Third Global Meeting of the Global Action Against Mass Atrocity Crimes
GAAMAC III
23-25 May 2018
Kampala, Uganda

Outcome Document

Introduction

Key actors working on atrocity prevention convened in Kampala, Uganda for the Third Global Meeting of the Global Action Against Mass Atrocity Crimes (GAAMAC) from 23 to 25 May 2018.

GAAMAC is an inclusive, state-led network created in March 2013. GAAMAC is a platform that supports atrocity prevention efforts with an emphasis on domestic and regional policies and architectures. Its role is that of a connector, translating concepts and ideas into concrete initiatives, actions and results on the ground. GAAMAC acts as an efficient platform connected with a large and diverse range of governments, civil society organizations, practitioners, experts and academic institutions. The GAAMAC Steering Group is composed of representatives from governments and civil society organizations.

GAAMAC III, hosted by the Government of the Republic of Uganda, built on previous meetings held in Costa Rica (2014) and in the Philippines (2016). During GAAMAC III, states and civil society representatives worked together to make atrocity prevention a reality within the broader theme of “Empowering Prevention.” Nearly 200 delegates, including 76 representatives from 35 governments, as well as a diverse range of international organizations, national and international civil society organizations, participated.

The Second Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Uganda, Hon. Kirunda Kivejinja, officially opened the meeting and urged participants to work towards concrete outcomes. UN Secretary-General António Guterres, GAAMAC Chair Mô Bleeker, and other distinguished guests encouraged participants to engage vigorously in the important discussions ahead and produce tangible results. UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide Adama Dieng, reminded the assembly that it is a long journey to make prevention a reality; and that in this journey no one shall ever give up.

During the meeting, different formats (plenary sessions, interactive group sessions and workshops) enabled highly interactive participation. Participants discussed the draft manual of the Africa Working Group (AWG) “Best Practices on the Establishment and Management of National Mechanisms for Genocide and Mass Atrocities Prevention.” The draft manual is an initiative that emerged from the GAAMAC II meeting in Manila, the Philippines. This presentation enabled the participants to engage in a
lively group discussion on the design, creation and implementation of national prevention architectures and policies.

The meeting highlighted the importance of sharing prevention success stories, underlining the importance to make visible what often remains invisible. GAAMAC III participants appreciated the “big tent” methodology that allowed participants to horizontally share about challenges and successes in their efforts to promote prevention; it generated a sense of solidarity and belonging to a global community of commitment. Participants felt empowered by the interactions and exchanges throughout the meeting, in particular thanks to the sharing of good practice and lessons learned with state representatives and civil society experts from all over the world.

Participants identified five overarching elements, crucial to the development of national prevention mechanisms:

1) generating political will;
2) ensuring – through parliamentary decision – the necessary resources for implementation;
3) engaging all relevant stakeholders, including relevant ministries, women and youth;
4) counting on and strengthening national leadership and coordination at the local and national level;
5) establishing legal frameworks and establishing shared procedures to allow for informed early action.

The interactive workshops covered a wide range of issues, during which participants identified the following key challenges:

In the last decades, multiple norms, standards and institutions at the national, regional and international levels have emerged in different fields related to atrocity prevention but implementation is failing, often due to a lack of leadership and commitment.

- While it is evident that hate speech, incitement and racism are key early indicators of a dynamic that can potentially lead to the commission of atrocities, parliamentarians and politicians do not easily acknowledge this fact; which poses an obstacle to early and timely prevention efforts.

- Societies that have not dealt with their own legacy of human rights and/or international humanitarian law violations can be exposed to the potential threat of recurrence. Mutually reinforcing initiatives, within a holistic approach combining efforts in the fields of truth, justice, reparations and guarantees of non-recurrence must be taken realized with the view to acknowledge what happened, take responsibilities for the consequences of grave violations, and prevent their recurrence. In the absence of such efforts, the probability of recurrent atrocities is very high.

- International justice is more effective in deterring atrocities when acting in full complementary with national justice systems. Otherwise, any disconnect in this regard can result in an impunity gap and weaken efforts to strengthen rule of law.

- While a variety of early warning mechanisms exist, prevention is most effective when early warning signs are followed by efforts for early understanding, steps towards early decision and
the implementation of early action. For this to happen, clear protocols and procedures must be established at the national and regional level.

- The commission of atrocities leads to forced displacement and refugee flows, which create an enabling environment for the commission of further atrocities. Narrowing definitions of what makes someone a refugee and the absence of solid legal frameworks for displaced populations pose a threat to the life and survival of these populations, to their self-identity and livelihood, as well as for the societies from which they come and where they live.

- Atrocities are also committed in non-conflict contexts as a consequence of other factors that increase the vulnerability of civil populations; for example, climate change creates situations of increasing vulnerability in certain regions as traditional ways of life are disrupted and new violent conflict based on survival and access to resources may emerge and disrupt long-term peaceful coexistence between communities.

**For the prevention of atrocities to be effective,** it is important to implement the following lessons learned:

- Ensure an in-depth understanding of context, history, culture and identify possible root causes with the view to prevent recurrence or dynamics that can lead to atrocities.

- Integrate a gender lens at all levels within atrocity prevention; do not limit efforts to responding to sexual and gender-based crimes, but seek to ensure that gender equality is mainstreamed across prevention.

- Prioritize the meaningful participation of women and girls in designing and implementing prevention efforts.

- Recognize local communities as essential actors in building resilience to atrocities.

- Integrate prevention systems into legal domestic frameworks and ensure their administrative viability and continuity at vertical and horizontal levels; communicate openly about values, strategies and local action.

- Establish strong legal frameworks, as they make national initiatives more effective.

- Strengthen justice efforts and access to justice for victims so to ensure accountability for perpetrators of atrocity crimes.

- Target preventive and capacity-building actions at marginalized, vulnerable and/or at-risk populations, as this can enhance domestic coping capacities.

- Draw important lessons from other fields of prevention where efforts have proven successful, such as public health and response to natural disasters.

- Improve early warning and response through monitoring and evidence-based actions, employing indicators, data collection, systematically and empirically-based analyses.
• Ensure the acknowledgment and implementation of linguistic rights, education and representation for minority groups, including their rights to be protected and treated equally.

• Build capacities within governments and civil society organizations to understand atrocity prevention policy and practice, incorporate civil service education efforts into national agendas and act accordingly.

• Build capacities within governments and civil society organisations to incorporate an atrocity prevention lens in the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the UN Human Rights Council.

• Contribute to historical memory, remembrance and memorialization initiatives in the aftermath of atrocities, in strong cooperation with victims, with the view to promote acknowledgment, social recovery and educate the society at large, in particular youth.

• Contribute to the design and implementation of holistic strategies to deal with the legacy of past atrocities, with mutually reinforcing initiatives in the fields of truth, justice, reparation and structural and institutional reforms to prevent recurrence and promote durable reconciliation.

• Strengthen and further develop national human rights institutional capacities to contribute to atrocity prevention.

• Establish and strengthen appropriate legal and political mechanisms to combat hate speech.

• Enable and support traditional and social media platforms to better monitor and address triggers and escalation of atrocities.

• Integrate religious leaders and other religious actors of different faith traditions in designing and implementing prevention efforts among and with their communities; encourage inter and intra faith dialogue to support the restraint from activities that could contribute to the commission of atrocities.

• Encourage and empower the private sector to actively contribute to the design of prevention strategies, and to actively restrain economic activities that pose serious threats to human rights and could lead to the commission of atrocities.

Ways Forward:

• The GAAMAC community of commitment expressed resolve to pursue its engagement for a world free of atrocities through empowering and engendering atrocity prevention implementation.

• GAAMAC will continue its efforts to mainstream gender into its own work, including by aiming for parity of participation, and a commitment to treat gender as a cross-cutting theme across all agendas.

• Regional groups proposed four regional initiatives to be realized in the coming months and will present their accomplishments during GAAMAC IV. The African Working Group will finalize the
draft Manual *Best practices for the establishment and management of national mechanisms for genocide and mass atrocities prevention* and disseminate it across geographical regions. The Asia Pacific Group has launched an initiative on *Preventing hate speech, incitement and discrimination: Lessons on promoting tolerance and respect for diversity in the Asia Pacific*, on which it will deliver a report with good practices across the region. The Latin American Group will identify the possible establishment of national architectures within its region. The European Group will identify stakeholders active in atrocity prevention and encourage their engagement with GAAMAC and GAAMAC IV.

- GAAMAC IV will take place in Europe in 2020.