and now the prevention of genocide. My response was that they know that I modestly see my role only as that of a catalyst for others who are more capable to do what needs to be done.

And indeed I see this catalytic role as comprising primarily three functions:

- i. Raising awareness about the generic cause of genocide and other mass atrocities;
- ii. Acting as a mechanism for early warning to the United Nations and the international community;
- iii. And advocating for timely action to prevent or halt genocide and other mass atrocities.

**III. Understanding the Roots of Genocide.**

The 1948 Genocide Convention defines genocide as any of the specified acts committed with the intent to destroy in whole or in part a national, ethnical, racial or religious group. It is obvious from the specified

acts and their intended objectives that genocide is one of the most heinous crimes against which humanity is expected to unite to prevent and punish. For the same reason, it is a most horrific crime which evokes great sensitivity, emotions and denial from both the perpetrators and those who would be called upon to prevent or stop it. This is why the best course of action is prevention at an early stage, before the stakes become so high that denial sets in.

For the same reason, it is also important to de-mystify genocide from being viewed as something too horrific and sensitive for comfortable discussion and therefore to be avoided, to a problem which can be constructively discussed with the objective of finding practical ways for preventing it.

I see genocide as an extreme form of identity-related conflicts, which emanate not from the mere differences, but from the implications of those differences in terms of access to power, resources, services, employment, development and the enjoyment of the rights of citizenship.

In virtually all genocidal situations, society is divided between the in-groups, who enjoy the rights and dignity of citizenship, and out-groups who are discriminated, marginalized, excluded and denied the rights and dignity of citizenship.

It is often the out-group's reaction to these inequalities, and then the counter-reaction by the dominant group, that generate conflict that can escalate to genocide.

**IV. To determine the risk of genocide, we have developed an Analysis Framework which we use to analyze and evaluate any given situation.** The Framework not only provides my office with an objective tool, but can – and we hope will - be used by states and regional/sub-regional organizations for their own preventive purpose.

The core elements of the framework are:

1. Inter-group relations, including records of discrimination and/or other human rights violations against a group.
2. Circumstances that affect the capacity of a state to prevent genocide.
3. Presence of illegal arms and armed elements.
4. Motivations of leading actors; acts which encourage divisions.
5. Dynamic factors and circumstances that tend to perpetration of genocide.
6. Act of genocide themselves.
7. Evidence of intent to destroy in whole or in part.
8. Triggering factors.

The framework was developed through an extensive consultative process involving experts in the field, colleagues within the U.N. and academics and members of civil society.

**Mainstreaming this framework will create a global benchmark by which all relevant actors can assess the risk of genocide, share relevant information, thereby facilitating cooperation amongst early warning mechanisms and agreement on appropriate action to be taken. I encourage states to contribute to these efforts by adopting the Analysis Framework and championing it in their relations with other states and inter-governmental organizations.**

**V. Constructive management of diversity as a preventive strategy.**

Given that one of the root causes of genocide is conflict between different groups as a result of gross inequalities, an obvious preventive strategy must be constructive management of diversity aimed at promoting good governance and equitable distribution of power, resources, services, development opportunities and inclusion of all groups, without discrimination based on national, ethnical, racial or religious identity. The objective must be the creation of a national identity framework with which all groups can identify, with equality and dignity.

**Through this broad approach to structural genocide prevention, it is obvious that Canada contributes to the prevention of genocide through its development assistance, especially in relation to its focus on good governance; the creation of economically equitable societies; and the promotion and protection of human rights. Continued efforts in this regard contribute to global collective efforts toward fulfilling the promise of ‘never again’.**

It should be emphasized that the challenge of preventing genocide is global, as diversity is indeed global; hardly any country can claim to be homogeneous. Even Somalia which was thought to be one of the most homogeneous countries in the world has been torn apart by clan-based identity conflict. The inequalities associated with diversity are also global; it follows that the potential for genocide is equally global. Some perform remarkably well in managing diversity equitably, while others fail dismally. This is why, in addition to generic awareness-raising, it is important to conduct case studies of best practices to be emulated and worse practices to be avoided.

**I would like to applaud Canada’s success in this regard: Canada is a good example of the constructive management of diversity. I am meeting later today with the officials from the Department of Citizenship and Immigration to learn more about how Canada manages its diversity, in view of learning good practices, or lessons learned, that can be shared with nations that face similar challenges. I believe Canada could contribute to generating knowledge and best practices in this regard.**

**VI. The role of regional and sub-regional cooperation in early prevention and preventive action:**

If genocide is a potentially global threat, as I just mentioned, it can be particularly effectively addressed at the regional and sub-regional levels by states that share the consequences of genocidal conflicts in their region.

States are, of course, very sensitive to the suggestion that there could be a risk of genocide in their territory. My approach has therefore been to strengthen collaboration with regional organizations as well as member states to spread awareness of the root causes of genocide and discuss preventive action at a regional level, including early warning mechanisms. In this vein, in Africa, I have been working closely with the African Union: I recently addressed the Panel of Wise and the AU Peace and Security Council. The Panel of the Wise agreed to incorporate the Analysis Framework into its early warning mechanism. I also recently visited West Africa and am developing cooperative relations with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Last week I met with the Organization of American States in Washington DC, and am establishing relations with the European Union. I hope to do the same with the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), in the Horn of Africa, and the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN).

**In this regard, I believe Canada should continue its support for regional and sub-regional organizations in an effort to increase their capacity to prevent and react to situations of concern in their own neighbourhood.**

**VII. I would like to end by again underlining the important role Canada has played and continues to play in preventing genocide and promoting the responsibility to protect. I am most grateful for Canada's continued support for my mandate and the work of my office. I look forward to fruitful discussions on these and other issues during my brief visit to your beautiful capital. Thank you for your kind attention.**