

**International Ecumenical Consultation on „The Responsibility to Protect“  
Summary of discussion in Group 1 on Theological Issues and Church-related Policies  
Konrad Raiser**

The group was moderated by Fernando Enns. In the final session it reported the following summary:

1. R2P: A shift of paradigm?

The R2P discussion appears to imply a shift of paradigm,  
from right to responsibility in the understanding of sovereignty;  
from politics based in the nation state to the international community;  
from an understanding of the constitution of the church as a national body to  
the ecumenical community as the “household of God”.

While this shift would be considered as desirable and necessary, the process of transformation has hardly begun. R2P as a new international norm is far from being accepted among the member states of the UN. Nation states are still the decisive actors and their future role has to be redefined. The ecumenical community has not yet developed the instruments necessary to establish itself as the new level of action.

2. R2P and Christian discipleship

The R2P discussion obliges the churches as the universal body of Christ to redefine their appropriate public role vis-à-vis nation states and the international community. The churches have to overcome the Constantinian captivity seeing themselves as appointed partners of the respective political institutions, sharing in their responsibility for maintaining public order. This implies to articulate afresh the “grammar” of Christian discipleship, i.e. what are the decisive marks of following Christ in a world of violence.

3. Protection

The objective of any action under the R2P norm is to provide protection for people at risk. The primary beneficiaries should therefore be the victims of war crimes, ethnic cleansing, genocide and other massive violations of human rights. However, experience shows that the dynamics of conflicts can turn victims into perpetrators and vice-versa. How do we find out and gain clarity as to whether, how, and when people want to be protected? How to avoid that protection leads to new dependency, rather than strengthening the capacity of people to secure their own protection? How to safeguard protection as an act of solidarity? How to decide when the responsibility for protection shifts from the legitimate authorities of a given community to the international community?

4. Vulnerability

The Norwegian study has shown the intimate links between security and vulnerability. Human vulnerability is the condition for all efforts to provide security. However, even maximum security measures cannot remove the fundamental vulnerability of human life. In fact, it can lead to

mutual isolation and thus undercut the ties within and between communities which are the basis for the sense of trust and security. Vulnerability thus appears as the other side of human openness and of mutual dependency. Actions for improving security must therefore avoid endangering the web of rights and relationships which sustain life in community. Since the effort to attain invulnerability is not only illusory but also destructive of community it is imperative to acknowledge the limits of the R2P norm. The possibility of failure in the effort to provide security and protection has to be considered realistically. Acknowledgement of failure can even strengthen the sense of legitimacy; on the other hand, any claim of moral superiority has to be avoided on the part of those called to exercise the R2P.

##### 5. Just peace

The ecumenical declaration is expected to focus on and to develop the concept of a “just peace”. This will require reopening the discussion about the relationship between peace and justice. In biblical thought both are inseparably related: ‘shalom’ embraces both peace and justice. However, in the effort to shape a viable order of life in community justice and peace can enter into conflict. The concept of a “just peace” calls for a critical re-assessment of traditional notions of both peace and justice. How can this be translated into the context of operating under the R2P norm? Can the responsibility to protect be limited to cases of massive violations of human rights in the sense of threats to the physical integrity of life? How do we deal with other dramatic threats to human security arising from economic “structural violence”? What are the appropriate forms of ‘intervention, reaction, and rebuilding’ in such cases? A “just peace” can only be built on right relationships in community. How can the concepts of “restorative” or “transformative” justice be applied to the search for building a “just peace”.