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General Assembly

Sixty-first session

Official Records

72nd plenary meeting
Monday, 11 December 2006, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Ms. Al-Khalifa . . . . . (Bahrain)

The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

Agenda item 101

Notification by the Secretary-General under Article 12, paragraph 2, of the Charter of the United Nations

Note by the Secretary-General (A/61/371)

The President: As members are aware, in accordance with the provisions of Article 12, paragraph 2, of the Charter of the United Nations, and with the consent of the Security Council, the Secretary-General is mandated to notify the General Assembly of matters relative to the maintenance of international peace and security that are being dealt with by the Security Council and of matters with which the Council has ceased to deal.

In that connection, the General Assembly has before it a note by the Secretary-General issued as document A/61/371.

May I take it that the Assembly takes note of this document?

It was so decided.

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 101?

It was so decided.

Agenda items 9 and 111

Report of the Security Council (A/61/2)

Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters

The President: As members are aware, the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council was first introduced onto our agenda in 1979, during the thirty-fourth session of the General Assembly.

Discussions on this matter led the Assembly, at its forty-eighth session, to adopt resolution 48/26 of 3 December 1993, by which it decided to establish the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council.

Since January 1994, the Working Group has attempted to reach agreement on the various aspects of that important issue. As members will recall, a number of draft resolutions on the issue of Security Council reform were submitted by several groups of States during the fifty-ninth and sixtieth sessions. As a result, the General Assembly has discussed the issue at a number of informal and formal meetings. That is in addition to the regular general debate on this agenda item and further discussion during the item on follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit. So far, our ongoing efforts have not lead to an agreement on Security Council reform. However, we should not lose

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hope in our ability to make progress on that important matter.

We should also acknowledge the clear mandate to move forward on this issue in the 2005 World Summit Outcome document. Our leaders recommitted themselves to supporting

> "early reform of the Security Council — an essential element of our overall effort to reform the United Nations — in order to make it more broadly representative, efficient and transparent and thus to further enhance its effectiveness and the legitimacy and implementation of its decisions" (*resolution 60/1, para. 153*).

After many years of inconclusive debate on that important matter, I believe that the time has come for us to make a realistic assessment of the whole issue. In so doing, we should be prepared to look at this matter with fresh and open minds so that we can make substantial progress. I therefore look forward to hearing members' concrete proposals and views on how to move ahead on that important reform agenda item.

As the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session, I wish to assure members of my readiness to work with all of them to establish the most appropriate process to enable us to fulfil the challenging task of reforming the Security Council, as mandated by our leaders.

I now give the floor to the President of the Security Council, Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, to introduce the report of the Security Council.

Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of all members of the Security Council, I would like to offer my congratulations to you, Madam, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session. It is my sincere hope that, during your tenure, relations between the Security Council and the General Assembly will continue to develop and strengthen so that each body may discharge its responsibilities in conformity with the vision set out in the Charter of the United Nations.

I have the honour, in my capacity as President of the Security Council for the month of December 2006, to introduce the annual report of the Council to the General Assembly in document A/61/2. The report I present today covers the period from 1 August 2005 to 31 July 2006.

As the annual report shows, the trend of an increasingly busy agenda of the Council has continued during the reporting period. The wide range of issues it addresses covers all the major aspects of the maintenance of international peace and security, including conflicts, threats to peace and security and the United Nations peacekeeping operations established to restore stability in those situations.

During the period under review, the Council met in 259 formal meetings, of which 217 were public, in addition to 24 meetings with troop-contributing countries. The Council held consultations of the whole 191 times. In that period, the Council adopted 81 resolutions and 65 presidential statements. The Council renewed 26 mandates, including those of peacekeeping operations, and created one new mandate, while none were terminated.

The Council also focused on a number of cross-cutting thematic issues, mainly in open thematic debates. Those issues included strengthening international law, small arms, peacekeeping operations, cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations in maintaining international peace and security, women and peace and security, the protection of civilians in armed conflict, and children and armed conflict, concerning which a number of resolutions and presidential statements were adopted.

Aware of the importance of Security Council missions, the Council undertook four such missions during the reporting period. The first was to Central Africa from 4 to 11 November 2005; the second to Ethiopia and Eritrea from 6 to 9 November 2005; and the third to the Sudan and Chad from 4 to 10 June 2006. The latter was undertaken back to back with the forth, which visited the Democratic Republic of the Congo from 10 to 12 June 2006.

The introduction to the annual report, which was prepared by the French delegation in its capacity as President of the Security Council last July, sets out in detail the Council's activities for the reporting period and all the issues that the Council addressed in that period. I would, however, like to highlight some of the most prominent issues that were addressed by the Council.

The African continent continued to receive the attention of the Council. Conflicts in the continent witnessed positive as well as negative developments. The situation in Côte d'Ivoire witnessed several

developments, to which the Council reacted. Although the presidential elections could not be held as planned on 30 October 2005, the Council welcomed the appointment of a new Prime Minister, approved arrangements for the transition period, and invited all Ivorian parties to accelerate the implementation of the road map. It also renewed the mandates of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire and the Panel of Experts.

Elsewhere in West Africa, the situation in Guinea-Bissau and Sierra Leone witnessed positive improvements. In Guinea-Bissau, successful presidential elections were held and the Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in Guinea-Bissau until the end of 2006. In Sierra Leone, positive developments were reflected in the establishment of the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone, pursuant to Security Council resolution 1620 (2005). The Council adopted a resolution to authorize the trial of former Liberian president Charles Taylor by the Sierra Leone Special Court, sitting in The Hague. In Liberia, too, there have been positive developments, which were reflected by the gradual relaxation of the embargo imposed by the Council. The Council also renewed the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Liberia and the Panel of Experts.

The precarious situation in the Great Lakes region continued to be a concern for the Council. In an open debate held on 27 January, the Council stressed the need for the disarmament and demobilization of armed groups in the region. The mandate of the United Nations Operation in Burundi (ONUB) was extended a final time to 31 December 2006, and the Council remained seized of the situation in Burundi and in the neighbouring Democratic Republic of the Congo. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, one of the main concerns of the Council was to create an environment conducive to the successful holding of presidential and parliamentary elections, including by increasing the military and civilian police strength of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the redeployment of ONUB personnel.

The situation in the Sudan was one of the issues that the Council debated extensively during the reporting period. As the situation in Darfur continued to be a cause of concern, the Council supported the Abuja peace talks, welcomed the Darfur Peace Agreement and called for its implementation. In a May 2006 presidential statement, the Council endorsed African Union decisions on the transition to a United Nations force in Darfur.

The Council called for the implementation of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission's decision and full cooperation with the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea. Also in the Horn of Africa, the situation in Somalia was further complicated by increasing militarization and the inability of the Transitional Federal Institutions to cope with the discord. The Council welcomed the talks and the agreement reached between the Transitional Federal Government and the Union of Islamic Courts; at the same time, the Council began consideration of authorizing an African peace support mission in Somalia.

Another region receiving considerable attention from the Council was the Middle East, where turmoil and violence escalated. Regarding Iraq, the Security Council on several occasions expressed concern at the ongoing violence in the country, while noting on other occasions the positive constitutional and electoral developments there. The Council extended the mandate of the Multination Force for 12 additional months.

The Council continued to receive monthly briefings from the Secretariat about the situation in the Middle East, including the question of Palestine, where the security and humanitarian situation had deteriorated considerably due to the escalation of violence, which threatened to further derail the peace process. On 24 August 2005, the Council heard in a public meeting a briefing following the Israeli disengagement from Gaza and parts of the West Bank, and issued a press statement emphasizing the importance of full disengagement as a first step towards resumption of the peace process. In a presidential statement of 23 September, the Council supported the most recent statement by the Quartet in that regard. In another presidential statement, the Council welcomed the successful opening of the Rafah crossing between Gaza and Egypt. This year, in a statement by the President, after congratulating the Palestinian people on holding legislative elections, the Council failed to reach agreement on a number of presidential and press statements that it considered on the situation in the Middle East. The Council also failed to adopt a draft resolution on the situation in the Middle East.

As violence escalated in the Gaza Strip, hostilities erupted across the Israeli-Lebanese border in July, causing a large number of casualties in a short time, which prompted the Security Council to express its shock at the firing by the Israeli Defence Forces on a United Nations observer post and, three days later, at the shelling of a residential building in southern Lebanon. The political situation in Lebanon also received the attention of the Security Council, which held a public meeting on 21 April in which the Lebanese Prime Minister participated, and continued to monitor the implementation of resolution 1559 (2004). Also concerning Lebanon, the Council continued to receive updates from the International Independent Investigation Commission regarding the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri. While supporting the work of the Commission, the Council adopted resolution 1664 (2006) requesting the Secretary-General to negotiate an agreement with the Government of Lebanon aimed at establishing a tribunal of an international character.

On Haiti, the main issue addressed by the Council was the holding of presidential elections. The Council held a public debate on 27 March in the presence of the President-Elect of Haiti, René Préval, and adopted two presidential statements congratulating him on his election and on his inauguration. The Council had earlier stressed the importance of conducting transparent, free and fair elections.

Regarding Afghanistan, the final milestone of the Bonn process was reached when successful parliamentary and provincial elections were held in September 2005, which was welcomed in a press statement issued by the President of the Council. Another important event regarding Afghanistan was the London Conference, whose outcome, the Afghanistan Compact, was endorsed by the Council in its resolution 1659 (2006).

Elsewhere in Asia, political unrest in Timor-Leste required the deployment of defence and security forces by Portugal, Australia, New Zealand and Malaysia, which was supported by the Council. Furthermore, the Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Office in Timor-Leste.

The Council considered a number of issues in Europe. It received briefings on the progress of the political process to determine Kosovo's future status. The Council twice renewed the mandate of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus for a period of six months. The Council was briefed, including in a public meeting held on 18 April in the presence of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina, on the implementation of the Peace Agreement in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the results achieved in the country's goal of full integration into European structures. The Council also remained seized of the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia.

On 15 July, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 1695 (2006), by which it demanded that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea suspend all activities related to its ballistic missile programme and re-establish its pre-existing commitments to a moratorium on missile launching. The next resolution adopted by the Council was resolution 1696 (2006). The resolution, which was adopted on 31 July 2006, noted that the Islamic Republic of Iran had not complied with the requirements set out by the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency and reiterated in the presidential statement it had adopted on 29 March. The resolution determined that Iran should suspend all enrichment-related and reprocessing activities and expressed the intention of the Council, in the event that Iran did not comply, to adopt measures under Article 41 of the Charter.

Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorists acts was an issue of priority to the Council. Resolution 1624 (2005) was adopted on 14 September 2005 at a Security Council summit attended by heads of State or Government, calling on all States to prohibit by law incitement to commit terrorist acts. At that meeting, the Security Council also adopted resolution 1625 (2005) on the prevention of conflict, particularly in Africa.

The Council continued the tradition of hearing joint briefings by the Chairmen of subsidiary Committees whose work relates to counter-terrorism: the Committees established pursuant to resolution 1267 (1999) concerning Al-Qaida and the Taliban and associated individuals and entities; resolution 1373 (2001) concerning counter-terrorism; and resolution 1540 (2004). The Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004) submitted its final report to the Council on 27 April 2006, and its mandate was extended for another two-year period by resolution 1673 (2006).

Following the decision of the September 2005 World Summit to establish the Peacebuilding Commission, the Council adopted resolutions 1645 (2005) and 1646 (2005), which operationalized that decision, and decided that the permanent members of the Council would be members of the Organizational Committee of the Peacebuilding Commission, together with two non-permanent members.

Finally, the Security Council, by its resolution 1691 (2006), recommended to the General Assembly that the Republic of Montenegro be admitted to membership in the United Nations.

I would like to point out that the format of the report now before the General Assembly corresponds to the provisions incorporated in the note by the President of the Council of 19 July 2006 (S/2006/507) in order to enhance the utility of the report.

The Security Council, eager to improve its working methods, continued to focus on that issue in order to make its work more effective and efficient. In that regard, the members of the Council endorsed the note by the President in document S/2006/507, summarizing the achievements of the Council's Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions since January 2006. The members of the Security Council were committed to transparency, outreach and effective interaction with the membership of the United Nations at large. In that spirit, as many public meetings of the Council as possible were held, and the Council coordinated closely with the former President of the General Assembly regarding the recommendation for the appointment of the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

In conclusion, on behalf of all Security Council members, I should like to thank members of the Assembly for this opportunity to introduce the Council's report. I would also like to express the appreciation of all Security Council members for the work of the Secretary-General and the Secretariat, and for their professionalism and invaluable support to the Security Council so that it might best fulfil its role.

Mr. Malmierca Díaz (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to address the General Assembly on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

First, we thank Ambassador Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar and President of the Security Council for December, for his introduction of the report of the Security Council. I avail myself of this opportunity to acknowledge, on behalf of NAM, the excellent job that Qatar is doing as a member of the Council.

The report of the Security Council was approved by that organ just last Wednesday, less than a week ago, and published as an official document just a few days ago. NAM considers that this very late submission of the report does not contribute to its deep and comprehensive consideration by the General Assembly. We sincerely hope that this situation will not recur in the future. This is a very important item on our agenda and all Member States need a reasonable period of time to prepare for this debate.

NAM notes that this year the report has a format and approach very similar to last year's. Clearly, much more should be done regarding the contents of the report. We call on the Security Council to submit a more comprehensive and analytical annual report to the General Assembly, assessing the work of the Council, including such cases in which the Council has failed to act, as well as the views expressed by its members during the consideration of the agenda items under its consideration. We also call on the Security Council, pursuant to paragraph 1 of Article 15 and paragraph 3 of Article 24 of the Charter, to submit special reports for the consideration of the General Assembly. The Presidents of the Security Council should also ensure that their monthly assessments are comprehensive, analytical, and issued in a timely fashion.

We oppose the tendency to equate reform of the United Nations with greater empowerment of the Security Council, mindful of the need to maintain the balance among the functions and powers of the principal organs of the United Nations. The Security Council must fully observe all provisions of the Charter and all General Assembly resolutions that clarify its relationships with that organ and other principal organs. In this context, we reaffirm that Article 24 of the Charter does not necessarily provide the Security Council with the power to address issues that fall within the functions and powers of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, especially in the areas of establishing norms, legislation and definitions, bearing in mind that the primary task of the Assembly in the progressive development of international law is its codification.

We would call attention to the danger of encroachment by the Security Council on issues that clearly fall within the functions and powers of other principal organs of the United Nations and their subsidiary bodies. Moreover, close cooperation and coordination among all the principal organs is absolutely indispensable so that the United Nations can remain relevant and able to meet existing, new and emerging threats and challenges.

The Movement of Non-Aligned Countries reiterates that a decision by the Council to initiate formal or informal discussions on the situation in any State Member of the United Nations or on any issue that does not constitute a threat to international peace and security violates Article 24 of the Charter.

In this context, NAM urges the Presidents of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council to meet periodically to discuss and coordinate among themselves regarding the agendas and programmes of work of the respective principal organs that they represent. We also call on the Security Council to take fully into account the recommendations of the General Assembly on matters relating to international peace and security, consistent with Article 11, paragraph 2 of the Charter.

We will oppose and stop attempts to shift issues on the agenda of the General Assembly or the Economic and Social Council to the Security Council and will oppose usurpation by the Security Council of the functions and powers of the Assembly.

The Non-Aligned Movement expresses its grave concern over instances when the Security Council has not tackled cases involving genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes or ceasefires between parties in fulfilment of its primary responsibility in that respect. We stress that in instances when the Security Council has not fulfilled its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, the General Assembly should take appropriate measures in accordance with the Charter to resolve the issue.

The Movement remains concerned at the lack of progress in the discussions in the General Assembly on the issue of Security Council reform. The discussions have shown that while a convergence of views has emerged on a number of issues, major differences still exist on many others. While there has been some improvement in the Council's working methods, they have not satisfied even the minimum expectations of the general membership of the United Nations. So there is much room for improvement.

Reform of the Security Council should not be confined to the issue of the number of its members; it should address substantive issues relating to the Council's agenda, working methods and decision-making process.

In recent years, the Security Council has been too quick to threaten or authorize coercive action in some cases while being silent and inactive in others. Moreover, the Council has increasingly been resorting to Chapter VII of the Charter to seize issues that do not necessarily pose an immediate threat to international peace and security.

Instead of excessive and abrupt use of Chapter VII, efforts should be made to fully utilize the provisions of Chapters VI and VIII for the peaceful settlement of disputes. Chapter VII should be invoked, as was intended, as a measure of last resort. Unfortunately, resort to the provisions of Articles 41 and 42 have in some cases been too quick when the other available options had not yet been fully exhausted.

Sanctions imposed by the Security Council remain an issue of serious concern for non-aligned countries. In accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, sanctions should be considered only when all means of peaceful settlement of disputes under Chapter VI have been exhausted and when the short-term and long-term impact of such sanctions have been thoroughly considered.

The objectives of sanctions are not to punish the populace or take reprisals against them. The objectives of sanctions regimes should be clearly defined, have a specified timeframe and be based on tenable legal grounds. Sanctions should be lifted as soon as the objectives are achieved.

The Non-Aligned Movement considers that transparency, openness and consistency are key elements that the Security Council must observe in all its activities, approaches and procedures. Regrettably, on numerous occasions, the Council has neglected these important factors. Such instances include unscheduled open debates with selective notification, reluctance to convene open debates on some issues of great significance, and restricting participation in some of the open debates. The Council must comply with the

provisions of Article 31 of the Charter, which allows any State not a member of the Council to participate in discussions on matters affecting it. Closed meetings and informal consultations should be kept to a minimum and as the exception that they were meant to be.

It is the position of NAM that the objectives of Council reform should be addressed in a comprehensive, transparent and balanced manner and should include the following: ensuring that the Council's agenda reflects the needs and interests of both developing and developed countries equally in an objective, rational, non-selective and non-arbitrary manner; ensuring that the enlargement of the Council will lead to its being more democratic, more representative, more accountable and more effective; ensuring that the Council's rules of procedure, which have remained provisional for over 50 years, are formalized in order to improve its transparency and accountability; and democratizing the decision-making process in the Council, including by limiting and curtailing the use of the veto with a view to its eventual elimination. In this context, the concept of voluntary self-restraint is insufficient and cannot be considered an option.

Among additional options that might be considered are the following: limiting the exercise of the right of veto to actions taken by the Council under Chapter VII of the Charter; the possibility of overruling the veto within the Council by an affirmative vote of a certain number of member States, commensurate with the size of an expanded Council; and possible overruling of the veto by a two-thirds majority vote in the General Assembly under the Uniting for Peace procedure and under a progressive interpretation of Article 11 and Article 24, paragraph 1, of the Charter.

The Non-Aligned Movement emphasizes the need for the following measures to be taken: calling upon the Council to increase the number of public meetings and ensuring that these meetings provide real opportunities to take into account the views and contributions of the entire membership of the United Nations, particularly countries not members of the Council whose affairs are under consideration in the Council; and calling upon the Security Council to allow briefings by the special envoys or special representatives of the Secretary-General and by the Secretariat to take place in public meetings, except in extraordinary circumstances. We call upon the Council to continue to strengthen its relationship with the Secretariat and with the troop-contributing countries through, inter alia, sustained, regular and timely interaction. We request the Council to ensure that its subsidiary organs function in such a way as to provide sufficient and timely information on their activities to all United Nations Members.

I should like to conclude by expressing our best wishes for success to the new members of the Security Council: Belgium, Indonesia, Italy, Panama and South Africa. The Council can always count on the willingness of the Non-Aligned Movement to participate constructively in consultations on these issues and to work for the democratization of the Security Council as an effective forum in the maintenance of international peace and security.

Mr. Kryzhanivskyi (Ukraine): I have the honour to speak today on behalf of the GUAM countries, namely, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

First of all, I would like to express our gratitude to Ambassador Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser of Qatar for presenting the report of the Security Council (A/61/2). The period under review became yet another challenging juncture for the United Nations and a test of the relevance of the international system of collective security, safeguarded by the Security Council. Let me briefly highlight some points of particular concern for the GUAM member States in that regard.

Without doubt, international terrorism continues to pose one of the greatest threats to international peace and security. Recent terrorist attacks around the world remind us that that menace is ever present. We are convinced that the Security Council should continue to use its unique potential in mobilizing the international community to fight the scourge of terrorism. The Counter-Terrorism Committee should remain a crucial instrument in the hands of nations in eliminating terrorism.

Another major challenge to the system of collective security stems from the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. It is with deep concern that we learned about the nuclear test by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The GUAM countries add their voice to the international appeal to Pyongyang to cease its nuclear and missile programmes and to renew dialogue with the

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), as well as to all States involved to do their utmost to resume the six-party negotiations.

We are also concerned by the findings contained in the latest report of the IAEA Director General on Iran's nuclear programme. We believe that the international efforts to find a negotiated solution to that problem should continue in order to strengthen confidence in the exclusively peaceful purpose of that programme. In general, the States of GUAM firmly believe that the Security Council must continue to play a major role in multilateral efforts to strengthen the non-proliferation regime. In that regard we fully support Security Council resolutions 1540 (2004) and 1718 (2006).

The work of the Security Council on the Iraq issue should be commended. We reaffirm our support for the efforts of the Council, the United Nations in general and the Government of Iraq to stabilize the situation in the country and to promote national reconciliation and a peaceful political process. We underline the importance of continued and enhanced international support for Iraq's sovereign Government at this crucial time.

The situation in the Middle East is a source of deep concern for the GUAM countries. Recent events in Lebanon and the continuing Israeli-Palestinian crisis have shown the need for more decisive efforts by the Security Council to restore peace and stability in that region. The GUAM delegations commend the Council's efforts aimed at the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006). Establishing a robust United Nations peacekeeping force with a focus on the principles of a permanent ceasefire and a long-term solution, and entrusting the Secretary-General with significant authority in peacemaking are laudable innovations in the Council's overall approach to the region's problems.

As the issue of Kosovo remains at the forefront of United Nations stabilization efforts in the Balkan region, we welcome the direct negotiations between Belgrade and Pristina on defining the political status of the province, conducted under the auspices of Mr. Ahtisaari, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General. In that regard, it is important to ensure that the Security Council's eventual decision on the final status of Kosovo not impose a solution; rather, such a decision must be taken only with the clearly expressed consent of both parties concerned.

With regard to Africa, we believe that there is an urgent need to find a mutually acceptable formula that will make full use of the United Nations peacekeeping capacity, with the aim of an early settlement of the crisis in Darfur.

Over the past few years, cooperation between the Security Council and regional organizations has been considerably expanded, strengthened and developed in constructive ways. Our States believe that the United Nations and regional organizations should harmoniously complement each other and use their respective advantages. The GUAM States underline the need to enhance such cooperation in the sphere of resolving the protracted conflicts in the territories of Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Azerbaijan, which have already been under way for more than 15 years. It is crucially important that the international community — in particular the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) — continue to take practical steps to settle those conflicts, which are among the most serious obstacles to stability, democracy and economic prosperity in the region.

In that regard, we call for the implementation of the resolutions of the Security Council and the decisions of the OSCE on the conflicts in Nagorny Karabakh, Azerbaijan and Abkhazia, Georgia, as well as the realization of the plan for a peace settlement of the conflict in South Ossetia, Georgia, offered by the President of Georgia, and the initiative by the President of Ukraine on Transdniestria, Moldova, entitled "Towards a settlement through democracy".

We note with satisfaction the reaffirmation in the Council's resolution 1716 (2006) of the commitment of all Security Council members to the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders, as well as support by the Council for the principles contained in the paper on Basic Principles for the Distribution of Competencies between Tbilisi and Sukhumi. The States members of GUAM are pleased to note the interest of the Security Council in the additional ideas of the sides with a view to conducting, creatively and constructively, a political dialogue under the aegis of the United Nations.

Now let me turn to the issue of Security Council reform. GUAM considers reform of the Security Council to be of exceptional international significance. Making that body more representative and balanced and its work more effective and transparent, especially with regard to decision-making, is vital in adapting the United Nations to the realities of the twenty-first century.

Our position on that issue stems from the joint letter issued by the Eastern European Group (A/59/723) in response to the recommendations of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change concerning the enlargement of the Security Council. It is our conviction that the provisions of that letter are fully applicable at the current stage of the negotiating process. Existing regional groups should be maintained in the process of Security Council reform, and any increase in the non-permanent membership of the Security Council should ensure enhanced representation of the Eastern European Group by the allocation to the said Group of at least one additional non-permanent seat in the enlarged Council. In that respect, we proceed from the fact that, since 1991, the Eastern European Group's membership has more than doubled.

In addition, we believe that the enlargement of the Security Council is to be carried out in both categories, permanent and non-permanent. The GUAM States are of the view that structural changes in the Security Council should go hand in hand with the improvement of its working methods towards increasing their effectiveness and transparency. In particular, those countries that contribute most to the Organization — militarily, diplomatically and financially — should be more involved in the Security Council's decision-making process. In that regard, we recognize the results of the activity of the Council's Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Question, contained in the note by the President of the Security Council in document S/2006/507, as a step in that direction. Still, in our opinion, there is a lot of room for improving the Council's interaction with the wider United Nations membership, in particular in the triangular relationship between the Security Council, the Secretariat and the troop-contributing countries, as well as in the application of sanctions.

Let me conclude by stressing the GUAM member States' full commitment to addressing the twofold challenge facing the United Nations today — strengthening the multilateral system of collective security and bringing the Security Council, as its central element, in line with today's realities and demands.

Mr. Hackett (Barbados): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) that are Members of the United Nations on agenda items 9 and 111 on the report of the Security Council and on the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters.

CARICOM member States would like first to thank Ambassador Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, the Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar and current President of the Security Council, for his detailed presentation of the report of the Security Council. The report was issued only at the end of last week. We therefore have not had very much time to review it or to have meaningful consultations within the group. Thus, our comments on the report are very preliminary in nature. I hope that Member States will have a further opportunity to discuss that important report of the Security Council, should that be necessary. I would also wish to add that timely submission of reports would assist the General Assembly in performing its role as envisaged in the most recent resolution on the revitalization of the Assembly. If Member States are to be able to deliberate fully and effectively on issues before the Assembly, then the Secretariat — and the Security Council itself in the case of its own report — must assume the responsibility for issuing the documentation for each item of the Assembly in a very timely manner.

I would also wish to express our appreciation for the report of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council, which, although it was submitted to the Assembly towards the end of the sixtieth session, I recognize as relevant to this particular debate. We are particularly pleased to offer special congratulations to Ambassadors Paulette Bethel of the Bahamas and Frank Majoor of the Netherlands, the two Vice-Chairs of the Working Group, for their work in leading the consultations over the past year.

Once again, most of the work of the Security Council in 2006 was focused on Africa, and we applaud the efforts of the Council to bring peace and stability to the conflicts in that region of the world. The countries of CARICOM particularly welcome the attention that the Council has paid to the situation in Haiti and the support provided to the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti. We would ask that the Council continue to remain engaged in Haiti and provide the new leadership of Haiti with the time and support necessary to establish and build a durable peace and a good basis for sustainable development.

The format of the report of the Council does not contain any assessment of the work of the Council. We believe that such an assessment is essential if the General Assembly is going to have a meaningful and analytical consideration of the work of the Security Council. For example, in the section of the report on the work of the subsidiary bodies, the Assembly is informed that the mandate of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004) was extended for a period of two years in its resolution 1673 (2006). It would have been very useful for Member States to receive some analysis of the situation in fulfilling the mandate of resolution 1540 (2004) and in learning what further work needed to be done within the context of the new resolution 1673 (2006). Reporting on those issues creates a heavy burden on small Member States, and we would like to see that burden lifted with the cessation of the need for such frequent reports.

Turning now to the reform of the Security Council, CARICOM member States are concerned that the General Assembly has been unable to reach agreement to date on reform of that major organ of the United Nations. We continue to believe that reform of the Security Council is part of the larger reform of the United Nations and is therefore critically important for completing the reform of the United Nations. We all therefore need to redouble our efforts to reach agreement on that important issue, hopefully by the end of the sixty-first session of the Assembly.

The consultations over the past 18 months, and particularly during 2005, have helped, we believe, to provide useful parametres for identifying some of the desired elements of the reform of the Security Council. We should therefore be able to build on those earlier consultations by re-examining earlier options, formulating fresh ideas and forging an agreement that would attract the support of the wider membership of the Organization. We should view 2007 as a new and, hopefully, final chapter in the search for a solution to Security Council reform.

In that regard, I offer for the consideration of this Assembly some of the views of CARICOM member States on that issue. CARICOM has been consistent in its call for an increase in membership of the Security Council in both the permanent and non-permanent categories, and particularly for greater representation of the developing countries in the Council. We therefore would like to suggest that, in any model for increase in the membership of the Security Council, there should be equity of access on the Council for small States of the Organization.

Few issues on the question of Security Council reform have proven to be as intractable as the question of the veto. CARICOM believes that the veto is an anachronism and should be abolished. If that is not immediately possible, there should be an agreement that the veto should be used with utmost restraint and limited to actions taken under Chapter VII of the Charter.

CARICOM is also of the view that, whereas sanctions may at times constitute a legitimate and necessary tool for the enforcement by the Council of measures to maintain international peace and security, those should be imposed only as an absolute last resort; they should be time-bound and accompanied by a clear exit strategy. Further, CARICOM stresses that special care and attention need to be given to the design and implementation of sanctions in order to avoid or at least minimize their negative impact on civilian populations.

CARICOM member States welcome a review clause in the working procedures of a reformed Security Council. Such a review could take into account criteria relevant to the obligations of Council members and should be undertaken periodically — possibly every 10 or 15 years — as a means of ensuring that the Council is fully responsive to the concerns and realities of Member States and, indeed, of the global community.

CARICOM is convinced that meaningful reform of the working methods of the Council is integral to the comprehensive reform of the Security Council. Critical to the reform of the Security Council is therefore the need for greater transparency and openness in the

working methods of the Council. We therefore appreciate greatly the report of the co-Chairs of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council, to which I referred earlier. While we had hoped for greater progress in the work of the Working Group, we nevertheless believe that the report represents a good basis for moving to the next phase of more intense consultations and their successful conclusion by the end of this session. We support the draft decision in the report that calls for the continuation of the Open-ended Working Group and the submission of its report to the General Assembly before the end of this session.

We further support the call for more frequent open debates of the Security Council to allow for greater inclusiveness and participation of all non-member States and for increased and comprehensive Council briefings to non-members as a means of keeping all delegations fully informed of Security Council activities.

Finally, in the 2005 Summit Outcome Document, heads of States and Government agreed that early reform of the Security Council was an essential element of our overall effort to reform the United Nations in order to make it more broadly representative, efficient and transparent. CARICOM believes that member States need to take a decision on that matter at least by the end of the sixty-first session of the Assembly if we are to implement that aspect of the Summit Outcome Document without much further delay. We therefore stand ready to participate in the consultations that we hope will begin in the early part of the new year.

Mr. Al-Shamsi (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the delegation of the United Arab Emirates, I would like to thank you, Madam, for your wise management of this important meeting. I also thank the former Chairman of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council and his two Vice-Chairs for their outstanding efforts in leading the meetings of the Group at the sixtieth session. I also wish you success in carrying out your important work and in achieving consensus on strengthening the role and effectiveness of the Security Council in maintaining international peace and security.

We further thank the representative of Qatar, the President of the Security Council for this month, for his valuable and comprehensive report on the work of the Security Council. We also support the statement made earlier by the representative of Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Despite the broad support declared by the Member States for this question — either during the extensive consultations carried out by the General Assembly and geographical groups soon after the release of the report of the Secretary-General on reform entitled “In larger freedom”, or throughout the work of the Open-ended Working Group since its establishment in 1993 — that matter continues to involve many complexities owing to ongoing differences of opinion among the Member States and their inability to date to find common ground for implementing that important part of the comprehensive reform process of the United Nations. That is particularly true in connection with the suggested format and size of the Council’s membership, the regional distributions, the criteria of permanent members and their powers, the decision-making process, accountability, and other necessary measures and procedures that should be used to regulate the use of the veto, which has obstructed the adoption of many important resolutions dealing with the grave security threats that continue to confront our world.

Anyone involved in the work of the Security Council, especially in the past 15 years, must take pause before the inconsistent and double-standard policies followed by the Council in addressing the issues on its agenda. While the Council has been very keen to take effective measures under Chapter VII of the Charter to address security issues in many regions, it has remained silent and failed to take similar or even simpler measures in situations that were even more threatening to international peace and security. That, in turn, raised fundamental questions regarding the credibility of the role of the Council, not only at the level of Government, but also in the sphere of global public opinion.

We therefore feel that the decline in the Council’s role to such levels will leave it short of the minimum requirements of the growing major responsibilities imposed upon it by current international changes. We

reiterate that the reform process of the Council and the increase of its membership have become an urgent priority international issue that requires no additional complications or delays, but a demonstration of more flexible, transparent and democratic positions by Member States in order to facilitate the process of reaching consensus and achieve the desired balanced reform of the Council. That will ensure the participation of all States, big and small, rich and poor, in the Council's decision-making process, which will reflect positively on them all, without exception.

The United Arab Emirates, which notes with satisfaction the limited progress made thus far in improving some of the Council's working methods — as reflected in the increase in the number of its open plenary meetings, giving non-members of the Council the opportunity to participate in its debates, and in the increase of public briefings on matters of common concern to the international community — would like to express its full support for the position of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, as declared at its fourteenth summit of heads of State and Government in Havana in September on this and all related matters considered to be an indivisible part of a comprehensive and integrated effort to make the role of the Council more effective and responsible and to promote democratization in its working methods, including the decision-making process, so as to reflect current political developments in international relations.

In that regard, we would like to reiterate our support for the following proposals.

First, enlargement of the permanent and non-permanent membership of the Council should be politically balanced and in conformity with the principles of the sovereign equality of Member States and equitable geographical representation so as to redress the underrepresentation of developing and small countries and the imbalance in geographical representation.

Second, a permanent seat should be allocated to the Group of Arab States. That seat would be filled by Arab countries on a rotating basis and in accordance with the practices endorsed by the League of Arab States, within the framework of the Groups of African and Asian States.

Third, in the event that agreement is reached on increasing the number of permanent members of the Security Council, those seats should go to countries that have truly demonstrated, in their relationship with the United Nations, their ability to discharge their responsibilities towards the maintenance of international peace and security and the fulfilment of the purposes and principles of the Charter in the economic, social and political arenas.

Fourth, priority should be given to establishing checks and balances on the use of the veto, which should be limited to resolutions submitted under Chapter VII of the Charter. The veto should also be overruled if resolutions receive a two-thirds majority vote so as to ensure the Council's impartiality, non-arbitrariness and non-selectivity, particularly with respect to pressing global issues that require urgent intervention in order to control bloodshed and protect civilians and their property, in accordance with the principles of the Charter and the 1949 Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Times of War.

Fifth, we must mitigate the increasing resort by the Security Council to Chapter VII of the Charter as an umbrella for addressing issues that do not necessarily pose an immediate threat to international peace and security. In that context, we stress that sanctions should not be imposed, extended or expanded unless all relevant peaceful means for the settlement of disputes have been exhausted under Chapters VI and VIII of the Charter, and until a thorough study has been made of their short- and long-term effects, in order to protect the people of the affected countries.

Sixth, the Council must be urged to increase the number of its public briefings in order to give non-members an opportunity to participate in its debates and voice their opinions in accordance with the provisions of Articles 31 and 32 of the Charter, taking into consideration the needs and interests of all States when setting its agenda, which should be done objectively and in a non-selective manner.

Seventh, the Security Council must be charged with the responsibility of preparing special reports on its work to the General Assembly, in addition to its usual annual reports, which are submitted in accordance with Article 24 of the Charter, so as to enable the Assembly to carry out periodic, substantive and comprehensive assessments of the Council's work.

Eighth, the Council's rules of procedure, which have been provisional for 50 years, must be formalized

in order to promote transparency and accountability in the Council's proceedings.

Ninth, an appropriate mechanism must be established to improve interaction and coordination between the Security Council and the General Assembly, on the one hand, and with the Economic and Social Council and other regional organizations, on the other, in order to ensure that the Council does not infringe upon the prerogatives and powers of the other organs, as provided for in the Charter.

In conclusion, we hope that our deliberations on this item will promote consensus and a convergence of the various points of view and lead to a common and practical international vision for carrying out the desired reform in the Security Council in order to enable it to address the increasing challenges in international peacemaking and in protecting humanity from the destruction of war and grave violations of human rights, as well as other current challenges of the twenty-first century.

Mr. Al-Murad (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I warmly thank you, Madam, for convening this important meeting. I also wish to express my gratitude to the President of the Security Council, the Permanent Representative of Qatar, for his clear and thorough overview of the Council's report submitted to the General Assembly regarding the considerable progress achieved in the activities of the Council last year.

We further express our appreciation of the excellent work of the former co-Chairs of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters related to the Security Council, and to the representative of Cuba, who spoke on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The item under discussion by the General Assembly is among the most important on its agenda. The discussion of the enlargement of the Security Council and the draft resolutions that have been submitted by various regional groups demonstrate the support of heads of State and Government for Security Council reform, as reflected in the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document. That Document represents an important landmark in the process of strengthening and reforming the United Nations and evidence of the importance attached by States to Security Council reform.

Debates in past years have highlighted the need to reform the Security Council and to enhance the transparency of its working methods, despite the fact that Member States are already agreed on the principle of the need for reform. Although more than 13 years have passed, the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters related to the Security Council has been unable to reach agreement on the nature of the required changes.

Nevertheless, we cannot ignore the progress that has been achieved in the Working Group's discussions, in particular regarding the Council's working methods and procedures. There is near widespread agreement on a number of procedures and proposals with regard to adjustments to be made, and the Council has in fact adopted and implemented several changes in that respect. We recognize the improvements that have been achieved in the Council's procedures and working methods, and pay tribute to those Council members that have striven to keep non-members informed on a regular basis of progress in the Council's discussions on the question of transparency.

Kuwait's position is based on the fundamental principles of firm support for strengthening and reforming all United Nations bodies, including the Security Council, in order to ensure their full capacity to carry out their principal functions, which, in the case of the Council and in accordance with the Charter, relate primarily to the maintenance of international peace and security. Such changes should not undermine the Council's effectiveness and efficiency in addressing global threats and dangers, but should enhance the credibility and legitimacy of its resolutions.

The Group of Arab States should be assigned a permanent seat on the Council that would be held in rotation, to be determined through coordination among members of the Group. With respect to the Council's working methods and the strengthening of its relationship with other organs, such as the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, we support all proposals to ensure greater transparency and clarity in the Security Council's work and to facilitate the exchange of and access to information from and to Member States.

We note the importance of codifying and improving the Council's working methods and of

agreement on its size, constitution and decision-making process, none of which will necessarily require any amendment of the Charter. It is high time for the Council to adopt permanent working methods, including new rules for the election of non-permanent members under paragraph 2 of Article 23 of the Charter that would allow small countries such as ours to participate in and be elected to the Council.

As to the right of veto, we feel it necessary to set checks and balances regarding its use. We need to restrict the right of veto, ensuring its application only in matters falling under Chapter VII of the Charter. The Council's non-permanent membership must reflect the increase in the number of members of regional groups, especially the Group of Asian States. We must reach an agreement acceptable to all parties that will ensure the Council's ability to fulfil unhindered its functions pursuant to the Charter.

Mr. Almansoor (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation extends its deepest thanks to the Permanent Representative of Qatar, President of the Security Council this month, for introducing the Council's report in document A/61/2 (Supp). The report describes the activities of the Security Council over the past year in the maintenance of international peace and security.

My delegation also thanks the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters related to the Security Council for its report on its discussions on that matter. We extend our gratitude to the Chairman and the two Vice-Chairpersons for their excellent and wise work in guiding the Working Group's debates.

My delegation welcomes this opportunity to participate in the joint debate under agenda items 9 and 111, "Report of the Security Council" and "Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters", respectively. We should have liked to receive the Security Council's report well in advance in order to be able to consider and study it thoroughly, given its great importance to our assessment of the Security Council's work over the past year and its role in various international issues and in the discharge of its specialized mission.

Security Council reform is one of the most important issues before us, as highlighted by the enormous attention the topic was accorded during the General Assembly's general debate this session and at the 2005 World Summit. A great number of heads of State and Government addressed the issue, laying out their national positions on the matter. In the Millennium Declaration, too, they stressed the importance of intensifying their efforts to achieve real reform of the Security Council. There is therefore no doubt whatsoever that Security Council reform is of enormous global interest and has become one of our top priorities. The Council is the principal organ of the United Nations entrusted with the maintenance of international peace and security.

The Council is currently unable to maintain international peace and security and will remain unable to do so unless it adapts to the changed world and to new political realities that are very different from those of the past. The Council must therefore be reformed comprehensively so that it can reflect current political realities and represent the international community as it stands today. The Security Council's agenda must take into account the needs and interests of all countries, both developing and developed, and it must do so in an objective and non-selective manner.

Given that the Council is the principal body responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security, any increase in its membership must be intended to make it more democratic, accountable, effective and transparent. Paragraph 49.5 of the Final Document of the Fourteenth Summit Conference of Heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned Movement, which took place in Havana from 11 to 16 September 2006, reaffirmed that transparency, openness and consistency are key elements that the Council should observe in all its activities, approaches and procedures.

The Non-Aligned Movement believes that the decision-making process needs to be democratized by, inter alia, limiting the veto power with a view to reducing its use and then its eventual elimination. In this context, the thirty-third session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, held in Baku between 19 and 21 July 2006, stressed the need to reform the Council by expanding its membership and, in particular, by dealing with the issue of the right to veto, since they are indispensable elements of any comprehensive package that takes account of the sovereign equality of countries and of equitable geographic representation.

Any consideration of the various positions on reform shows that there is a general desire not only to expand the membership, but also to deal with essential issues relating to the Council's agenda, working methods and decision-making process. The reform must make the Council more representative of all Member States and enable it to better reflect current geopolitical realities and diversity, taking into account the balance of power and international stability, as well as the situation of small countries, regardless of what model is finally chosen for expanding the membership.

When addressing the issue of Council reform, many Member States have said that a mechanism should be set up to help us to deal with sudden and successive changes or rapid developments in situations around the world, since most countries are currently unable to cope with the challenges posed by such changes. We must take a different approach to the many new issues confronting us, otherwise our collective peace and security will be jeopardized. The Security Council is the organ that is primarily responsible for dealing with such issues, and accordingly it must change its approach by improving its working methods and procedures. That is the priority issue for the reform of the Council, and is one of the main issues being considered by the United Nations.

Member States have demanded that the Council be reformed; that is self-evident. Thus in 1993 the General Assembly adopted resolution 48/26, establishing the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council, because Member States were very much aware of the real need to deal with this matter and wanted the Council to better represent the general membership of the United Nations.

However, 13 years after the Working Group was established, it has still not been able to reach agreement; it has been deadlocked on the issue of the increase in the membership of the Council. If this situation continues, we will not be able to reach agreement. If States are not sufficiently open, if they are unwilling to make concessions because of their own perceived interests, we will not be able to find a solution. The real goal is to make the Council truly more representative.

Because of the Council's increasing role in recent years, it is, in a way, the showcase of the United Nations — a window open to the world. People judge the United Nations negatively or positively, depending on their response to the resolutions of that showcase window, that is, the Council.

The way the Council responds to crises or fails in confronting them affects the way in which public opinion regards the Organization. The Council must take that into account and change its vision and its approach. The Council must meet the expectations of the peoples of the world, who are distressed at resolutions in which the Council exercised double standards and selectivity, particularly with regard to issues involving the Middle East.

States must demonstrate the political will to actually reform the Council, and they must pay attention to the interests of all States, both large and small. After all, the main goal is for all States, large and small, to feel that the Council represents them and protects their interests, their peace and their security.

Mr. Maurer (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank the Security Council for its annual report (A/61/2), and welcome its introduction here in the General Assembly. The report contains a comprehensive overview of the Council's activities and meetings over the previous session. Switzerland believes, however, that the document would be more useful were it accompanied by a more analytical assessment of the Council's activities throughout the period under review. It would then be an important reference tool, describing the challenges that the Council faced during the period under consideration and the way that it dealt with them.

The report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization (A/61/1) and the *United Nations Secretariat First Consolidated Report 2005* provide good models in this respect. More specifically, what we would like to see is a true report that we can discuss, rather than a kind of laundry list, which may be useful but has very limited political utility.

Over the past two years, the United Nations has made a remarkable effort to reform the system. Some progress has been made, but not in all fields. We believe that the reform of the Security Council is an essential component of the reform of the United Nations, and thus we should give it our full attention.

Switzerland remains committed to expanding the Council — an expansion that we believe would make the Council's work more representative and enable it to respond better to contemporary geopolitical realities. But such an expansion should not jeopardize the Council's capacity to respond promptly and effectively to threats that weigh upon international peace and security. In fact, safeguarding the Council's efficiency is just as important as enlarging its membership. Thus, enlargement should focus on a reasonable and manageable increase in the number of seats. In this context, we reiterate our conviction that enlargement should not lead to granting the right of veto to other Council members, as that would only overburden the decision-making process.

We continue to favour enlargement based on objective criteria, which would include elements such as a Member State's size and population, its financial contributions to the United Nations system, its troop contributions to peacekeeping operations or the active role it has played over the years in the United Nations.

Countries meeting those criteria should have a chance to qualify for a sustained presence in the Security Council. But the presence should be linked to a strong mechanism for ensuring accountability, either in form of a periodic review or the need for re-election. From this perspective, we welcome the ideas of an intermediary or incremental solution that would go beyond the models that have been officially proposed to date. In this respect, the creation of an appropriate framework for formal negotiation would be welcome.

We must not forget that the great majority of States Members of the United Nations have little hope of serving on the Council. If they do, it is for only a short period of time. Countries lacking the necessary resources may never be able to join it. To preserve the ability of such countries to interact in a meaningful way with the Council, Switzerland, together with Costa Rica, Jordan, Liechtenstein and Singapore — its partners in the so-called small five group" (S5) — has been urging improvement of the Council's working methods as an important means of making the Council's work more transparent, accountable and inclusive.

The Council, realizing that a great many Member States were concerned about this issue, adopted by its note by the President of 19 July 2006 (S/2006/507) certain measures concerning its working methods. It has thus taken up suggestions submitted by its Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions and has shown its willingness to make its work more transparent. We congratulate the Working Group for the task it has completed, and we commend the Council for steps taken to improve its interaction with Member States.

The initiative of the S5 has highlighted the importance of working methods both within and outside the Security Council. It has certainly had a positive impact on the deliberations and relevant decisions taken by the Council. In our view, the note by the President was is an important step in the right direction, and we are quite pleased with the results achieved by the initiative so far.

However, to make this process more successful we feel that the Security Council should continue moving along the road it has set off on. More can and should be done.

First, not all provisions contained in the Council's presidential note have yet produced a tangible effect. Switzerland therefore encourages the Council to place emphasis on implementing its own decisions and arrangements.

Secondly, a number of measures in the S5 initiative have not yet been addressed or have been only partially addressed, to wit, the possibility for the Council to submit thematic reports to the Assembly on issues of international concern; the establishment of groups for assessing and drawing lessons learned from the implementation of Council decisions; establishment of fair and clear procedures with regard to listing and de-listing in the sanctions committees; a more open approach on the part of the subsidiary bodies towards the needs of Member States; enhanced information-sharing with troop-contributing countries and important financial contributors on the details of operational considerations and mission planning; voluntary renunciation of the veto in cases of genocide and crimes against humanity; and the need to explain the use of the veto.

Switzerland, along with its partners, will follow closely implementation of measures taken by the Security Council to date. We will also continue working for a more ambitious reform of the Council's working methods. Our efforts will focus on the issues I have just listed, but also on effective and accountable functioning of the sanctions committees and their

groups of experts, which have an important part to play in implementation of the Council's decisions.

Many States Members of the United Nations feel strongly that the reform agenda should continuously give high priority to systematic access to information and enhanced transparency with regard to the Council's often far-reaching decisions, leading to an improvement in their legitimacy. This is not only in the interest of the membership at large; it corresponds also to the Council's own interests. Member States will be more willing and in a better position to enforce sanctions, commit troops or pick up the bill for peacekeeping operations if their Governments, parliaments and people are well informed and understand the rationale behind the Council's decisions and actions.

We see the results to date as encouragement to continue our efforts. We believe that this process will continue to move in the right direction. Switzerland will continue to cooperate constructively with the Security Council in ensuring high standards of transparency and legitimacy in accordance with the importance and responsibility of the Council.

Mr. Wenaweser (Liechtenstein): Given the late submission of the report of the Security Council, I will not comment today on its substance. I wish to say, however, that so far we have not detected anything in the report that would justify its very late submission this year, since it is essentially a compilation of the proceedings of the Council during its reporting period.

While this debate usually takes place earlier in the calendar, there is perhaps a symbolism to its scheduling today. At a time of the year when we all look back at what we have achieved and where we have failed, Security Council reform seems to fit in rather nicely. After the institutional changes we agreed on in establishing the Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council, Security Council reform is clearly the one big task that remains unresolved. Indeed, reform of the Council remains essential, while some may begin to doubt that it is even feasible. However, our job is to make possible what we believe is necessary, and Council reform fits that description.

Our efforts to reform the Security Council must be guided by the Charter, which makes it clear that the Council acts on behalf of the membership as a whole. To our mind, the phrase "on behalf of" entails representation of both the geopolitical realities of today's world and the diversity of opinions. We must therefore conclude that the Council, at this juncture, is not in a position to fulfil either of these two prerequisites.

The big conundrum of Security Council reform remains composition. Since all efforts in 2005 failed — despite producing some positive side effects — no serious or promising initiative for enlargement has been put forward in more than a year now.

We believe strongly that it is necessary to relaunch this debate in a different manner. Ever since the High-level Panel presented its report in early 2005, all proposals for enlargement have been characterized by one main difference of opinion. There has never been, and there is not now, an agreement on whether or not new permanent seats should be created. The arguments both in favour and against have been presented forcefully and with deep conviction. In the end, it comes down to a matter of belief, on both sides of the debate.

It is therefore hard to see a way out of this debate unless we revisit the notion of permanency. As long as we interpret it in the same manner as it is understood in the Charter today — irrespective of whether or not the veto right is granted to go with it — we are very unlikely to find a formula that garners stronger political support than the ones put forward in 2005.

Indeed, the Charter amendment needed for enlargement of the Council requires support that goes far beyond the numerically necessary two thirds of the membership. There are ways of making it possible for States to serve on the Council on an ongoing basis, without resorting to the type of permanency granted at San Francisco. We hope that those who have shown a very keen interest in the enlargement issue in the past will rethink their position in a manner which makes a new approach possible. We also believe that a stronger involvement on the part of States that have no immediate national stake in enlargement will advance that cause.

As is well known, the group of five small nations known as the "Small Five" (S-5) has focused its efforts on the issue of the working methods of the Council, traditionally also known as cluster 2 issues. We have done so in the conviction — rightly, as it turned out — that there would be a continued deadlock on the topic of enlargement. The way the Council conducts its daily business and in particular the manner in which it

involves States that are not members of the Council are essential aspects in terms of the legitimacy and effectiveness of the Council. While working methods may attract less public attention than enlargement, they are by no means a secondary or ancillary issue. For those of us that either do not serve on the Council or have a limited impact on its decision-making when we do, the way the Council takes into account the views of the broader membership is crucial indeed.

As a member of the S-5, we are certainly encouraged by the double effect of the submission of our draft resolution in March this year. It had a beneficial impact on the internal discussions in the Security Council on working methods and also kept the discussions on Council reform in general alive. We were pleased that the Council responded to our initiative by engaging in a serious effort to improve its working methods for the first time in many years.

We are particularly grateful to the Chairman of the Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions, Ambassador Kenzo Oshima, and to his team for their genuine commitment and untiring efforts to advance this difficult agenda item. Those efforts resulted in the adoption of the presidential note of 19 July listing a set of measures that deal with the issue of working methods.

We believe that the General Assembly, both legally and politically, has the competence to take up this issue, and that, indeed, the draft resolution we submitted this year is a reflection of that competence. Also, we have always looked to establish a cooperative approach with the Council and continue to do so. While the outcome of the internal discussions of the Council, reflected in the presidential note I mentioned earlier, fell well short of our expectations and of the set of measures we ourselves had proposed, we nevertheless refrained from having our own text adopted by the General Assembly. We did so in order both to avoid an antagonistic relationship between the two most important organs of the Organization and to give the Council time to further advance its discussions and to apply the measures it had agreed on.

The measures we proposed were never meant to be exhaustive; rather, they constituted a selection which we believed was most urgent for the legitimacy and effectiveness of the Council at the time. Since the presidential note was significantly less ambitious in its scope, we naturally see a need to further pursue our efforts. This analysis is compounded by the fact that we do not recognize any consistency in the application of the measures decided upon by the Council itself. Some of the measures are applied on a regular basis and some in a rather erratic manner, and others seem not to be implemented at all. There is therefore a continued need to engage with the Council on this topic, and we are ready to do so. We would be happy to engage with the Working Group on Documentation, which could provide an excellent forum for informal discussion and, incidentally, itself constitute the implementation of one of the measures contained in the presidential note.

The Council might also want to consider inviting the views of the membership at large, for example by way of convening an open debate on the topic. Of course, we are also considering the desirability of drafting a revised set of measures in the form of a draft resolution or otherwise.

There is no quick fix for Security Council reform in either of the two areas. As far as working methods, we will pursue our efforts consistently, guided by the vision of a Council that is more representative and has greater legitimacy by dint of genuinely acting on behalf of the interests of the membership as a whole. On the issue of enlargement, we will work with those who seek a solution that is both viable and makes the Council an organ that is truly fit to address the challenges of the twenty-first century.

Mr. Hachani (Tunisia) (*spoke in French*): Madam President, allow me to begin by congratulating you on the manner in which you are guiding this debate. I should like also to thank the Ambassador of Qatar, the President of the Security Council for the current month, for having introduced the report of the Security Council submitted to the General Assembly pursuant to the relevant provisions of the Charter of the United Nations.

My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the representative of the Non-Aligned Movement and would like to make the following comments.

First, with respect to the report of the Security Council, under agenda item 9, consideration of the report of the Security Council represents the only opportunity available to States Members of the United Nations — particularly those that are not members of the Security Council — to consider the activities of the

Council and to identify measures that should be taken with a view to making the necessary improvements to the methods of work of that important organ.

In that regard, it is clear that greater efforts must be made to enhance the quality of the report of the Security Council, which, as we cannot but acknowledge, remains a compilation of the decisions and resolutions adopted and a somewhat factual description of that body's work.

We are far from having fulfilled the recommendations suggested by Member States regarding an analytical report. Along those same lines, it should be noted that the General Assembly had asked the Security Council regularly to submit special thematic reports on matters of international interest.

With regard to another matter, we are pleased to note that during the past period, the Security Council held a significant number of public meetings, in which many delegations participated. However, it would be helpful to ensure that the choice of issues to be discussed at such public meetings does not encroach on the competence of other organs, and particularly that it does not interfere in areas under the purview of the General Assembly. Likewise, we must not call into question the right of Member States and/or representatives of regional or political groups to participate in public meetings on matters of particular interest to them.

In terms of content, the report before us notes that the Security Council has acted with resolve to address a large number of conflicts in several areas of the world, including by dispatching Council missions to the field. In the Middle East, however, the Council's efforts continue to fall short of expectations. The frustration at the Council's repeated inability to fulfil its responsibilities and to become more involved in settling the Palestinian question poses a great threat to the region and to the Council's authority.

Secondly, with regard to the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council, I am particularly pleased to thank the two Vice-Chairpersons of the Open-ended Working Group dealing with these issues, the ambassadors of the Bahamas and the Netherlands, for their remarkable contributions in that area during the past session.

The crucial importance of Security Council reform has been constantly reaffirmed every year since 1993, when the Open-ended Working Group was established to consider that issue in all its aspects. However, since that time, the Working Group has not been able to elaborate a specific formula that is acceptable to all. Of course, we understand the complex and sensitive nature of this issue. Nevertheless, we believe that we must achieve comprehensive Council reform as soon as possible.

The Working Group's deliberations on this issue enabled us in previous years to identify a number of elements that are widely supported by Member States. It is therefore obvious that we have various elements at our disposal that can serve as a basis for efforts to move forward and broaden the consensus regarding basic aspects of Council reform.

My country believes that the purpose of any reform of the Security Council is to strengthen equitable representation in that organ, as well as its credibility and effectiveness. The Council must reflect the political and economic realities of our world today. It must have the legitimacy it needs to act on behalf of the international community in carrying out its Charter mandate. Those objectives will not be attainable without an expansion in the two membership categories, permanent and non-permanent. Moreover, the size of a restructured Council must reflect all the sensibilities of the international community. In that context, Tunisia continues to endorse Africa's position as reflected in the African consensus. We will support any consensual formula that gives Africa and the developing countries their rightful place in the Security Council.

Finally, the matter of periodic review of a reformed Security Council is an essential element of the reform programme. Such review represents a factor in establishing the trust that will enable us to carry out the changes that will be necessary in the future. Even more important, however, it will be a mechanism that enables us to assess the contributions of new members to the strengthening of the Council's effectiveness.

In conclusion, we believe that the Security Council, if it is to continue to enjoy the confidence of States and of world public opinion, must demonstrate that it is able to effectively address the most difficult issues; it must also become more representative of the international community as a whole and of the realities of the contemporary world. It is time to set out on that

path with resolve, under your leadership, Madam President.

Prince Mishal Bin Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): The delegation of Saudi Arabia would like to thank you, Madam President, for convening this important meeting to discuss the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council, which is an essential issue within the United Nations. It is important that we enhance the Council's credibility in the eyes of international public opinion, given the changes, developments, threats and challenges facing the world.

We support the statement made by the representative of Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, and we thank the Permanent Representative of Qatar, President of the Security Council, for introducing the report of the Council (A/61/2).

Saudi Arabia supports the principle of equitable geographical representation on the Security Council for both permanent and non-permanent members. Any reform of the Council must seek to build that organ's capacities so it can more effectively play its Charter role, shouldering its responsibilities and addressing international security and political issues in order to attain the objectives set for it by the international community: maintaining international peace and security on the basis of harmony, objectivity and transparency, preventing conflicts before they erupt and spin out of control, causing bloodshed and the destruction of property and undermining the capabilities of countries and peoples.

Saudi Arabia attaches particular importance to ensuring that the Security Council plays its role by fully shouldering, in an effective manner, its responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. The Council is the United Nations organ with primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, in accordance with Article 24 of the Charter.

In that connection, at the 2005 World Summit, held during the sixtieth session of the General Assembly, heads of State or Government expressed the need to continue extensive efforts to carry out overall structural reform of the Security Council to make it more representative, transparent, effective and equitable and to reinforce the effectiveness and legality of its resolutions in order to maintain international peace and security and protect humanity from the scourge of war, gross human rights violations and other current threats faced by our peoples.

Saudi Arabia would also like to express its disillusionment at the lack of effectiveness of Security Council resolutions and policies and at the double standards apparent in some of the Council's work, particularly on issues related to peace and security in the Middle East. That has resulted in Israel's continued occupation of Arab territory and in its thwarting of international efforts to establish peace in the Middle East.

The world has witnessed Israel's aggressions against Lebanon and the Palestinian territories in a war that that has caused systematic and premeditated destruction of infrastructure. National and humanitarian rights have been violated, civilians and innocent people have been killed or detained and massacres have been perpetrated. All of those actions were carried out in violation of international agreements and instruments. Israel's policy of hegemony and occupation and its expansionist and racist actions in the region are continuing, owing to a lack of concern by certain States and the support by other States for that policy.

The Council is thus unable to take important decisions in this regard, despite the fact that the Arab countries expressed their genuinely peaceful intentions during the Arab Summit in Beirut in 2001 by supporting an initiative proposed by His Majesty King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud for the establishment of just and comprehensive peace, in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), leading to the signature of a peace treaty for the full restitution of Palestinian and other occupied Arab territory, within an independent Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital.

My delegation has engaged in debate, and we would like to see healthy discussion of the issue on all levels within the United Nations and outside it. We have listened to statements made by States and other major contributions that have been made. All of this constructive discussion is taking place at the theoretical level, and it has not been translated into action on the ground. The fact remains that the members of the Security Council — particularly the permanent members — have an important role to play

in this regard. They must deal with the situation in a rational manner, because changes have occurred in the world since the Organization was established. Substantial Security Council reforms now need to be implemented if the Council is to strengthen its capacity to prevent conflicts and crises before they arise.

Mr. Abdelaziz (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): The General Assembly is today discussing two items that are interlinked. These issues are of increasing significance, particularly in the light of the international conviction that the United Nations reform process will be neither complete nor successful without the reform and expansion of the Security Council. We are eager to discuss the report of the Council to the General Assembly alongside the question of Security Council reform because we believe that we need to have a true and transparent picture of all aspects pertaining to the activities of the Council so that we can improve its performance and make it more representative of the interests of the general membership. In addition, we would like to underline the need to curtail the encroachment by the Council on the mandates of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council in some instances, and its hesitation in others, to act in accordance with its own mandate as a result of certain political interests that are usually linked to permanent membership and the exercise of the right of veto.

Undoubtedly, the inability of the Council to face up to Israeli violations, such as the recent Beit Hanoun massacre, as a consequence of the use of the veto by one permanent member, as well as its failure to put an end to the Israeli aggression against the people and the territory of Lebanon, as a result of the 34-day obstruction by the same permanent member of the adoption of a resolution calling for a ceasefire, during which the people of Lebanon were subjected to mass killings, categorically prove that the existing formulas and balance of power within the Council must be reformed.

Such a reform effort is particularly important given the existing geographic imbalance in the permanent membership category and the fact that the Council lacks African representation, as well as the abuse of the right of veto in a manner that goes against the principle whereby the permanent members represent the larger interests of the general membership of the Organization.

Furthermore, such an approach reflects an attempt by the Security Council to conduct its decision-making process in contravention of democratic practices that are based on the principles of transparency and accountability and in line with the spirit of the Charter, and to the detriment of the other principal organs, as well as increasingly, against the interests of the countries concerned.

The consequence of this is a decision-making process in the Security Council that does not take due account of the nature and dimensions of many of the vital issues under its consideration. That has negative implications for conflict resolution — resulting, in some instances, in the prolongation of conflicts, and, consequently, of the suffering of peoples. In this context, resolution 1706 (2006), in which the Council addressed the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the Darfur region, is a vivid example of how the credibility of the Security Council, and the United Nations at large, can be damaged as a consequence of a hasty, unrealistic and misguided approach based on narrow and temporary, national self-interest rather than on practical and objective considerations, which would best promote the effectiveness, legitimacy and credibility of the Council's resolutions and lead to solutions, rather than futile confrontations.

In the 2005 World Summit Outcome (resolution 60/1), our heads of State or Government reaffirmed their faith in the United Nations and their commitment to the purposes and principles of the Charter. Thus, restoring the credibility of the Organization is increasingly linked to our ability to reform the Security Council so that it reflects contemporary global realities and embraces the values and principles of democracy, justice and equality. It would also help to narrow the widening gap between North and South and eliminate the growing perception that — for one reason or another — some bear a greater responsibility than others for the maintenance of international peace and security.

In this context, the issue of accountability lies at the core of the reform of the United Nations in general, and of the Security Council in particular. The most important requirement is to correct the artificial imbalance in the institutional relationship between the Security Council and the General Assembly, as well as between the permanent and non-permanent members. This imbalance has also manifested itself in the unwarranted delay in the submission of the annual

report of the Security Council to the General Assembly. Absent procedural or technical reasons, that delay is, in our view, related to the repeated attempts by the Security Council to ignore the reality that the General Assembly is the more democratic organ of the United Nations — the organ to which all other principal and subsidiary bodies of the Organization are accountable, in accordance with the provisions of the Charter.

Furthermore, again this year, the report of the Security Council does not reflect any commitments to the relevant provisions of various General Assembly resolutions on the revitalization of its role, the most recent of which is resolution 60/286, which calls for the report to move away from the rigid framework of merely citing facts and figures to a more analytical approach setting out the premises upon which the Council bases its resolutions and presidential statements; the positions taken by the various members, including permanent members and the countries concerned during consultations; the rationale behind the inability of the Council to take firm and effective measures in relation to important issues relating to the maintenance of international peace and security; and the reasons for adopting resolutions that either cannot be implemented or are likely to lead to confrontations that fuel conflicts, rather than resolve them.

The delegation of Egypt wishes to reaffirm that any reform of the Security Council needs to address all negative aspects in such a manner as to restore the Council's credibility. Such reform must include two primary, indivisible and mutually supportive aspects, namely expansion of the membership of the Council in its two categories and reform of its working methods. To that end, I wish to affirm that Egypt will engage in any genuine, collective and constructive effort aimed at a comprehensive reform in the context of an integrated package based on a broad agreement on the following set of principles.

First, the expansion of the membership in the permanent and the non-permanent categories should take place in a manner that will ensure a just representation of developing countries, particularly African countries, and of all cultures and civilizations, which would restore the existing imbalance in favour of the interests of the developed countries. The size of an expanded Council should be linked to the objective of achieving equitable representation.

Secondly, expansion should ensure equality of rights, privileges and responsibilities among existing and new permanent members. The question of the veto must be addressed in a holistic and integrated manner that is in keeping with the principles of equality and international democratic governance. That would entail the elimination of the veto and, pending that, its extension to new permanent members.

Thirdly, meaningful and constructive reforms should be made to the working methods of the Security Council so as to ensure transparency and the participation of non-members in its work, particularly those countries directly affected by its decisions. Also, the scope of interaction should be expanded, on the basis of respect and parity, among the Council and regional organizations as well as actors in conflict areas.

Fourthly, balance must be restored in the institutional relationship among the three principal organs of the United Nations, the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, in accordance with their prerogatives and mandates under the Charter.

To that end, the delegation of Egypt associates itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and with the statement to be delivered by the Ambassador of the Niger on behalf of the African Group. Egypt wishes to reaffirm its full commitment to all aspects and elements of the Common African Position included in the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration, which are integrated and indivisible. That Common Position reflects the just and legitimate African aspirations to genuine and equitable representation in an expanded Security Council, in a manner commensurate with the weight and significance of the continent, and in view of the efforts made by its countries and its regional and subregional organizations in meeting political and security challenges, in the context of defending African interests in the Security Council, like other regional groups whose members enjoy the right to veto.

The negotiations we undertook last year have proved that the options presented by the Secretary-General for Security Council expansion were not able, as he himself indicated, to garner the necessary support. Therefore, it is important to continue our work on this vital issue with the same momentum and to

focus our search on devising a new model that would meet our collective aspirations, including the legitimate aspirations of Africa, and that would achieve the widest possible international support beyond the required two thirds majority. We will not be able to devise such a model if we do not address the issue with an open mind, taking account of prevailing international political realities, which are totally different from the ones that gave rise to this Organization, in a manner that would make the reform and expansion of the Security Council one of the central issues before us, if we are sincere in our efforts to achieve a comprehensive reform of the Organization.

Meanwhile, the responsibility to reform the working methods of the Security Council lies primarily with the General Assembly, which must continue to base its relationship with the Security Council on the principles of transparency and accountability and relentlessly to address the encroachment of the Council on the prerogatives of the Assembly through a series of resolutions that would consider cases in which the Council is unable to discharge its responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, and modify the institutional framework to address such cases, if necessary.

Organization of work

The President: I would like to draw the attention of members to the work of the Fifth Committee and the date of recess of the current session.

Members will recall that its 2nd plenary meeting, on 13 September 2006, the General Assembly decided that the Fifth Committee would complete its work by Friday, 8 December 2006, and that the sixty-first session would recess on Tuesday, 12 December 2006.

I have been informed by the Chairman of the Fifth Committee that the Committee was not able to finish its work on Friday, 8 December. It is my understanding that the Committee will need to meet until Tuesday, 19 December.

In that connection, in view of the work that remains to be done for this part of the session, I would like to propose to the Assembly that it postpone the date of recess of the current session to Thursday, 21 December 2006.

If there is no objection, may I take it that the Assembly agrees to this proposal?

It was so decided.

The President: In connection with the work of the Fifth Committee, may I also take it that the General Assembly agrees to extend the work of the Fifth Committee until Tuesday, 19 December?

I hear no objection.

It was so decided.

Programme of work

The President: I would like also to inform members of some revisions and additions to the programme of work of the General Assembly.

The consideration of agenda item 110, “Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly”, originally scheduled for tomorrow morning, Tuesday, 12 December, has been postponed to Wednesday, 13 December, in the afternoon.

On Wednesday, 13 December, in the morning, the Assembly will take up the report of the Ad Hoc Committee on a Comprehensive and Integral International Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities to take action on the draft convention on the rights of persons with disabilities.

On Thursday, 14 December, in the morning, the Assembly will hold the oath of office ceremony for the Secretary-General-designate.

On Thursday, 14 December, in the afternoon, the Assembly will take up the reports of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee).

The Secretariat will issue a revision to the programme of work to reflect those changes.

I should also like to remind members that on Friday, 15 December, the Assembly will resume the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly on illegal Israeli actions in occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the occupied Palestinian territory.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.