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General Assembly

Official Records

Fifty-first Session

65th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 26 November 1996, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Razali Ismail . . . . . (Malaysia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 48 (*continued*)

Strengthening of the United Nations system

Mr. Gorelik (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): The current stage of the United Nations reform efforts started in an atmosphere of high expectations that, unfortunately, have since been justified to only a small degree, if at all. A growing number of pessimistic voices have been heard in this respect.

Our delegation, however, does not share those fatalistic views. The General Assembly Working Groups, including the Open-ended High-level Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System, have made a useful contribution to drawing up a road map of action for the revitalization and renewal of the Organization. They have identified the main issues that are resolvable and have presented alternative views. In many cases, they have determined ways to bring about rapprochement and have highlighted converging interests among those States on the so-called "middle ground".

From the outset, the Open-ended High-level Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System had to work while struggling with the heavy burden of an overly broad mandate that threatened to turn it into a competitor of the other Working Groups. The Group managed to find an appropriate niche and to focus mainly on General Assembly and Secretariat issues and other related topics. However, the result has been that the mandate enabled the Working Group to maintain its focus on and seek solutions to a wide range of issues, from "purging" the General Assembly agenda to studying the growing role of non-governmental organizations in United Nations activities; from the optimal way of submitting the Secretary-General's reports to the General Assembly to the administrative culture of the Secretariat; and from the relationship between the General Assembly and the Security Council to the configuration of the uppermost strata of the Secretariat structure.

In our view, the potential and interest of this Working Group lie primarily in the fact that, more than any of the others, it has provided access to comprehensive, intersectoral themes.

In drawing interim conclusions, we would say with cautious optimism that the Working Group is in broad agreement on how to restructure the Secretariat in terms of a more rational organization of its work, modern management techniques and increasing cost-effectiveness and accountability. At the same time, we, like other delegations, are dissatisfied with the manner in which the principle of equitable geographic distribution has been observed in relation to high-level Secretariat posts. We believe that a recommendation to abide by that principle should be reflected in the final conclusions of the Working Group.

The improvement of the United Nations budgetary processes and mechanisms is an important yet frequently

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underestimated aspect of the topics considered by the Group, although it relates directly to United Nations policy issues. The budgetary process directly reflects, in particular, the cooperation between the General Assembly and the Secretariat, two of the main United Nations organs. Moreover, it is important to consider the question of how the Working Group can revive the basic Charter provision stipulating the consideration of administrative budgets of the specialized agencies by the General Assembly.

The Open-ended High-level Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System has begun to develop coherent approaches to the interrelated issues of management, budgetary process and control functions within the Organization. Improved cooperation between the Secretariat and the intergovernmental mechanisms remains one of the major goals. Programme activity should be given high priority.

With regard to the Group's working methods and its final "product", we believe that the current narrow focus should be retained, despite a temptation to reach for new, promising themes and even though the title of the Working Group apparently suggests a comprehensive agenda. Concrete, albeit humble, results should first be attained in areas already broached. A series of such attainable agreements could form the basis of a relevant General Assembly resolution, hopefully at the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. There should be no strict timetable for the formulation of such a resolution.

In our view, the Group should in the future address topics directly related to the functioning of the United Nations specifically as a system. The roles of the Chairman of the Working Group, Mr. Razali Ismail, and his two Vice-Chairmen, Ambassador Shah and Ambassador Biørn Lian, will be extremely important in every respect. We are convinced that they will have the energy, perseverance and flexibility to stimulate a rapprochement of views and to focus the Working Group's attention on substantive activities — on the forest, not the trees.

Much will depend on the timetable of the meetings. It is not an easy task to establish a timetable whereby the five Working Groups of the General Assembly do not step on each other's heels or produce an excessive workload at the Missions of the Member States that are truly interested in the success of reform. Nevertheless, it must be accomplished. There is a view that, as of January 1997, it would be best to concentrate on the activities of the Working Groups on an Agenda for Peace and on an Agenda for Development. There is logic to that view. If that choice is made, we feel that the informal meetings and consultations of other Groups, including that on the strengthening of the United Nations system, should in any case be continued at the beginning of next year to maintain the momentum already gained.

Mr. Avalle (Argentina) (*interpretation from Spanish*): On behalf of the Argentine people, allow me, as other speakers did yesterday, to share in the concern and anguish of the people of Honduras, more than 30,000 of whom — as we have heard — have been affected by the grave situation following upon the hurricane in their country.

My delegation is participating in this debate to reiterate its commitment to the Open-ended High-level Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System. First, let me say that the progress made by that Group must be attributed to the dedication of the co-Vice-Chairmen at the fiftieth session, the Ambassador of India, Mr. Shah, and the Ambassador of New Zealand, Mr. Keating.

We are convinced that, under Mr. Razali's chairmanship and with the assistance of the Group's new co-Vice-Chairmen, Ambassador Shah of India and Ambassador Biørn Lian of Norway, the Working Group will conclude its work successfully.

We believe that the task before us is of great importance to the Organization. The need to reform and strengthen the United Nations system at the intergovernmental level and within the Secretariat is reaffirmed on a daily basis.

The achievements of the consultations chaired by Ambassador de Rojas, which resulted in the adoption of resolution 50/227, could be appreciated during the current Economic and Social Council session and in the Second Committee's work at the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. We believe that these achievements show the importance of reform processes which lead to real change in the work of the Organization. The success of the reform process which led to the adoption of resolution 50/227 was largely due to the fact that from the very outset the participants had a clear idea of the fundamental principles that should guide their deliberations.

My delegation believes, therefore, in the need to reiterate the principles that should guide negotiations which seek to revitalize and strengthen the Organization in its totality. We believe that the reform process should

be based on, among others, the following principles. First, the reform of the United Nations must result from negotiations based on consensus. Secondly, the strengthening of the Organization should be the ultimate objective of the reform process. Thirdly, the reform must be based on Member States making a firm political and financial commitment to allow the Organization to discharge its duties. Fourthly, the savings realized from the improved efficiency and restructuring of the work of the Organization should be reinvested in the system. Fifthly, the reform should not seek to reach decisions on the scope of the administrative competence of the Secretary-General. Sixthly, the task of the High-level Working Group has an independent intrinsic value of its own and should not be conditional upon the progress of negotiations in other groups or forums. This list of basic principles should be supplemented by others of a more operational nature, such as the importance of transparency in the functioning of the Organization and in the selection of the senior staff of the Secretariat.

The General Assembly was one of the main subjects of the discussions in the Working Group of which India and New Zealand were the Vice-Chairmen. From my delegation's point of view, the purpose of these negotiations should be to try to change the structure of the General Assembly debates. We believe, for example, that for some subjects the debate in the Plenary should be more interactive. This would no doubt help in the revitalization of the programme of work, which could in many cases include replies from the Secretariat to the questions raised in some of the statements.

Similarly, for several of the established agenda items, the Assembly might consider the introduction of a more focused and segmented debate, based on the choice of a series of subjects that might be of sufficient interest in attracting high-ranking officials, as now happens, for example, in the Commission on Sustainable Development.

As regards the structure of the General Assembly, we do not believe that it is essential to change the current division of labour between the committees. However, one might consider, for example, reviving the fairly recent practice of holding joint meetings of the committees when the nature of the subject matter so demands. We also believe that strengthening the office of the President of the Assembly would give increased dynamism to the image of the United Nations and make it easier for the Assembly to interact with other organizations, such as the Bretton Woods institutions. Finally, in a world in which participatory democracy is one of the guiding principles of our political systems, we would argue for the greater participation of civil society, such as that of non-governmental organizations, in the work of the General Assembly and its Main Committees.

The restructuring of the Secretariat is fundamentally the administrative responsibility of the Secretary-General. In this context, we consider that reform should lead to the establishment of a more rational and dynamic structure of command and execution, in keeping with the importance of the mandate and complexity of the tasks this Organization must carry out.

Allow me to reiterate the importance of strengthening the Organization's coordinating functions. In this context, we are impressed with the changes introduced at the last session of the Economic and Social Council, which give the Council a supervisory role over the work of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC).

By way of conclusion, the United Nations is being asked to play a significant role in the international system of the twenty-first century. In this context, one of the major challenges facing us at the dawn of the new millennium is to establish the terms of reference and the necessary mechanisms to ensure that the Organization can accomplish the objectives set forth in the Charter.

Mr. Kharrazi (Islamic Republic of Iran): Since the inception of the United Nations its reform has always been under discussion. During the cold war, due to the circumstances prevailing at the time, the United Nations was not successful in achieving the objectives enshrined in the Charter. In the new era marking the end of the cold war, which created a new international environment for cooperation among States and people around the world, the role of the United Nations system in dealing with world issues has become more than ever unquestioned. Therefore, if the Organization is to become more responsive to the rapid and fundamental developments in international relations, it must be reformed and revitalized. There is a dire need to strengthen the United Nations in order to seize the opportunities and to meet the inevitable challenges in the political, economic and social fields — particularly in the field of development and the economic situation of the developing countries.

My delegation, for these very reasons, attaches great importance to the work of the Open-ended High-level Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System, among other groups with a mandate to

reform different aspects of the United Nations system. To this end, my delegation has actively participated in these working groups' deliberations with the expectation that they will succeed in finalizing their work as early as possible and achieve tangible results. Needless to say, the success of any effort in reforming and revitalizing the United Nations system depends entirely on the political will and the commitment of all the Member States to a strengthened and effective United Nations.

As far as the work of the Open-ended High-level Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System is concerned, my delegation would like, very briefly, to touch on some of the issues it is considering. First, any effort to strengthen, revitalize or reform the United Nations system should maintain and promote the basic principles of the Charter, particularly the principles of equal sovereignty of all States and effective and full participation of all Member States in the United Nations decision-making process, as well as the principle of maintaining transparency and democracy in the Organization's work.

Secondly, the strengthening of the United Nations system means revitalization, improved effectiveness and democratization of the entire system, as well as removing the existing imbalances in the Organization's work. Despite the Organization's activities in the field of development, and its success in some related aspects, it is still far from achieving its objectives in this area as defined in the Charter. Hence, the central priority in any effort to strengthen the United Nations system should be the enhancement of its role in the promotion of economic and social development.

Thirdly, the United Nations system suffers tremendously from the lack of financial resources to realize its goals and objectives, particularly in the area of development. Any effort to strengthen the United Nations system without allocating the required resources will be useless. Therefore, the provision of financial resources should be regarded as an indispensable requisite in any effort to strengthen the United Nations system.

Fourthly, our work in the Open-ended High-level Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System should bring about the enhancement of the role, effectiveness and efficiency of the General Assembly as the supreme organ of the Organization, in which all Member States enjoy equal participation in the decision-making process. Therefore, there is an urgent need to enhance the role of the General Assembly in such a manner that it can effectively fulfil its functions and powers as clearly defined by the Charter of the United Nations. In this regard, the task carried out under General Assembly resolutions 47/233 and 48/264 regarding the revitalization of its work should be given due consideration.

Fifthly, regarding the consideration of the reports of the Security Council by the General Assembly, my delegation believes — as do many others — that the reports should be informative and analytical and provide a clear picture of the Council's activities to all Member States. The General Assembly should consider the reports of the Security Council in a more structured and comprehensive manner. Furthermore, the Security Council should thoroughly discuss all views presented and recommendations made during the consideration of the reports and reflect them in its future reports. Moreover, the reports of the Security Council to the General Assembly should be more frequent. In some cases, the submission of special reports to the General Assembly deserves to be considered.

Sixthly, we attach great importance to the annual reports of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly. Consideration of the report of the Secretary-General should provide an opportunity for all Member States to assess to what extent and in what manner the mandates given by the General Assembly have been implemented by the Secretariat. At the same time, it should be emphasized that only the Member States can set the United Nations priorities and objectives in the various sections.

While my delegation supports any effort to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the United Nations system and its Secretariat, we strongly believe that any measure taken in this respect should not be at the expense of downsizing or dismantling certain programmes or organs, particularly those related to economic and development areas.

In conclusion, my delegation once again expresses its readiness to work with you, Sir, and with other Member States in the Open-ended High-level Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System in order to attain tangible and positive results.

Mr. Hosny (Egypt) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I would like to express our solidarity with the people of Honduras after the cyclone that struck that country.

My delegation participated with great interest in the work of the Open-ended High-level Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System from the time of its establishment in accordance with General Assembly resolution 49/252. I wish to pay tribute to the efforts of the Ambassadors of New Zealand and India for the way in which they conducted the business of the Working Group. I would also like to thank them for the documents they prepared, which are the basis for our discussion in the General Assembly. I wish to pay tribute to the President of the General Assembly at its forty-ninth session, who gave tremendous support for the establishment of the Group. I would also like to pay tribute to the President of the General Assembly at its fiftieth session.

After 44 substantive meetings, the Working Group drew up document WGUNS/CRP.12, which reflects the status of consultations and which was submitted to the fiftieth session of the General Assembly. Although the paper does not represent agreement, it does include questions that received agreement in principle, as well as other questions that need further discussion.

My delegation is once again prepared to participate in the discussions when the Working Group resumes its work at the fifty-first session under the chairmanship of the President of the General Assembly. We will be working with other delegations to arrive at a consensus reflecting the views of Member States on the future of the United Nations, in order to find ways to attain the goals of the Charter of the United Nations.

Egypt does not consider the reform of the United Nations to be an end in itself. It is a way to correct certain situations which do not tally with the realities of our times. That is why we support efforts to improve the performance of our Organization, so that we can be in step with the modern world, on the basis of the values of the Charter and the priorities agreed to by the majority of the Member States through a democratic process.

Allow me here to express the fundamental principles on which our attitude is based with regard to this reform process. First of all, the strengthening and improvement of the United Nations are not a new idea. The process has been going forward and some achievements have been made, in various phases. However, much remains to be done — on a democratic basis — through governmental and international consultations that are reasonably transparent. I wish to reaffirm here that what is needed in this reform process with regard to the Organization is something that is not part of the mandate of the General Assembly, because the Assembly just implements the decisions of the Member States.

Secondly, the strengthening and reform of the United Nations is related to the efforts that all Member States will make, provided that certain countries do not impose their views, opinions and individual goals. This all has to be in keeping with the need to preserve the democratic nature of the United Nations, as well as the principle whereby all States are equal, in keeping with the Charter. The United Nations should not respond only to some countries, and no single vision should prevail in the Organization. What is called reform should not mean that some can resolve some problems while leaving others in a more perilous situation.

We need to gather the necessary resources to finance the activities of the United Nations for development. We believe that the solution to the financial crisis of the United Nations is closely linked to compliance with the principle of democracy. Thus, countries should not be allowed to regress in this respect.

Together with this, the United Nations should have a well-defined policy, one that respects the Charter of the United Nations. We also need to meet the priorities established by the majority of Member States in the United Nations. Similarly, we need to think about economic and social development and aim for it — especially for the developing countries.

It is therefore our duty to discuss the role that each party in the United Nations should play — the Secretary-General, the General Assembly, the regional commissions and, of course, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and the Bretton Woods institutions — before suggesting fundamental changes which may entail the abolition or addition of some organs or the modification of the working patterns they have followed so far.

These have made radical proposals to eliminate some bodies and to make certain improvements. Our response is that we need an international working framework reflecting our commitment to democracy within the context of international relations. We should like this framework to consist of a forum in which all can express their views. That would enable us to decide on steps that would have a positive international impact with respect to partnership. All of these measures should make it possible to strengthen international peace and security, which, after all, has been the ultimate goal of the United Nations since

it was established. It is therefore our duty to assist the General Assembly in exercising its functions in all the areas specified by the Charter, including the maintenance of international peace and security.

We must also correct other policies that seek to marginalize the role of the United Nations. We must consider in depth the strengthening of certain bodies of the United Nations, including the Security Council, in order to allow the majority of Member States to participate in the decision-making process on a democratic basis. As we know, efforts to revitalize the role of the United Nations are not new; they did not come from the present Working Group but preceded it by several years. As an example, I should like to refer to developments several years ago, in particular since the forty-seventh session, when an Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations was convened under the co-chairmanship of the representatives of Sri Lanka and Uganda. The efforts of that Group resulted in the adoption of General Assembly resolution 47/233, which recognized the importance of the reports of the Security Council to the General Assembly. It is important that we discuss these resolutions objectively and in depth. Resolution 48/264 refers to the possibility of the General Assembly creating new bodies to facilitate the discussion of any question or any matter within the scope of the Charter and the making of recommendations on it to the Members of the United Nations or to the Security Council.

I should therefore like to express our optimism with regard to acceptance of the principle of establishing machinery to discuss the report of the Security Council in the detail that is required, and to the need for consultations on this. We appeal for a positive dialogue to continue within the Working Group that will allow it to draw up a report commanding general agreement, thereby enshrining the principle of participation in the maintenance of international peace and security.

With regard to issues relating to the Secretary-General, our ideas are clear. We must take into consideration Article 97 of the Charter, which names the Secretary-General as chief administrative officer of the Organization. This is a sensitive issue and our reform efforts in the United Nations should give due weight to the implementation of resolutions, decisions and mandates adopted by Member States that explain the role of the United Nations without departing from these principles.

The selection process for the Secretary-General is an issue that needs to be reviewed. In this context, the principle of democracy should apply, thereby giving the General Assembly greater powers and ensuring closer cooperation between it and the Security Council. We should not have to vote in the process of electing the Secretary-General. As an assembly of nations, we should take into consideration the principle of consensus. The General Assembly should not become a mere instrument to be used by some without due consideration of the legitimate interests of others.

With regard to the strengthening of the United Nations system, we must keep in mind the credibility of the Organization and the financial crisis. In this context, I would appeal to Member States to pay their contributions in full and on time. My delegation reaffirms our belief that reform of the United Nations should take place in order to allow the Organization to shoulder its responsibilities, as envisaged by the founding fathers and stipulated in the Charter. This is a noble objective, requiring cooperation in a framework of democracy and equality to ensure that the common goals of humankind are realized in the United Nations.

Mr. Kamal (Pakistan): The United Nations system is going through severe stresses and strains. This is obviously an unhappy situation and needs to be rectified. The problems besetting the Organization have not emerged abruptly, nor will they vanish overnight. The General Assembly, which is the only democratic voice of the comity of nations, has seen the gradual erosion of its central role. During the past several years, the United Nations has been facing a severe financial crisis, which continues. While the United Nations bureaucracy consumes three quarters of the United Nations budget, the economic and social sectors continue to face serious problems of diminishing resources. Despite the noble declarations produced at the global conferences, the dream of a secure and prosperous world remains elusive.

Under these circumstances, none of us can dispute the argument that reform of the United Nations system is overdue. However, a word of caution is in order. While reform of the United Nations system is one of the common objectives of Member States, it is a highly complex task that requires careful consideration and genuine consensus before implementation. Any attempt to hasten the reform process by denying Member States an opportunity fully to comprehend the consequences of decisions would be counter-productive.

Reform, of course, is an ongoing process that needs to be continuously pursued. While the issue of reform has

been on the agenda of the United Nations for the past several years, the debate on reform intensified only during the fiftieth session of the General Assembly. A number of working groups have looked at various aspects of United Nations reform and will resume their deliberations early next year. Each of these Working Groups — on the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council; an Agenda for Peace; an Agenda for Development; on the financial situation of the United Nations; and on the strengthening of the United Nations system — was established by the General Assembly and therefore carries equal weight. Each has a specific mandate and cannot duplicate the work of the other Working Groups. Each is engaged in debating a set of highly complex issues.

While all issues in all the Working Groups are related to reforming the United Nations, it would be disastrous to lump them together or to force them to work under the threat of deadlines. Each of the Working Groups must function at its own pace while adhering to its own mandate. The Open-ended High-level Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System was established by resolution 49/252, with the following mandate: first, to undertake a thorough review of various studies and reports on subjects relating to the revitalization, strengthening and reform of the United Nations system; secondly, to specify, by consensus, those ideas and proposals for the purpose of revitalization, strengthening and reform of the United Nations system; and, thirdly, to perform its task without in any way duplicating or impeding the work of other groups.

The members of the Security Council have listened carefully to the proposals made in the debates on the Council's report in the Assembly in recent years as well as in deliberations held elsewhere in the Organization on how the work of the Council can be made more transparent and more accessible to non-members of the Council. I have no doubt that those members fully recognize the need for a thorough consideration of those proposals and others that are likely to be expressed today as part of the effort to promote efficiency and transparency in the work of the Council. Through such an approach, the opportunity for Member States to contribute to the work done on their behalf would be enhanced and thereby facilitate greater interaction between the Assembly and the Council.

In this regard, over the past year the Informal Working Group of the Security Council concerning the Council's documentation and other procedural questions, established in June 1993, has continued to meet regularly and a number of steps have been taken following recommendations by that Group. These have built upon the foundation laid in the past few years.

Thus, aware of the need for greater transparency, the Security Council on 28 March 1996 issued a presidential statement (S/PRST/1996/13) that sets out the procedures to improve the arrangements for consultations and exchange of information with troop-contributing countries. The issuance of the statement reflects not only the Council's readiness to act in the light of practical experience, but also its recognition of the need to respond to the views expressed by the Members of the Organization.

In the same vein, in a note dated 24 January 1996 the members of the Council indicated their agreement that the Chairman of each sanctions committee should give an oral briefing to interested Members after each meeting. That agreement is indeed consistent with the steps that have been taken in recent years to promote transparency in the procedures of the sanctions committees.

Again in January 1996, as part of the effort to improve the documentation of the Council, a note by the President was issued regarding the Council's decision to remove four issues from the list of matters of which the Council is seized.

During the period under review, there has been increased recourse to open debates, in particular at an early stage in the Council's consideration of a subject. By highlighting the concerns of the general membership on issues before the Council, such open debates have been invaluable in facilitating the work of the Council. In addition, briefings by the Council presidency for non-members of the Security Council has continued and has become an established practice.

At the same time, the members of the Council remain cognizant of the wish expressed by Members of the Organization to improve the format and nature of the report of the Security Council. The Informal Working Group on documentation and other procedural matters has continued to deliberate on this issue.

As indicated in its Introduction, the Security Council's report, as currently constituted, is intended as a guide to the activities of the Council during the period covered. Therefore, it is not intended as a substitute for the official records of the Security Council, which provide a more substantive account of its deliberations. Thus, the report should be read in conjunction with other official

documents of the Council, to which it constitutes a reference guide.

In conclusion, I am confident that the members of the Council will listen attentively to the debate we are holding today, to the comments made and the ideas raised. I remain hopeful that, over the course of the next year, we may witness further steps that will contribute to enhancing the work of the Security Council, as well as its effectiveness and transparency.

Mr. Zlenko (Ukraine): There is no need to go into detail to explain the reasons why any issue concerning the activities of the United Nations Security Council attracts such great attention on the part of the Member States of the United Nations.

First, in accordance with Article 25 of the United Nations Charter, we all agree to accept the decisions of the Security Council. Secondly, pursuant to the same Article, we all agree to carry out the decisions adopted by the Council. In other words, those decisions are mandatory for Member States. That is why we are not indifferent to the methods by which decisions are taken in the Council and the implications such decisions will have for any Member State.

Last but not least, we all consider membership in that authoritative body to be of the utmost importance and a great honour for any Member State. The proof of this is reflected in the growing competition among the Member States in practically every regional group that we have witnessed in recent years.

It goes without saying that the work of the Security Council has become more transparent and that its procedures have become more relevant and its methods more satisfying and responsive to the demands of the general United Nations membership. The report so accurately and aptly presented by the President of the Security Council, Ambassador Wisnumurti of Indonesia, adequately reflects those facts.

At the same time, while thoroughly studying the content of the report, we have been trying to find out whether or not, or to what extent, the Security Council took into account all the critical notes, general ideas and practical suggestions that were expressed by the Member States at the fiftieth session of the General Assembly.

Unfortunately, my delegation has located no sign in the report of any positive reaction to those notes, ideas and suggestions. Member States are not made aware of the results of the activities of the Security Council's Informal Working Group concerning the Council's documentation and other procedural questions in this sense. In our opinion, members of the Security Council should have paid more attention to constructive proposals that would have not only improved its working methods but that could also save money. The latter consideration is of special importance in the context of the Organization's current financial crisis.

Members of the Security Council, and first of all the permanent members, are not very enthusiastic about working out updated and consolidated rules of procedure for that important body, notwithstanding the fact that they would be the first to benefit from them.

An objective and unbiased examination shows that the so-called provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council have ceased to be the Council's procedural guidelines in its deliberations. I shall cite just one example. At present, the process of working out decisions in the Security Council is concentrated in so-called informal consultations, which are not even envisaged in the provisional rules of procedure. My delegation is not against informal consultations, as such. But the current working methods of the Council have serious procedural and financial implications. Thus, Security Council members benefit from interpretation services, which, according to the provisional rules of procedure, are to be provided only during meetings. If informal consultations are interpreted as meetings in private, then a verbatim record, albeit confidential and in a single copy, must be prepared, and the President of the Council must issue a communiqué of that meeting through the Secretary-General.

Mr. Kamal (Pakistan), Vice-President, took the Chair.

During the fiftieth session, the Working Group focused mainly on the reform of the General Assembly and the Secretariat. In May 1996, the General Assembly decided to transfer four additional items to the Working Group. This decision was taken by consensus, and the guidelines were clear. We therefore agreed that the Working Group could proceed to deal with these specific items also.

The Working Group's report to the General Assembly at its fiftieth session, contained in document A/50/24, indicates that while the progress made by the

Working Group was severely limited, the exchange of views produced a better understanding of the issues. We are happy to see that the Working Group remained within the parameters set by resolution 49/252 and resisted the temptation to assume any over-arching role vis-à-vis the other working groups of the General Assembly.

The issues before the Working Group, particularly the task of strengthening the role of the General Assembly in the United Nations system and the reform of the Secretariat, are extremely important and deserve to be followed up with utmost attention. The General Assembly is the highest political organ of the United Nations and has special significance for the great majority of Member States. It is the only organ where all Member States are duly represented. It should therefore be the centre of gravity of this Organization. We should devise ways and means for improving its performance and credibility. We should aim at restoring to it the prestige it deserves and once had. The Assembly's role, even in matters relating to international peace and security under Article 11 of the Charter, its prerogative with regard to the budget of the United Nations and its role in appointing the Secretary-General, require further in-depth discussions now more than ever before.

Next year the Working Group should focus on reform of the Secretariat. In our statement on this subject, we have been highlighting some of the problems which require deeper examination and discussion. Despite the difficulties, our efforts should be aimed at giving the United Nations a Secretariat which meets the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity, so that it shines as a beacon worthy of emulation by one and all.

It is clear that the Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System has an extremely important and heavy agenda. It is far from having completed it. Adding further to the agenda would thus be neither in conformity with its mandate nor justified. If we wish to achieve genuine reform and not mere cosmetic change, we should exercise due caution and care in dealing with this, as with other issues of reform.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item. We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 48.

Agenda item 11

Report of the Security Council (A/51/2 and Corr.1)

The President: I call on the President of the Security Council, Mr. Nugroho Wisnumurti, to introduce the report of the Security Council.

Mr. Wisnumurti (Indonesia, President of the Security Council): I am honoured and privileged to have this opportunity to address the General Assembly as President of the Security Council to introduce the annual report of the Council covering the period 16 June 1995 to 15 June 1996.

The members of the Security Council continue to attach great importance to the timely submission of this annual report to the General Assembly, as provided for in Articles 15 and 24 of the United Nations Charter. Consistent with the practice established in 1993, the draft of this annual report was issued to all Member States and was adopted at a formal meeting of the Security Council on 13 November 1996.

The consideration of the Council's report by the General Assembly provides the opportunity for substantive dialogue and interaction between these two principal organs of the United Nations. This is an essential process in enhancing and promoting the fulfilment of their respective responsibilities under the Charter. It is therefore a process that needs to be constantly nurtured.

The report once again reflects the heavy workload of the Council in responding to problems related to the maintenance of international peace and security. As the report notes, during the period under consideration, the Council held 132 formal meetings, adopted 64 resolutions and issued 62 statements of the President. In addition, Council members held 240 consultations of the whole, totalling some 377 hours. The report also lists the various issues that engaged the Council during the period under review. Clearly, however, these figures taken together do not and cannot by themselves fully reflect the dynamics of the Council's work: the intense consultations among members of the Security Council aimed at building consensus while at the same time ensuring the effectiveness of the decisions reached to control and indeed resolve the conflict situations before the Council.

In Africa, the former Yugoslavia, the Middle East, the Americas and other regions, threats to international

peace and security, and implications for humanitarian situations, still abound and constantly test the effectiveness of the Council. In all instances, the input of States immediately affected and cooperation with the relevant international and regional organizations have been valuable.

Our delegation believes that the time has come to clarify the provisions of the provisional rules of procedure and formulate them in an unambiguous way, taking into account present day realities. This means that the Security Council should be more accessible to all Member States since they have the right to know more, to be well informed and to be informed in good time.

The question of the format of the report of the Security Council is always among the hottest issues, and I am sure that in our current discussion the problem of the analytical nature of the report, or rather the lack of it, will be raised again. Today, I can only reaffirm our position that the lack of analysis is an inherent feature of a report of this kind. It is hard to believe that 15 members of the Security Council would agree a common understanding and interpretation of the Council's endeavours.

In this context, the delegation of Ukraine would prefer to consider special reports of the Security Council to the General Assembly on specific issues that the Security Council remains seized of, as provided for in Article 24, paragraph 3, of the Charter of the United Nations. My delegation would like to recommend to the Security Council's Informal Working Group concerning documentation, working methods and procedures that it study very thoroughly the issue of the preparation by the Security Council of reports on special topics for the General Assembly. A positive reaction to this proposal might make the report of the Security Council to the General Assembly, in its present format, simply redundant.

My delegation notes with satisfaction that the so-called orientation debates have become a characteristic feature of the working methods of the Security Council over the past year. Their positive impact on the work of the Security Council can hardly be overestimated. The points of view of United Nations Member States have contributed to the Security Council's elaboration of balanced and comprehensive decisions.

In our opinion, the same positive effects would be felt if the Security Council introduced the long-awaited practice of allowing interested States that are not members of the Council to participate in informal consultations. There is no doubt that if members of the Security Council understood the positions of conflicting parties, unnecessary shortcomings would be avoided and the Council's decisions would enjoy greater legality.

In conclusion, my delegation wishes to express the hope that the results of today's discussion will be suitably reflected in the responsible and honourable activities of the members of the Security Council in years to come.

Mr. Petrella (Argentina) (*interpretation from Spanish*): First of all, I would like to thank the President of the Security Council, Ambassador Nugroho Wisnumurti of Indonesia, for introducing the Council's report to the General Assembly. I now wish to make some comments on what we see as one of the most important items on the agenda of this session of the General Assembly.

The report of the Security Council to the General Assembly (A/51/2) provides the Members of the Organization with the opportunity for an overall assessment and analysis of the work of the Security Council. To this end, we have the document that was circulated somewhat earlier, which shows us the range and scope of the activities on the Council's agenda. As the President of the Council said, the Security Council is continuing to consider how to respond to threats to international peace and security. It adopted measures to control and resolve conflicts; above all, the general trend towards negotiation and consensus continues. The Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, in his annual report on the work of the Organization went one step further and reminded us that only one draft resolution was not adopted owing to the lack of the required votes in its favour, whereas on the other hand, it succeeded in adopting 51 resolutions during the period covered by the report of the Secretary-General, which indicates that, fortunately, the trend towards consensus is being consolidated.

With regard to our region, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Haiti, and gave it room for manoeuvre. We would like to avail ourselves of this opportunity to thank the Security Council for its positive attitude towards this important item which, furthermore, involves a people and Government with close friendly ties to Argentina.

We feel we need to make these comments because the relationship between the General Assembly and the Security Council needs to be smoother and deeper than it

has been in recent years, particularly in view of the new international agenda and the new modalities of work in the Security Council.

As we have emphasized in the past, these new modalities, *inter alia*, involve the practice of closed meetings to consider matters which, because of their universality, would undoubtedly be of interest to us all. They involve presidential statements in the most diverse circumstances. They involve briefings for delegations which are not always satisfactory and which are frequently less detailed than those given to the press at the same time. They involve a broad interpretation of the factors that would invoke Chapter VII of the Charter. And they involve more frequent use of the quasi-legislative or judicial powers granted to the Council under the Charter.

We must add, however, some mention of the very important and effective action taken by the Council in establishing and supervising peacekeeping operations.

In the light of what I have said, and in order to ensure that members of the Assembly can play their role under the Charter on items relating to international peace and security, I believe that we should recall the respective areas of competence of the Security Council and of the General Assembly and how each organ performs its duties. Articles 10 and 14 of the Charter set forth the shared responsibility of the Council and the Assembly for maintaining international peace and security.

In accordance with Article 24 of the Charter, States Members of the Organization confer on members of the Council primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. That Article specifies that the Security Council is not acting on its own, but on behalf of the entire international community.

It emerges from the interpretation of these Articles that the powers granted the Security Council are limited, first, by the provision that the General Assembly may discuss any matter relating to the powers and functions of the Organization, except, as stipulated in Article 12, when the Security Council is exercising its functions in respect of a particular dispute or situation.

The second constitutional limitation lies in the Charter's giving Member States the right to participate directly in decision-making processes relating to the maintenance of peace and security, as stipulated in Articles 31 and 32.

Hence, one may conclude that with the granting of powers to the Assembly and the establishment of mechanisms for direct participation, States preserve their fundamental right to act and, accordingly, to be informed, consulted and taken into account by the Security Council in the decision-making process.

Today, the very concept of participation and consultation has lost all practical meaning, as the decisions of the Council are frequently reached in the seclusion of so-called informal consultations.

It has also been the case for some years now that the report of the Security Council, which should be a nexus of vital communication between the Security Council and the General Assembly, in which all States are represented, has been merely a thematic compilation without any analytical or substantive description of activities. The report sheds no light on the decision-making process, and much less on the reasons why a given course of action was chosen in those closed meetings. Nor does it allow for any interpretation of the lessons to be learned for the future.

The lack of an updated *Répertoire of the Practice of the Security Council* adds a final and alarming element to this worrisome picture. However, the statement of the President of the Security Council in introducing the report reveals some signs of change.

In the light of the rapid changes in the international arena, one might ask, as the Ambassador of Ukraine did a moment ago, whether the current format of the report, which has been unchanged since 1973, serves the purposes of the Charter. One might also ask whether special reports, as set out in Article 24, submitted on a timely basis, would not be more useful in generating dialogue accessible to all countries, including the smallest, on questions relating to international peace and security.

All of these circumstances deserve urgent attention, not only because of the Security Council's acquired practice of holding closed meetings, but also because the international agenda has changed considerably since the end of the cold war.

Today this new agenda — and one need only look through the report of the Council to realize this — is filled with racial conflicts and conflicts between communities, massive violations of human rights, the emergence of irregular forces or entities, and all types of events that have little to do with State dominion. As a

result, the United Nations, an Organization of sovereign States, has to deal with, and is sometimes overwhelmed by, these new circumstances.

We have recalled the important functions of the Assembly not to revive old debates that had more to do with political interests than with genuine interests. We have done so because the Security Council must think carefully about the limits on its responsibilities and the necessary obligation that its gestures and its acts be as transparent as possible to the General Assembly, which shares these principal responsibilities. This would go hand in hand with the triumph of democracy in the world, at a time when there is explosive growth of transparency in public administration, fostered by a revolution in global communications.

The founders of the Organization did not intend to establish a system of exclusion between the Assembly and the Council, but rather a dynamic relationship of cooperation. The Security Council has no authority of its own; as stipulated in Article 24, it acts on behalf of all of us, and not solely on behalf of its members. In accordance with the principle that there can be no delegation of powers without obligations, we should explore ways and means to restore, through dialogue, productive interaction between the Security Council, the General Assembly and Member States. Only in this way can we help put an end to the crisis of participation and confidence affecting the majority of the Member States of the Organization.

Mr. Wang Xuexian (China) *(interpretation from Chinese)*: The Chinese delegation wishes to thank the President of the Security Council for submitting the annual report of the Council to the General Assembly. The report basically reflects the work of the Council in the period from 1995 to 1996. Though fewer resolutions and presidential statements were adopted than in the preceding 12-month period, the Council remained very busy. It did a great deal of work and made fresh contributions to the maintenance of international peace and security. It also made certain decisions to improve its working methods and enhance its transparency. These efforts should be recognized.

The Council is an important United Nations organ that bears primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. It is therefore useful to review and summarize the work of the Council every year in the context of consideration of its annual report. As a permanent member of the Security Council, China is willing to listen to the views of Member States on the Council's work and attaches great importance to those views. The Chinese delegation is of the view that the Council should make greater efforts or improvements in the following areas to keep abreast of developments on the international scene and make a greater contribution to the maintenance of international peace and security.

First, under the Charter the Council acts on behalf of all Member States. Therefore, the Council, before making major decisions, should hear in full the views of the general membership, particularly those of the countries of the region concerned, and increase their participation in the work of the Council so as to enhance the accuracy and authority of its decision-making. In this connection, the Council has already made some efforts, such as holding public meetings to draw on collective wisdom when considering important issues and consulting with troop contributors on the deployment, extension and termination of peacekeeping operations. These are all effective practices that should be continued.

Secondly, in resolving international and regional conflicts, the Council should, in accordance with the Charter, try to urge the parties concerned to settle their disputes and differences peacefully through negotiation. It should be very prudent and take the humanitarian implications fully into consideration before adopting such mandatory measures as sanctions and military intervention, so as to avoid any harm to innocent groups and further complication of problems. In this regard, many important issues need to be resolved.

Thirdly, on major questions concerning international peace and security, the Council should consistently abide by the purposes and principles of the Charter and, in particular, respect the views of the countries and parties involved and those of the countries of the region concerned and encourage regional organizations to play a proper role in the light of different circumstances. My delegation believes that there are both progress and weaknesses in the work of the Security Council in this area.

Fourthly, the Council has clearly defined terms of reference. It should refrain from exceeding its mandate to trespass on the affairs of other bodies and should particularly respect the authority of the General Assembly. As a Chinese saying goes, it should sweep clean the snow from its own door and not worry about defrosting other people's windows.

As stated by the President of the Council, the report will help Member States understand the work of the Council during the period under consideration. We hope that the Council will continue its efforts to improve its working methods and to enhance its transparency and effectiveness on the basis of bringing experiences together and hearing the views of all parties in full so that it can play a proper role in maintaining international peace and security.

Mr. Park (Republic of Korea): At the outset, my delegation would like to associate itself with the statement made by Ambassador Wisnumurti, President of the Security Council, regarding the report of the Security Council now under consideration.

As he rightly pointed out in his statement, the consideration of the Council's report by the General Assembly provides a good opportunity for productive dialogue and interaction between the two principal organs of the United Nations. The question of the relationship between the general membership and the Security Council on matters related to international peace and security remains inconclusive and unclear in spite of 50 years' experience and the provisions of the Charter governing that relationship. My delegation hopes that this forum will contribute to bringing these two vital organs closer together so that they can discharge their heavy responsibilities in a most harmonious manner in the interest of world peace.

Last year, several delegations, in referring to paragraph 1 of Article 24 of the Charter, which stipulates that the Security Council acts on behalf of the Member States, indicated the need for a system of checks and balances between the Security Council and the General Assembly. In our view, however, an optimal relationship between the General Assembly and the Security Council can be better achieved through the practical pursuit of closer consultation and coordination between the two organs rather than by focusing on a debate over which body reigns supreme over the other.

The heavy workload of the Security Council, particularly since the end of the cold war, is well known to us. We believe that such an expansion in the role of the Security Council must necessarily be accompanied by greater input and cooperation from the general membership. Through our own experience as a member of the Security Council, we have gained the firm conviction that the decisions made by the Council cannot be fully implemented without appropriate support and understanding from those outside the Council chamber.

Consequently, it goes without saying that the adequate flow of information and proper interaction between the Council and the General Assembly assumes primary importance. The Security Council should be quite familiar with and sensitive to the preferences and priorities of the general membership. By the same token, all Member States represented in the Assembly are entitled to better information about past actions and future plans of the Council. Fortunately, we have seen some modest, but meaningful, progress during the period under consideration.

One of the prominent improvements has been the enhanced arrangement for the consultation and exchange of information with troop-contributing countries as contained in the Presidential Statement of 28 March 1996 (S/PRST/1996/13). We believe that, among others, the new mechanism has made it easier to create a strong support base for a new peacekeeping operation by providing for meetings with prospective troop contributors before its establishment. Oral briefings by the Chairman of each sanctions committee, which were introduced at the beginning of this year, have also served as a valuable step in increasing the knowledge of non-members of the Council on how the sanctions regime actually works. By making proper use of the orientation debate, the Council has also received useful and timely input from non-members of the Council on various issues.

Above all else, the Council President's briefings on the informal consultations have now become a vital semi-institutional link between Council members and non-members. These briefings are especially important given the role of informal consultations in the decision-making process of today's Security Council. It is now an indisputable fact that informal consultations are the core activity in the Security Council, while the formal meetings, with the exception of open debates, have more or less assumed a ceremonial nature.

Whenever I come out of the consultation room and pass non-members of the Council being briefed by members of the Council, I always feel that, given the critical importance of informal consultations, there should be a more systematic and reliable way of providing information to the general membership as a whole. While the solution to this problem might not be within our immediate grasp, we think that, for now, the report of the Council can, as many Members of this Organization hope, be improved by being made more substantive and analytical.

As it stands now, the report customarily reproduces the text of resolutions or presidential statements already adopted and readily available elsewhere. In this regard, my delegation believes that, rather than passing on merely duplicative texts, efforts should be made to convey the proceedings of the informal consultations in a more substantial fashion. This type of improvement in the format of the report will also help to transform it into a genuine guide to the activities of the Security Council, as envisioned in its introduction.

Before concluding, I wish to emphasize once again that an enhanced partnership between the General Assembly and the Security Council can only serve to augment the calibre of that organ in coping with the broad range of new conflicts and instabilities that have emerged in the post-cold-war period.

Therefore, I would like to close by reaffirming that my delegation, as a member of the Council, will continue to do its utmost to ensure that the essential link between the General Assembly and the Security Council, as exemplified by this report, is further strengthened, particularly in creating a more orderly and reliable flow of information between the two organs.

Mr. Mabilangan (Philippines): The Philippine delegation, at the outset, wishes to thank the President of the Security Council, the Permanent Representative of Indonesia, for his presentation of the report of the Security Council to the General Assembly.

My delegation received the report of the Security Council just before the debate and we thank the members of the Council for their efforts. We would have preferred, however, the report to have been circulated prior to the plenary general debate so that our delegation, and presumably others, could have prepared more adequately for this debate. Nevertheless, from the limited time we have had to consider this report, we can only express once again our disappointment with its content.

We must therefore reiterate that the inability of the General Assembly to conduct a truly substantive and analytical debate on the report, as envisioned in General Assembly resolution 48/264 on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly, arises mainly from the present method or procedure for considering the report and its content. I wish to address briefly these two points.

First, there is an urgent need to improve the Assembly's present format of considering the annual report of the Security Council. In this regard, operative paragraph 4 of General Assembly resolution 48/264 invites the President of the Assembly to propose appropriate ways and means to facilitate an in-depth discussion by the Assembly of matters contained in the reports submitted to it by the Council and, it implies, to consider possible action which may be proposed by delegations on these reports.

Moreover, the latest working document of the Open-ended High-level Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System states that the President of the General Assembly should assess the debate on this item and that, in the light of this assessment, informal consultations should be held to discuss the need for and content of any action by the Assembly based on the debate.

It is therefore clear that the present organizational set-up is felt to be inadequate for an in-depth discussion of the report, as called for in resolution 48/264. A more appropriate mechanism or procedure should be established to permit the General Assembly to have an analytical exchange of views on the matters in the report and, where appropriate, to translate these views into recommendations or decisions. We therefore urge the President to undertake consultations on this matter at the earliest possible date.

On the second point — improvements in the content and presentation of the report — operative paragraph 3 of resolution 48/264 encourages the Council to provide a clear and informative account of its work in connection with its submission of reports to the Assembly. We believe that this could be accomplished by presenting a more substantive and explanatory annual report, and not what is essentially a compilation of official proceedings and decisions.

Towards this end, the report should include a summary of the consultations of the whole on key matters that it covers, focusing on the reasons, circumstances or factors which led to a specific course of action or non-action on an issue. This would enable the General Assembly to gain a clearer appreciation of the Council's deliberations and the thinking of its members which led to decisions or actions on critical issues.

The usefulness of the report would also be enhanced if it were to include sections on the decisions and recommendations of the Council's subsidiary organs, especially its sanctions committees, the highlights or outcomes of its consultations with troop-contributing

countries, on peacekeeping operations and on the steps taken by the Council to improve the transparency of its working methods and decision-making process.

The Council should also provide special reports to the General Assembly throughout the year, in accordance with Articles 15 and 24 of the United Nations Charter. These reports would not only supplement the annual report, but also provide the General Assembly with a continuous, up-to-date and authoritative source of information on the Security Council's decisions and activities. In this regard, my delegation suggests that special reports be issued as soon as particular actions and situations occur in the period between the submission of the annual reports. These actions should include the establishment of new peacekeeping operations, the termination of peacekeeping operations or substantive changes in their mandates. Decisions by the Council to impose or lift sanctions on any Member State of the United Nations or to change existing sanctions regimes should also be occasions for issuing a special report to the General Assembly.

Finally, we believe that a truly substantive debate on the annual report, as envisioned in resolution 48/264 and facilitated by a more substantive report and an improved method for considering the report, would serve as a convincing manifestation of an effective relationship between the General Assembly and the Security Council.

Mr. García (Colombia) (*interpretation from Spanish*): At the outset, allow me to thank the Permanent Representative of Indonesia, in his capacity as President of the Security Council, for introducing the report of the Security Council to the General Assembly covering the period from 16 June 1995 to 15 June 1996.

Articles 10 to 17 of the Charter of the United Nations refer to the functions and powers of the General Assembly. Article 15 provides that the General Assembly shall receive and consider both annual and special reports from the Security Council. In turn, Article 24, paragraph 3, of the Charter provides that the Council shall submit annual and, when necessary, special reports to the General Assembly for its consideration.

These two articles establish an institutional link of the utmost importance for the work of the United Nations — a link that reflects the fact that whenever the Council acts, it should do so in conformity with the Charter, and in so doing, acts on behalf of the Member States. However, at the same time, in the Organization there is a universal, supreme and unique organ, the General Assembly, in which all Member States are represented. That organ has a very broad mandate covering all subjects and issues within the scope of the Charter, including issues relating to the maintenance of international peace and security.

It is therefore clear that although the Security Council has primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, that responsibility is not and cannot be exclusive to the Council. The importance of the Council's report to the Assembly is underscored by the fact that Article 15, paragraph 1, of the Charter refers to the report of the Security Council separately, in order to differentiate it from the reports of all other United Nations organs to the General Assembly, which are referred to in paragraph 2 of the same Article.

We regret that despite the provisions of General Assembly resolution 48/264, which encouraged the Council to submit reports to the Assembly in a timely manner, document A/51/2, dated 13 November 1996, was only distributed last week. In addition to the very short span of time between the submission of the report and its consideration in the Assembly, the report, as published, lacks the elements that would allow the Assembly to fulfil properly its responsibility of considering, analysing and assessing the work of the Council.

In the period covered by the report, the Council held 132 formal meetings, that is, 20 meetings fewer than in the period covered by the previous year's report. Although the decrease corresponds to a general trend reflected in a reduction in the number of private meetings, resolutions adopted and statements by the President, it is important to point out that contrary to the wish of the Members of the Organization to increase the number of open meetings, these have been constantly decreasing over the past few years.

If we add to what I have just said the fact that in many instances the formal meetings go no further than formalizing decisions of the Council that have been negotiated in private, the extremely limited information available to non-member States of the Council becomes obvious.

We consider the efforts made by the Council to rationalize its programme of work and to improve the transparency of the sanctions committees to be positive, yet insufficient. Likewise, we recognize the importance of continuing the informal briefings by the President on the work of the Council, where delegations that are not

members of the Security Council have access to some of the information not reflected in its reports.

We also welcome the measures adopted by the Council to achieve greater transparency and better communication between Council members and non-members since 1993, when the informal Working Group on documentation and other procedural questions was established. Nevertheless, there is still a long way to go to achieve the necessary transparency and information to ensure the enhanced functioning of the Council and proper communication with the Assembly to allow the latter to fulfil the mandate envisaged by the Charter.

In that regard, what was stated last year by the delegation of Colombia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries is still entirely valid. Likewise, the decisions adopted by the Heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned Movement at the eleventh Summit, held at Cartagena in 1995, are fully relevant and valid, including, *inter alia*, those referring to the functioning of the Security Council, the need to ensure the transparency of the Council's work and improve its working relations with the General Assembly, and the implementation of Article 50 of the Charter.

My delegation wishes to reiterate the proposals that have been expressed on various occasions in this forum regarding the improvement of the Council's report in order to allow the Assembly to perform the responsibilities attributed to it by the Charter.

Regarding its reports to the General Assembly, the Security Council should, first, submit its annual report before the beginning of the general debate in the General Assembly; second, submit reports every three months, which would simplify their preparation and provide more current and useful information; third, emphasize the outcome of the action taken by the Council and referred to in the report, with the corresponding evaluation; fourth, provide adequate information on its informal consultations on issues brought to its attention; fifth, include decisions and recommendations on the work of the subsidiary organs of the Council, particularly the sanctions committees and tribunals; sixth, include the highlights of the results of consultations with troop-contributing countries on peacekeeping operations; seventh, include a section on the steps taken by the Council to improve its working methods; and eighth, take into account in the preparation of the report the points of view of the General Assembly on the reports of the Security Council. Lastly, the report should be comprehensive, analytical and substantive.

The Council should increase the number of formal meetings and improve the information on closed meetings, so that Members of the Organization are aware of the main elements and tendencies relating to the issues under consideration by the Council. Likewise, the Council should submit special reports to the General Assembly during the year. Those reports could be submitted, for example, when new peacekeeping operations are established, when their mandates are modified and when their activities have been completed. Special reports could also be submitted whenever sanctions are imposed or lifted, or when changes in a sanctions regime have taken place.

Finally, my delegation wishes to inform members that consultations are taking place within the Non-Aligned Movement on a possible draft resolution on the report of the Council to the General Assembly. For this reason, we request that agenda item 11, entitled "Report of the Security Council", be kept open.

Mr. Böck (Austria): Austria welcomes the introduction of the report of the Security Council, as contained in document A/51/2, by the President of the Council, the Permanent Representative of Indonesia. This continues a trend started by Brazil in 1993 and represents, in accordance with Article 24 of the United Nations Charter, a step towards enhancing the relationship between the Security Council and the General Assembly. This presentation by the Council President highlights, in our opinion, the Council's readiness to enter into and continue dialogue with the General Assembly.

The relationship between the Security Council and the General Assembly is undoubtedly one of the core issues of the ongoing reform debate. Let me stress the importance my delegation attaches to efforts aimed at redressing the political imbalance between these two organs. It is essential that the General Assembly become an even more relevant player in the decision-making process of the United Nations. However, in order for it to regain its importance as a forum for political dialogue and as a meeting place for all nations, as well as to better function as a policy-setting, coordinating and oversight body, the General Assembly has to improve its organization of work and its working methods. This goal needs to be pursued with utmost vigour. My delegation therefore welcomes the first steps to streamline the proceedings of the General Assembly which have been taken under Ambassador Razali's leadership.

Although it is undoubtedly of particular value to be presented with and to have a discussion in plenary meeting about such an extensive account of the various activities and actions of the Security Council, covering the period from 16 June 1995 to 15 June 1996, it seems even more important to achieve increased interaction, wherever appropriate, between the members and non-members of the Council at an early point in the consultation and decision-making process. Improving interaction among delegations would automatically enhance the legitimacy and efficiency of the Council. Let me restate our view that, as the discussions on the enlargement of the Security Council meet with some difficulties, the need for greater legitimacy of the Council suggests that more attention should be paid to interaction and transparency issues.

An adequate flow of information towards non-members seems a prerequisite for understanding and assessing how the Council is dealing with political issues, and it should therefore be facilitated. We believe that the need for confidentiality has to be weighed against the advantages of a transparent approach. Overall, transparency rather than secrecy should be one of the guiding principles of the Security Council's activities. Member States with a special interest in situations which are under consideration in the Security Council should be given the opportunity to articulate their views as early as possible. This participatory element is especially important for countries which are concerned with or touched by a given conflict or which, due to their geographic location, should assume a particular role in the ensuing operations mandated or authorized by the Security Council. We welcome the progress made in recent years in this area, and we hope that this trend will continue.

Such a necessary and substantial dialogue is deemed to be of particular importance in the field of peacekeeping operations. Overall, the current mechanism for interaction between the Security Council, the Secretariat and the troop contributors has to be further strengthened. My delegation welcomes the improvements undertaken by the Council in the last two years towards better access to information, and we ask all its present and future members to assure an appropriate and consistent follow-up to these initial steps. Let me mention in this context last week's meeting of Security Council members, troop-contributing countries, and States from the concerned region, regarding the establishment of a multinational force to address the tragic situation in eastern Zaire. This meeting provided us with an excellent example of the usefulness of such an approach.

As the extensive report of the Security Council demonstrates, the Council accomplished an enormous amount of work during the period under consideration. The packed agenda of this period highlights again the ever increasing challenges facing this organ as well as the United Nations as a whole.

In the past my delegation has made suggestions on the possible format of future reports of the Security Council to the General Assembly, including the possibility of monthly reports, which would then be put together to form the yearly report of the Security Council. We would hope this could be achieved without adding too much to the workload of the Secretariat. My delegation is fully aware of the potential difficulties arising from this suggestion. However, a more analytical report on the work of the Security Council would contribute not only to the transparency of the Council's work but also to the promotion of interaction between the Security Council and the General Assembly, to which I referred earlier.

Mr. Fulci (Italy): First, I wish to congratulate the Permanent Representative of Indonesia, Ambassador Nugroho Wisnumurti, who, in his capacity as President of the Security Council, has made a clear, comprehensive and thoughtful presentation of the Council's annual report to the General Assembly. My compliments go also to the Secretariat for a job well done in preparing this document.

The Security Council's report to the General Assembly is essential for ensuring close and effective coordination between these two principal organs of the United Nations. It is a crucial point of reference for the discussion of questions relating to the maintenance of international peace and security, as provided for under Article 15, paragraph 1, of the United Nations Charter. Perhaps it is worth recalling that in order to achieve the purposes of the Organization, the Charter requires that the Security Council and the General Assembly not work in isolation but establish an open and constructive dialogue, consistent with their respective responsibilities.

As Ambassador Wisnumurti pointed out, this year's report brings out the Security Council's intense activity in the maintenance of international peace and security and related humanitarian aspects. This is proved by the number of formal meetings and informal consultations held, resolutions adopted and statements issued. In particular, the almost daily informal consultations demonstrate the Council's commitment to respond

adequately to the challenges of today's international relations.

As a member of the Council for the past two years, Italy has directly witnessed and participated in the Council's efforts to solve international crises and other situations that might affect international peace and security. Italy's action in the Council has been guided by two principles. First and foremost is the defence and promotion of the interests of the international community as a whole; and the second is the involvement and participation of all States in the activities of the Council, especially of those most directly concerned by its deliberations, when the discussion of matters of interest to them had not been previously announced. That is why my delegation made it a point to inform colleagues from other Missions promptly when matters affecting them were raised in the Council. This is why we have insisted so much on more public debates, as well as on prior consultations with countries contributing troops to peacekeeping operations, and not merely the presentation of information.

Needless to say, Italy also attaches the utmost importance to the principle of democracy, which entails trust, transparency and accountability. We have consistently viewed these elements as the guidelines for our action in the Security Council. We hope therefore that our contribution to the Council's work has met the expectations of the general membership of the United Nations, which almost unanimously elected Italy to a seat on the Council two years ago.

In view of the recognized need for greater transparency in the Council's work and for greater accessibility to non-members, various proposals have been put forward in previous debates on the Council's report, as well as in other forums, such as 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. Unlike the Group's discussion of the question of expanding the Council's membership, its discussions on how to improve the Council's working methods have made meaningful progress. No amendment to the Charter seems to be necessary on the specific issue of working methods. Consequently, we hope and believe that it will be possible to achieve quick results towards updating and strengthening the United Nations system through one or more resolutions of the General Assembly or of the Security Council.

This year's report already reflects a number of achievements in the field of transparency. As I have already mentioned, new procedures were introduced to enhance arrangements for consultations between the Council and troop-contributing countries. There was increasing recourse to open debates, particularly at an early stage in the Council's consideration of a subject.

Briefings by the President of the Council for non-members have become an established practice. Moreover, it has become standard practice for the President to speak to the press at the end of every meeting, highlighting matters discussed that day, often after the Council had been given guidelines beforehand. Furthermore — and this is no less important for dispelling the atmosphere of secrecy that often used to surround the Council's informal consultations — now, every day, all delegations of the United Nations can learn the agenda of the Security Council in advance from the *Journal*. The procedures of the sanctions committees were further improved. In these and other areas, the Council has greatly benefited from the activity of its Informal Working Group on documentation and other procedural matters, established in June 1993.

At the same time, further steps are needed to improve the effectiveness and transparency of the Council's work and of its interaction with the General Assembly. First and foremost — as other colleagues who spoke before me have already said — we need to review the format and content of the report to the General Assembly. At present, the report is merely analytical and descriptive of the activity of the Council, and does not provide any substantive indication of the process leading to the Council's decisions. These limits were also recognized by several speakers last year when we debated on the report, and they continue to hinder a more thorough and meaningful consideration of the report by the General Assembly.

In particular, we believe that the report should include a brief account of the Council's informal consultations on crisis areas, regional tensions, humanitarian emergencies and other issues crucial to local and global stability. We therefore look forward to the further analysis and discussion of the proposal on the preparation of the Council's report already submitted along these lines in the Informal Working Group on documentation and other procedural matters.

In conclusion, let me express my confidence that today's debate on the Security Council's report will once again be extremely useful in reaffirming the Council's fundamental role in guaranteeing international peace and

security. At the same time, it is hoped that it will help to indicate practical ways and means to improve further the Council's effectiveness and transparency vis-à-vis all Members of the United Nations, and ensure the full involvement of all in the deliberations on peace, war, sanctions and other matters which, needless to say, are of vital interest to each and every one of us.

Mr. Hasmy Agam (Malaysia): Let me begin by conveying my deep appreciation to the President of the Security Council, Ambassador Nugroho Wisnumurti of Indonesia, for his statement introducing the report of the Security Council (A/51/2). This debate, and those that the General Assembly has held in the past on reports of the Council, testify to the importance attached by the general membership of the Organization to the work and functioning of the Security Council.

By the virtue of Article 15 of the Charter of the United Nations, the General Assembly deserves to be fully informed of the practice of the Security Council in its principal role of maintaining international peace and security. Under that Article, the Assembly shall receive and consider annual and special reports from the Council which shall include an account of the measures that the Council has decided upon or taken to fulfil its Charter-mandated obligations. The provisions of this Article, and of Article 10 of the Charter, clearly stipulate the key role of the General Assembly as the global forum for monitoring the work and activities of other principal organs of the United Nations. My delegation therefore believes that the agenda item before us today provides an excellent opportunity for the general membership represented in this Assembly to express its views on the work of the Security Council.

My delegation has carefully studied the report of the Security Council contained in document A/51/2. In my delegation's assessment, apart from some cosmetic changes, the report remains — disappointingly, as in the past — a mere compendium of meetings and decisions in the form of resolutions and presidential statements, as well as a compilation of communications and documentation received by the Security Council during the period under review. In fact, there is nothing new in the report; most delegations have already had access to the information it contains, as it has been circulated by the Department of Public Information.

Malaysia has on several occasions in the past emphasized the need for the Security Council to produce an analytical and substantive report of its work to the General Assembly. Even if such a report involved extra work and had other implications, the value of a comprehensive report, such as those submitted by the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization or the annual report of the International Court of Justice, would justify that extra work and outweigh those other implications; moreover, the report would be meaningful to all delegations.

The present report does not provide information on the basis of decisions made by the Security Council on all issues. My delegation would like to believe that the members of the Security Council had conducted thorough consultations among themselves as well as the parties concerned before making any decision. In this regard, the report has done the Council an injustice by not reflecting the substance of those important consultations, which led to the Council's decisions. On the other hand, if such consultations had taken place, my delegation believes that the Council is obliged, at the very minimum, to explain and inform the General Assembly of the substantive elements that were deliberated upon in respect of particular issues. This measure would contribute to better appreciation of the Council's decisions and uphold the principle that the Council acts on behalf of all Member States.

As is obvious from the report, it only indicates communications received by the Security Council from Member States on various subjects that need the Council's attention. Beyond this, however, the General Assembly is not given any information on the deliberations or the decision-making process in considering those matters. It appears to indicate the first instance when an issue was brought to the Council and the Council's subsequent decision, without making any reference to what transpired in between. This is obviously not in conformity with the normal practice of reporting by national Governments or intergovernmental organizations. Is it unreasonable for Governments represented in this Assembly to request that a similar practice be adopted by the Security Council, and that the decisions that are made on their behalf be explained?

While recognizing that the Security Council has taken some measures to improve its work and procedures, we believe that much more remains to be done. While we encourage the Council to have more formal meetings, the non-Council member States must be allowed to speak first at those formal meetings so that the Council can truly benefit from their input. Current practice often makes these meetings merely pro forma. There have been various proposals — as discussed in the Working Group — dealing with reform of the Council that could

be adopted to bring more transparency and democracy into the Council's decision-making process. My delegation earnestly hopes that the Council will be ready formally to adopt and institutionalize those measures without further delay. By reacting positively to the wishes of the general membership, the Council would enhance its standing and legitimacy in the eyes of the international community. This is important, bearing in mind that the Council's decisions have global reach and implications, and that it is only with the full support of the international community that the Council can fulfil the responsibilities provided for in the Charter.

My delegation would like to underscore the importance of timely reports from the Security Council. The annual report itself should be made available much earlier if the Assembly is to deliberate on it in a meaningful way. Apart from submitting the annual report, the Council, under Article 15, to which I referred earlier, should also keep the general membership of this Organization informed at regular intervals throughout the year through its special reports. This is important, as we all live in a dynamic environment where breaches of international peace and security that require Council action sometimes take place. At the same time, this would enable the Council to give a comprehensive account of its deliberations and its decisions on all issues in an orderly and timely manner. This Assembly would have benefited, for example, from a special report on the great human tragedy in the Great Lakes region. It would also be useful for the General Assembly to be informed of the various reports prepared for the Council but never brought to the Assembly's attention as a result of opposition from certain quarters.

On another aspect of the report, my delegation has in the past emphasized the need for the Council also to include in its report information regarding the consultations of the whole which are normally undertaken prior to its action or deliberations on issues within its mandate, and on the process leading to action on them, including a brief summary of the main views of Council members on these issues. This would further enhance the process of transparency in the Council's actions, thus enabling all delegations and the world outside to fully comprehend the issues at hand. It would be more useful if the report contained a brief assessment of the areas of success and failure of the Council in relation to issues raised in the report. This assessment would include an analysis of the extent to which the Council's action or lack of action affected and influenced the situation in question and its future prospects.

Apart from incorporating the decisions and recommendations of the subsidiary organs of the Council, it is also important to underline the need for the inclusion of the highlights or outcome of the consultations between the Council and troop-contributing countries on the status of the existing peacekeeping operations or the establishment of such operations in the future. This would enable the Council to make decisions taking into account the views and intentions of the troop contributors, who in turn would be able to follow closely the Council's actions regarding the mandate, as well as developments on the ground where these operations are established.

Despite the Council's continued reliance on sanctions as a means of ensuring compliance by the target States with the relevant Council resolutions, the information provided in the report regarding the activities of the sanctions committees is still superficial and lacking in depth. In this regard, my delegation believes that the report should have a separate chapter comprehensively to reflect the activities and decisions of each of the sanctions committees. We would like to reiterate the need, again for the sake of transparency, for future reports of the Council to include information regarding informal meetings of the sanctions committees. The work of these committees must indeed be acknowledged, and due recognition to them must be reflected in the report.

Let me stress again the need to improve the format and content of the report of the Security Council along the lines proposed in this Assembly. Otherwise, this debate will only be an annual ritual that we all go through.

Mr. Wlosowicz (Poland): Allow me to begin by expressing appreciation to the President of the Security Council, Ambassador Wisnumurti of Indonesia, for having introduced the annual report of the Security Council to the General Assembly. This report covers the one-year period from 16 June 1995, half of which runs concurrently with Poland's membership in the Council. My delegation is pleased fully to endorse the statement Ambassador Wisnumurti has just made.

At this point, let me also express my delegation's gratitude to the Secretary-General for his efforts in providing the Security Council with all it needs to discharge its mandate. Our thanks go as well to the hard-working members of the United Nations Secretariat.

Dialogue and cooperation between the General Assembly and the Security Council, the two principal

organs of the United Nations, are of crucial importance for this Organization in the pursuit of its objectives. We welcome the fact that in recent years this dialogue and cooperation have been gaining in scope and substance. We praise the inventive approach of United Nations Members towards enriching the relationship between the Council and the Assembly. We also commend the Council's readiness to respond positively to what others have to say and to accelerate the process it has embarked on to improve its working methods.

We are pleased to see successive Security Council presidencies informing interested delegations, on a daily basis, about this body's deliberations. This, coupled with the practice of announcing the Council's agenda and distributing the relevant documents, gives the general membership useful and much sought after insight into the Council's proceedings and allows for a better understanding of its decisions.

The Council itself is also making an effort — in our view a successful one — to become better informed on issues with which it is dealing. I emphasize only two points in this regard: first, the increasing use of orientation debates as a vehicle for an exchange of views in the early stages of Council's deliberations; and secondly, the determination with which the Presidents of the Security Council are making themselves, and the Council as a whole, accessible to all United Nations Members.

As the seventh largest troop contributor, Poland welcomes the changes in the mechanism for peacekeeping consultations, as introduced by the President of the Security Council in his statement of 28 March 1996. This is an important document. What has been achieved is greater transparency and, perhaps even more importantly, a wider and more substantial involvement of the countries that have for a long time been expressing their legitimate interest in exerting more influence on United Nations peacekeeping. My delegation believes that there is room for further improvement in the mechanism for peacekeeping consultations, and we think that the idea of institutionalization might be more closely examined.

Poland notes with satisfaction the further improvements in the functioning of the sanctions committees that were made on the basis of decisions contained in the note of the President of the Council dated 24 January 1996. This process must be continued.

Speaking of sanctions, I should like to stress that every effort should be made to minimize the unintended side effects of sanctions, that is, to limit, insofar as possible, the unnecessary suffering of those who are not responsible for governing a target country. This factor should properly be taken into account when imposing mandatory measures under Chapter VII of the Charter. We believe the same should apply to the work of the sanctions committees. We expect these committees to address humanitarian issues on a priority basis in each particular case and, if necessary, to bring the matter to the attention of the Council.

In our view, the problem of sanctions deserves further attention by the Council and all other relevant United Nations bodies — namely, the Informal Open-ended Working Group on an Agenda for Peace, the Special Committee on the Charter of the United Nations and on the Strengthening of the Role of the Organization, the Sixth Committee and the Open-ended Working Group on the reform of the Security Council.

As the President of the Security Council has said, the current report of the Council once again reflects the heavy workload of this body. It held 132 formal meetings, adopted 64 resolutions, issued 62 presidential statements, and spent hundreds of hours in informal consultations. Yet, however high these figures may look, they are still somewhat lower than the corresponding ones of last year, and lower still than those of the year before that.

Of course, the well-known changes in the Council's agenda are definitely behind this decrease. I would venture to say, however, that the Council's enhanced ability to better shape its response to the crises with which it has been dealing, as well as its increased efficiency, may also be attributed, at least partly, to those changes. I am stressing this point because on previous occasions of this kind certain delegations rightly pointed to the risk of the Council's becoming increasingly prolific, thus lessening the value of its message.

I should like to share one more observation with regard to numbers. Out of 132 formal meetings of the Security Council, 45 were devoted to the situation in the former Yugoslavia and 42 to issues related to the African continent. As of now, the Yugoslav crisis has partly fallen off the agenda. The conflicts in Africa, however, are clearly going to stay with us for some time.

The Council's experience with emergency situations prompts me to make two other points: first, to emphasize the importance of cooperation between the Security Council and regional organizations; and secondly, my

delegation firmly believes that the United Nations rapid deployment capability is in need of further enhancement and improvement. We welcome the recent progress in the process of creating a rapidly deployable headquarters team. It is our hope that the team will become operational as previously scheduled, that is, at the beginning of next year.

These are the comments of the Polish delegation on the work of the Security Council on the occasion of the examination of the Council's annual report to the General Assembly. Being a non-permanent member of the Council at the halfway point of our term, we attach great significance to the views of the delegations that have already spoken and those that will do so today. A harmonious relationship between the Security Council and the General Assembly constitutes a *conditio sine qua non* for the smooth and efficient work of the whole Organization. While satisfied with what has already been achieved, we, like other delegations, would also like to see further progress in bringing the General Assembly and the Security Council closer together. We are ready to make our contribution towards realizing this objective.

Mr. Eitel (Germany): We welcome the presentation of the report of the Security Council to the General Assembly. It reflects the vast agenda with which the Council had to deal between June of last year and June of this year. As the President of the Security Council, Ambassador Wisnumurti, put it, the report is a guide to the previous activities of the Council. As a guide, it does not replace substance. It serves, rather, as an indicator of direction and as a reference.

From a German perspective, three aspects deserve particular mention in this context: first, the format of the report; secondly, transparency and related measures; and thirdly, the overall reform context.

Any comment on the Security Council report would be incomplete without a reference to the widespread dissatisfaction in the General Assembly regarding its format. My delegation shares that dissatisfaction. In our opinion, future reports could and ought to be both more concise and more substantial.

As to the first of these two criteria, the volume of this year's report has been reduced by 10 per cent compared to the previous one. However, the report still has more than 300 pages. That reflects the enormous workload of the Council, but it may also leave some leeway to make the report even shorter and more precise. The wording of many parts of the report is identical to that of last year's edition. In our view, it should be possible to replace these formal and repetitive portions with more substance and analysis, for instance in the introduction to the report. Thus, the General Assembly and its President would be helped in assessing and debating the report. This aspect is rightly mentioned in the report of the Open-ended High-level Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System (A/50/24). Proposals to achieve these goals are on the table in the Informal Working Group of the Council concerning the Council's documentation, but views diverge on how to proceed. My delegation is one of those that have been and will continue to be actively interested in the matter.

A careful reduction in the number of matters of which the Security Council is seized could also contribute to a shorter and more precise report. After extensive consideration in the Informal Working Group of the Security Council concerning the Council's documentation and other procedural questions, the Council approved, during the German presidency, the final version of a mechanism that provides for a yearly deletion of topics that have not been considered by the Council for five years. At the same time, it allows any Member State to have any item retained through a simple notification to the Secretary-General. This last element enhances not only the transparency of the Council's work but also the cooperation between the Council and all States Members of the United Nations.

I now turn to the subject of transparency and related measures. During its two presidencies, in June 1995 and August 1996, Germany tried to ensure an extensive, substantial briefing of non-members of the Council by the President of the Council on a daily basis, thereby implementing previous measures adopted by the Council. It successfully asked for more open meetings of the Council, thus opening the Council to the general membership, including observer delegations. The improvement of transparency is also one of Germany's central concerns with regard to the sanctions committees. In particular, our chairmanship of the Committee established by Security Council resolution 661 (1990) on the situation between Iraq and Kuwait gave us the opportunity to contribute to this matter.

Among the various measures adopted I will mention only the new practice of comprehensive briefings by the Chairman for non-members and the press immediately after each Committee meeting. Judging from the reactions we have received, this has provided welcome help for non-members in reaching a better understanding of the

work of the Committee. But we do not see these measures as the end of our efforts; they are steps in the right direction and must be continued.

Enhanced transparency was also at stake when the question of coordination between the Security Council and troop-contributing countries to peacekeeping operations was discussed over several months. Germany actively supported and contributed to the efforts initiated by Argentina and New Zealand aimed at an improvement of the regime that then existed. Without a doubt, the arrangements set out in the presidential statement (S/PRST/1996/13) of 28 March 1996 are an important step forward. Their implementation will, however, have to be kept under review, and we stand ready to come back to the issue if need be.

We now turn to the third and last topic, the overall reform context. Chapter 23 of the report contains the statement of the President of the Security Council on 26 September 1995 in commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations. She stated:

> "The Security Council recognizes that the challenges facing the international community demand a resolute response, based on the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations. The members of the Security Council consider that the United Nations must be strengthened and revitalized to help meet these challenges. They take note of the conclusions of the Working Group of the General Assembly on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and other Matters Related to the Security Council, *inter alia*, that the Council should be expanded, and that its working methods should continue to be reviewed." *(S/PRST/1995/48)*

Improving the transparency of the Council and improving its composition and size are two sides of the same coin. Both elements are connected. They are not hostage to each other, but sisters.

These are not the only connected elements. Another important aspect is the relationship between the Security Council and other organs. The most prominent among these is the General Assembly. The reform of the General Assembly, the only organ in which all Member States are equally represented, has been one of the main focuses of discussion of the agenda item "Strengthening of the United Nations system", the present stage of the consideration of which we just concluded this morning. A more transparent Security Council would lead to a stronger General Assembly. Further measures should be taken to strengthen the latter even more. However, all measures must be balanced and take place in the context of a comprehensive approach that includes both bodies. The documents submitted by the Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System give a strong indication of those aspects.

Another example in this context is the Czech proposal made in the Working Group on the reform of the Security Council. A broader, teleological interpretation of Article 31 of the Charter could lead to more frequent invitations to non-members to participate in the discussions of the Council whenever the latter considers that the interests of a non-member are especially affected.

I am confident that the capacity and effectiveness of the United Nations can be further strengthened, and the representative character of its organs enhanced and their working efficiency and transparency improved. Many of the constructive suggestions made by Member States will contribute to that end. They are an integral part of the reform package aimed at making the Council more transparent, more credible and more capable of maintaining peace and security. With the necessary political will and determination, this goal can be reached without undue delay.

Mr. Rodríguez Parrilla (Cuba) (*interpretation from Spanish*): For more than five consecutive years, year after year, many countries have stepped up to this rostrum to suggest how best the report of the Security Council might fulfil the role for which it was designed: providing all States Members of the United Nations with the information they need to determine whether the Security Council is acting on their behalf, as provided for in Article 24 of the Charter of the United Nations, or not.

Regrettably, once again, the report before us is nothing more than a sterile account, a list of items and documents, with no thorough or objective examination of the diverse and very important matters that the Security Council has had to deal with during the year it covers. Although the report also lists the decisions and actions taken by the Council, it does not include information on the goals pursued by the Security Council in adopting its resolutions or presidential statements.

We have said more than once that the Security Council's report is aimed at States and not at libraries or documentation centres, which is why it should be

analytical and explicit enough to help Member States and the General Assembly in their policy-making process.

Naturally, communication of this report cannot simply be seen from a mechanical perspective. In our opinion, nothing can be solved by submitting it to the Assembly in a purely formal way. It is the Council's responsibility to provide thorough information to the Assembly; the latter has the right to discuss the report, the issues it contains and the measures that the Council has taken during the period to draw up, in accordance with the Charter, the recommendations that the 185 States Members of this Organization deem appropriate. Can we do that with a report like the one before us now? Does this report offer enough analysis for us to be able to work in any depth so that the international community as a whole can contribute to the work of the Security Council?

Also for many years, in the most varied forums of this Organization, the need for more transparency in the work of the Council has been bandied about. This report of the Security Council is precisely one of the elements proving that, even if some progress has been made in terms of transparency, a great deal has yet to be done and to be achieved. We are convinced that the members of the Security Council themselves would benefit from preparing a thorough and analytical report. The debate on it would provide a wealth of information that the Council could use in its work. It would give the Security Council a new sense of legitimacy and thus spare its members from the understandable doubts and criticisms they have at the moment about this organ.

The Charter also provides for the Security Council to issue special reports. The items permanently on the Council's agenda are so numerous and so important that it would be expedient for it to advise the Assembly on everything that, one way or another, might affect international peace and security; on cases in which sanctions or other coercive measures are applied; on the establishment, fulfilment or change of mandate of peacekeeping operations; or on all other actions where the Security Council itself would do well to secure a broad international consensus. In short, we are convinced that it would be better if States respected Security Council decisions, not just because they are obliged to do so under the Charter, but because they feel that they are part of a decision-making process that is not confined to 15 States but involves them all on an equal footing.

We hope the situation will be redressed and that, in the future, the Member States will be provided with frequent, serious, analytical, illustrative and in-depth special reports.

We believe that, of late, greater transparency has been the order of the day in the Security Council's sanctions committees and that their decision-making process has grown more independent. Nevertheless, we still frequently see the work of those committees being influenced by certain unilateral, sometimes even arbitrary, decisions that have nothing to do with the opinion of the international community as a whole on whatever case is being dealt with.

Hence, it is also important that the annual report of the Security Council give a substantive assessment of the work of the sanctions committees instead of merely providing a factual enumeration of the resolutions and presidential statements adopted with regard to sanctions or coercive measures imposed under Chapter VII of the Charter.

In the current international situation, where conflicts are constantly growing in number and complexity, the General Assembly must de facto and *de jure* assert the powers and prerogatives conferred upon it by the Charter, including those in Chapter IV. That is why a group of States Members of this Organization has undertaken to prepare, negotiate and submit at this fifty-first session a draft resolution on the report of the Security Council.

My delegation actively participated in this interesting process which, we hope, will lead to the adoption of a text that expresses the will of the General Assembly and seriously and rigorously promotes a mechanism whereby the Security Council can account for itself to all Member States in a transparent and timely manner.

The President took the Chair.

Programme of work

The President: I should like to make an announcement concerning agenda item 12, entitled "Report of the Economic and Social Council". The report of the Council has been circulated in document A/51/3. Chapter V, section F of the report of the Council concerns non-governmental organizations. This section contains the text of Council decision 1996/297, entitled "Non-governmental organizations", by which the Economic and Social Council:

"decided to recommend that the General Assembly examine, at its fifty-first session, the question of the participation of non-governmental organizations in all areas of the work of the United Nations, in the light of the experience gained through the arrangements for consultation between non-governmental organizations and the Economic and Social Council". *(A/51/3, chap. V, sect. F, p. 187)*

Members will recall that at its 3rd plenary meeting, held on 20 September, the General Assembly decided that it would consider chapter V, section F of the report of the Economic and Social Council directly in plenary meeting. I have requested the Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations, Mr. Ahmad Kamal, to undertake informal soundings on this issue early, both with Member States and with non-governmental organizations, in order to make a proper determination on the methodology, as well as on the substantive issue of facilitating the participation of non-governmental organizations in all areas of the work of the United Nations. Ambassador Kamal has graciously accepted.

In this connection, I would like to inform members that the first meeting of the informal soundings will be held on Monday, 2 December 1996, at 10 a.m. in Conference Room 8.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.