United Nations A/54/PV.37

General Assembly

Official Records

Fifty-fourth session

37th plenary meeting
Thursday, 21 October 1999, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Gurirab . . . . . (Namibia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 11 *(continued)*

Report of the Security Council (A/54/2)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Jordán-Pando (Bolivia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Sir Jeremy Greenstock (United Kingdom): The United Nations is being tested as never before by the world's demands for action on problems which we all share, or which arouse widespread international concern. In an era of massive change, the United Nations too must change or be seen to fail.

The Security Council has to be part of that change; and this General Assembly debate on the annual report is an important opportunity to discuss that. The United Kingdom vigorously supports, and has a significant national stake in, a Security Council which lives up to its full responsibilities and achieves results in the maintenance of international peace and security. That is why the United Kingdom is active in the debate on reform, so that the Council can again enjoy the full confidence of the United Nations membership. This means, in our view, enlargement in both the permanent and non-permanent categories of membership, with the allocation of new permanent seats reflecting the vital role of the non-industrial countries, as well as the contribution of Germany and Japan to the work of the Organization. And it also means greater transparency and communication in the daily work of the Council.

This year, after a period in which the Council did not consistently measure up to the Charter's expectations, there is a renewed determination to bring its weight and authority to bear. That includes a greater readiness to authorize new peacekeeping operations. On issues such as Sierra Leone, East Timor and Lockerbie, the United Kingdom has been extremely active in forging a more active and better targeted Security Council role. Even on the most controversial issues — I have in mind Iraq and Kosovo — where we had earlier judged that the Security Council had failed badly to generate a collective response, the United Kingdom has worked hard, and continues to work hard, to re-establish a central role for the Council.

The proof of success in such difficult areas will be in the final result: in the case of Kosovo, in the proper implementation of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999); in the case of Iraq, in the adoption of a resolution which reconstitutes an active and productive United Nations presence in Iraq in both the humanitarian and the disarmament fields; and in the case of East Timer, in final independence and a good relationship with Indonesia.

Important as those subjects are, I believe that the greatest ongoing challenge to the Security Council is presented by the problems of Africa. On no other continent does conflict do such damage to political and economic structures and to ordinary people. Africans rightly call out for more international action; and non-Africans, above all in the developed world, must respond. I understand the cries of double standards — that we are prepared to act decisively in other continents

99-86191 (E)

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but not in Africa. But that is not the real story, and, while outside action is necessary, outside action alone is not enough. Africa, because both political structures and economic growth are often too weak, needs long-term assistance, not just short-term palliative action. The role of the latter is reduced if the former is not also put in place.

The United Kingdom, for one, has shown by its actions, and not just by its rhetoric, that we are committed to bringing greater stability and prosperity to the continent. If we are to address the long-term nature of African problems, we shall need a special kind of cooperation between African and international leaders; a redefinition of the real objectives of such cooperation; and deeper and more frequent communication. Direct links between the Organization of African Unity and the Security Council should be part of that. In the Central African Republic and in Sierra Leone we are beginning at last to make progress. Ethiopia and Eritrea, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Angola now need our urgent attention. The lessons we learn from these issues could then perhaps be applied to the distressingly hard cases of Sudan and Somalia.

In this call for more attention to African issues I sense a more general trend of international support for greater activism by the United Nations, not least when humanitarian catastrophes threaten. Kosovo, and more recently East Timor, have raised important questions about humanitarian action and its relation to the principles of national sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs. The British Foreign Secretary told the General Assembly last month

> "that the first responsibility for reconciling internal conflict rests with the State in which that conflict arises. But we also have a shared responsibility to act when we are confronted with genocide, mass displacement of peoples or major breaches of humanitarian law". (*A/54/PV.5*)

As British Prime Minister Tony Blair said in a speech in Chicago in April this year, working out the conditions and identifying the circumstances when it is right in the modern world to intervene is the most pressing problem in foreign policy today. We believe that that debate, which is crucial to the Security Council's role in the maintenance of international peace and security, needs to be pursued as a matter of urgency. But we must avoid a sterile or an ideological confrontation. We are, after all, seeking to help ordinary people, not to attack systems. Before creating new machinery, we should widen and deepen our informal discussions. If we can build consensus — in the Security Council as well as elsewhere — around a pragmatic set of principles and conditions, it is more likely that the Security Council will be able to fulfil its responsibilities quickly and unanimously, without disturbing our respect for each other's values and cultures.

Finally, a few words about the issue of transparency. The United Kingdom strongly agrees on the need for the Council to carry out its responsibilities in a transparent manner. This year's report to the General Assembly is a further improvement: it now includes, for the first time, the annual reports of the sanctions committees, as an appendix.

But more could be done to improve transparency. During the period under review, the Council held 121 formal meetings, many of them to adopt resolutions without debate, and 239 consultations in the other room. Informal consultations continue to be necessary, particularly for more complex issues or for detailed negotiation. But the United Kingdom believes that more of the work done in informal consultations could and should be done at public meetings of the Council. There is a considerable appetite among the membership for more public discussion of substantive country-specific issues currently being dealt with by the Council. Greater transparency in this area can be achieved, if we are sensible, without diminishing the effectiveness of the Council's work. We hope to take this forward over the coming year, including during the United Kingdom presidency in December 1999.

A healthy and effective Security Council, achieving solid results, is indispensable to a healthy and effective United Nations system. The Security Council must work as an integral part of that system, connecting with the work of the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly, and receiving in return positive inputs form those and other bodies. The United Nations is more than any nation, more than any council, more than any bloc. It is time we all agreed to release its real potential. The United Kingdom will work hard for that.

Mr. Lee See-young (Republic of Korea): My delegation has carefully examined the annual report of the Security Council to the General Assembly covering the period from June 1998 to June 1999. My delegation appreciates the statement by Ambassador Sergey Lavrov, President of the Security Council for this month, introducing the report.

As we take stock of the state of affairs in the Security Council over the reporting period, my delegation wishes to pay tribute to the members of the Council and the Secretary-General for their around-the-clock, year-round hard work in the discharge of their responsibilities as the Council dealt with a number of crisis situations from Bosnia, Kosovo and Afghanistan to Rwanda, Congo and, now, East Timor and Sierra Leone.

With this in mind, allow me to discuss some aspects of the Council's activities to which we attach particular importance.

First, we cannot but admit that, in this world of unprecedentedly deepening interdependence, the Security Council over the past year had to face enormous challenges of tackling more than ever a much wider range of complex issues directly or indirectly related to international peace and security. One of the phenomena which reflected such a trend in the Council's work was that the Council organized more open discussions on a number of issues addressed as separate agenda items — namely, the protection of civilians in armed conflict; post-conflict peace-building; disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants; small arms; and children and armed conflict. Just two days ago the Council held a formal meeting on international terrorism at the initiative of the Russian delegation.

The issues that have traditionally been considered under the competence of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council or other organs of the United Nations now require the attention of the Security Council to address those aspects falling practically within the purview of the Council. In this connection, we believe that the Council should make further efforts to build an effective partnership with the Assembly and other organs within the United Nations system in order to strengthen its relevance in meeting complex and multifaceted challenges facing the United Nations in a more comprehensive and coordinated manner.

In a similar vein, I would like to echo the suggestions made by my Egyptian colleague yesterday that, in accordance with Article 15 of the United Nations Charter, the Security Council should be called upon to submit not only an annual report but also special reports to the General Assembly on the important measures taken in the discharge of its mandate, as a step towards greater accountability of the Council to the general membership of the United Nations.

Secondly, we believe that the Council needs to make greater use of preventive action as an indispensable tool in coping with potential conflict situations. My delegation concurs with the Secretary-General's recommendation for more proactive use of a preventive monitoring presence in areas of potential conflict and the deployment of preventive peacekeeping missions. Based on this belief, we welcomed the establishment by the Secretary-General of the Trust Fund for Preventive Action and have continued to make contributions to the Fund since its inception in 1997. We call upon members who have not done so to make their financial and other resources available to this Fund in order to enhance the Secretary-General's ability to take preventive measures.

Thirdly, as the Council has progressively expanded its involvement in a wider range of divergent issues, one of the key areas of our debate on the Council's report in recent years has been on how to enhance transparency in the Council's work. Given the growing role and responsibility of the Council in dealing with crisis situations throughout the world, as demonstrated most recently in the cases of Kosovo and East Timor, the United Nations membership in general and non-members of the Council in particular which are parties directly or potentially involved in the situation, have an increasingly greater interest in taking part, in one way or another, in the Council's decision-making process.

Of course, we share the concern of some Members that transparency might undermine the efficiency of the conduct of business in the Council. However, when the decision-making process has financial or other implications for non-members of the Council, we believe that the need for efficiency should give way to transparency for the sake of mustering broader support of the general membership. Overall, we consider that the working method of the Council should be further rationalized in a manner conducive to ensuring greater transparency and better efficiency in its work.

In this connection, we appreciate some improvements made over the past year in the briefings given by the Presidency on the contents of the Council's informal consultations. First, such briefings to non-members are now given almost immediately after the informal consultations, ensuring real-time transparency in the work of the Council. Secondly, such briefings these days contain more substantive matters, enabling constructive information-sharing among the general membership. We highly commend those Council Presidents who went the extra mile for their non-member

counterparts to give real-time, first-hand information on a daily basis about the contents of the informal consultations, thus greatly contributing to the promotion of transparency in the work of the Council.

Let me now turn to several technical aspects of the annual report before us. First, we note with satisfaction that the report now carries with it an addendum of optional monthly assessments by former Presidents of the work of the Council during the reporting period. We believe that with this addendum the report has become a more substantive and analytical source of information on the work of the Council.

My delegation also welcomes the practice by which the Council Presidents over the past year provided the general membership with their respective monthly assessments of the Council's work. We hope that the practice of distributing the monthly assessment of the President promptly to the general membership as an official document will continue.

Secondly, we welcome the inclusion in Part V of the annual report of substantive information on the work of the subsidiary bodies of the Security Council as an integral part of the Council's report. The report now covers the activities of such subsidiary organs as the sanctions committees, the United Nations Special Commission and the International Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, and the information contained therein has also been greatly improved. We are particularly satisfied that for the first time the Council has decided to incorporate the annual reports of the sanctions committees into the Council's report as appendices. As a long time advocate of such practices, we hope to see this continue in the future.

Before concluding, my delegation wishes to reiterate its willingness to work closely with the President and with other delegations in our common effort to promote transparency, efficiency and rationalization of the working methods of the Council. With this in mind, I take the opportunity to assure the Assembly that my delegation will continue to do its utmost to contribute to the work of the upcoming meetings of the Open-ended Working Group on the reform of the Security Council, under the President's able guidance.

Mr. Amer (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) *(spoke in Arabic):* My delegation is participating in the general discussion of the Security Council report because of its great importance. This is an opportunity for Member States to review the work of the Council and evaluate its activities in the performance of its duties related to preserving international peace and security.

When the General Assembly discussed previous reports of the Council, Member States made many remarks pertaining to the Council's working methods. Constructive proposals were made to improve its annual report in form and substance.

Before dealing with the contents of the present report, I should like to take the opportunity to express our appreciation to Ambassador Sergey Lavrov, the President of the Security Council for this month, for his clear briefing on the Council's report.

The report before us was based mostly on the elements included in the note by the President of the Council of June 1997, with one additional chapter for the annual reports of the sanctions committees.

My delegation appreciates the initiatives taken by the Council and the Secretariat to improve the Council's working methods. Yet these improvements, in our opinion, are still limited. The reports should be further improved in order to ensure the Council's high efficiency and transparency.

The present report indicates that the Council has increased the number of open formal meetings compared with previous years. Due to the importance of the subjects discussed in those meetings, Member States should be informed in advance of the subjects to be discussed so as to be prepared prior to the decision-making process, not after it has been completed, since many States find themselves faced with previously prepared draft resolutions that tackle issues that are important to them.

We welcome consultations with troop-contributing countries, but we stress the importance of implementing the provisions of Article 31 of the Charter, which provides that non-members of the Council may participate in the discussions if the interests of those countries are specially affected.

The report mentions that the Council held 239 closed consultation meetings and gives the dates and the reports discussed in them. It also states that they lasted for a total of 511 hours, but does not include, even briefly, the opinions voiced by members of the Council during those meetings. This is a source of major concern to us. We understand that the work of a limited group of States could in some instances be useful in facilitating the search

for a solution to the conflicts before the Council, but we object to the excessive reliance on informal consultations that could destroy the transparency of the Council. The consultations prevent the overwhelming majority of Member States from participating in discussions of the issues. What is of interest for the international community is not the number of meetings or hours, but the content of the discussions.

We would like here to make the following important points.

First, when did the Council begin holding such meetings, and why? The Council is master of its own decisions, but it is also possible, to an extent, that it could make decisions surreptitiously, without the knowledge of the international community or without its participation. The Charter provides for the exact opposite.

Secondly, we would like to stress the importance of holding more open and public meetings, with the participation of the States parties, to discuss the issues on the Council's agenda.

We believe that the Council should be guided by the opinions and proposals of Member States, and therefore we are not convinced that the General Assembly should only take note of the Council's report, in view of its extreme importance. We believe that Members should be given the opportunity to form their opinions regarding the report and to present their recommendations to the Council in accordance with Articles 10 and 11 of the Charter.

We further believe that it is unacceptable that the Council should continue to use provisional rules of procedure that are more than half a century old and whose provisions do not apply to the informal consultations that have become the most used framework for the Council's activities.

The Security Council held many meetings devoted to discussing the problems of certain African countries — a fact that we appreciate. However, it is a source of concern to us that the Council deals with other regional problems, takes appropriate measures and produces efficient and effective resolutions, but only pays lip service to, and expresses the best of intentions about, African issues.

We believe that the Council should take practical steps to address African problems, taking into account the priorities of the African countries themselves, and coordinate its work with them to resolve these problems. This approach would break the cycle of violence that destroys the security of many countries of the African continent and would enable peace to be established and sustainable development to be implemented.

The period under review is very important in the context of the history of the problems that the Council has addressed in different parts of the world. We realize that the Council bears the major responsibility for maintaining international peace and security, but the Charter also provides for the General Assembly to participate in laying down the general guidelines that would help achieve that purpose. If the Security Council cannot tackle serious problems independently, it should cooperate with the General Assembly, in accordance with the provisions of the Charter, to solve many of them.

The Security Council's report tackles, in chapter 16, the report of the sanctions committee concerning the sanctions imposed on the Libyan people. In connection with lifting those sanctions, in implementation of paragraph 16 of Security Council resolution 883 (1993), paragraph 8 of Security Council resolution 1192 (1998) clearly states that Libya has fulfilled its obligations in accordance with Security Council resolutions. Yet the United States has prevented the Council from taking a decision to lift the sanctions. The United States Government has used three arguments to justify that position. First, it says that Libya supports terrorism. The Secretary-General's report refutes that claim completely, and the facts of the matter assert that Libya has not supported terrorism; it has, rather, supported the legitimate struggle of national liberation movements, especially in African countries. Secondly, it is said, Libya has not cooperated with the Scottish tribunal. Libya has indeed cooperated, and we have clearly stated on several occasions that we are more than willing to cooperate with that tribunal to have the sanctions lifted.

Thirdly, and most curiously, the United States claims that we should pay damages to the families of the victims of Pan Am 103, even before the issue has been settled in court. We can pay damages only when a court decision is taken. The American claim undermines the rules of international law, as well as human rights. It is a widely known legal principle that a suspect is innocent until proven guilty. The claim of the United States erodes human rights by completely denying the possibility of the innocence of the suspects. Using the logic of that argument, we could demand damages for all the suffering that we have undergone for seven years and that has

caused us human losses and tremendous material losses that reached billions of dollars.

When the Members of the United Nations mandated the Security Council to work on their behalf, they presupposed that the Council would take into account their opinions and positions with regard to the issues under consideration. With regard to the situation I have just mentioned, one can clearly see that a single State has disregarded the positions of most members of the Organization.

This is a very dangerous trend that should be checked. One cannot disregard the will of the overwhelming majority of the international community, the Non-Aligned Movement, the Organization of African Unity, the League of Arab States and the Organization of the Islamic Conference — all of which have formally and repeatedly requested the immediate and total lifting of the sanctions imposed on the Libyan people. They are all convinced that Libya has fulfilled all its obligations towards Security Council demands regarding the Lockerbie case. A single State cannot stand in the way of the will of the international community. Preserving the fait accompli will enforce the will of a single State and not the will of the overwhelming majority of the international community.

Mr. Larraín (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me, first of all, to express my delegation's gratitude to Ambassador Sergey Lavrov, Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation and President of the Security Council for the month of October, for his valuable presentation to the Assembly of the Council's annual report. We would also like to extend our thanks to the Secretariat for the efforts it made in presenting a comprehensive and timely report.

This report, which is issued in compliance with a duty enshrined in the Charter, has a very important ritual significance. It symbolizes the cooperation that should exist between two bodies, the Security Council and the General Assembly. It is also the product of the legal fiction according to which the Council acts on behalf of all the members of the Organization. These circumstances alone would justify its existence. But beyond performing a ritual function between the two bodies, the report should also achieve the basic objective for which it was created, namely, to inform. We can therefore ask ourselves whether its present format allows it to carry out that objective.

In order to answer that question we would first have to spell out what type of information the Member States, on whose behalf the members of the Council act, require. Secondly, we would have to examine what other means of information are available to them. From the replies to these questions we will be able to determine whether the report meets the Member States' requirements for information.

Without trying to be comprehensive, I would venture to reply that with regard to information, what we would like to know about first is the existence of situations that endanger international peace and security. We would like to be informed in a timely manner about such situations and know what the motives and elements are that characterize such conflicts — for instance, who the parties in conflict are, what the dimensions and political challenges of the conflict are, what the humanitarian situation and the status of the conflict on the ground are, and so on. In this regard, it would be very important for the States that are not members of the Council to have timely access to any information that could be provided by the Secretariat, the special envoys and personal representatives of the Secretary-General and the parties to the conflict.

Information should serve one objective, and that is to enable countries to assess what is taking place, take positions, intervene and contribute to the solving of conflicts. In reality, however, the information provided by the annual report does not meet that need. The annual nature of the report, which appears long after the events it deals with have occurred, means that its interest is primarily historic.

Secondly, we Member States are interested in finding out how the Council is handling a conflict. In that regard, we would like to know what alternatives are being considered and what positions are being taken by the members of the Council. This is particularly important in the case of the non-permanent members, whom we elect every year.

The legal fiction that the Council is acting on our behalf should come closer to the truth. We believe in an ideal situation in which the Member States can aspire to a feeling of sharing a particular political sensitivity with those who represent us in the Council.

With regard to the Latin American region, I would like to place on the record our gratitude to the delegations of Argentina and Brazil for the tremendous effort they made to brief us during their period of service on the Security Council.

The fact that the permanent members are not elected does not exempt them from the duty to provide an increasing flow of information to the non-member States. Once again, the legal fiction that they act on our behalf should progressively converge with reality. Although it is true that the permanent members of the Security Council are not the object of scrutiny, that does not free them from the duty — at least from a moral and practical point of view — to be aware of the feelings of the other members of the Organization, on whose behalf they act. These feelings can only be accurate if the Member States are well informed as to what is happening in the Council.

The process of providing information does not end with the annual report we are considering today. Providing information is a permanent exercise that should take place at all levels and stages. Obviously, information will be better and more abundant where transparency prevails, and in this regard there is a great deal to be done.

When we served on the Council in 1997, we had the honour of signing a document, along with the other nine non-permanent members, suggesting a series of measures to improve the work of the Council, particularly aspects relating to transparency. Some of those measures have already been taken, while others have not. Many ideas designed to increase the transparency of the Council's work are being discussed in detail in the open-ended working group on the reform of the Council. It is important to make progress in this area. In order to achieve this it is essential that the permanent members be less passive and try to adapt themselves to new realities.

With regard to transparency, any progress that has been made is the result of pressure from the rest of the membership. That is why we would like the permanent members to be more energetic in developing ways to enable all of us to be better informed about what is happening in the Council. The permanent members sometimes seem to confuse the trivial with the fundamental. What is certain is that greater transparency will in no way affect their privileges; on the contrary, it will give greater legitimacy to their actions, as it does in democratic societies. It is not healthy that a feeling should develop that they are separated from us by an ocean of incomprehension. That situation should be ended in the interests of the United Nations and of international peace and security.

I end on an optimistic note. Although the report does not completely satisfy our need for information, we must recognize that in the past two years progress has been made, in particular as a result of the inclusion of the assessments former Presidents have made at the end of their presidency, and we are grateful to those who have done so. We urge the Council to continue to explore, through the Working Group on documentation and procedure, ways of improving the report by making it more substantive and analytical.

Mr. Kasanda (Zambia): I welcome this opportunity to consider the annual report of the Security Council to the General Assembly. I wish to thank the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation, the President of the Council for this month, for presenting the report.

My delegation attaches great importance to the activities of the Security Council, as they have a bearing on the interests and well-being of the entire international community.

In the recent past the Council has shown its preparedness to respond positively to the call of the majority of Member States for an increased flow and greater sharing of information with non-members of the Security Council. During the past year interested Members of the United Nations that are not members of the Security Council were able to participate in some of the Council’s open debates. Additionally, their understanding has been enriched by the daily briefings and monthly reports of the Security Council President. These are encouraging signs of a move towards a more open and transparent Security Council. My delegation therefore wishes to encourage the Council to continue these activities.

While this positive trend is appreciated, the Council needs to do a good deal more to meet calls by the general membership for greater transparency and accountability in the way in which it conducts its affairs. Like its predecessors, this report lists facts without incorporating information about the deliberations of the Council in the consultations of the whole. Furthermore, the report does not provide an analysis of the matters considered in those consultations or of any of the reasons that might have led to the Council’s taking certain decisions rather than others.

The Security Council has been described by some Members as a private negotiating forum. However, this description ignores the fact that, under the Charter, the Council acts on behalf of the entire general membership of the United Nations. Closed-door meetings will therefore continue to reinforce the negative view that the Council neglects its accountability to other members of

the Organization. The Zambian delegation joins previous speakers who have called for the Council to meet in open meetings more frequently.

The report also shows that the Council dealt with a great number of subjects affecting the African continent. However, it is one thing to hear and document reports about such situations, but quite another to summon the political will to do something about the crises. The action proposed by the Security Council on Sierra Leone is appreciated, but the Council is not acting quickly on the problem of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In this regard, the President of Zambia, in his capacity as mediator on behalf of the countries of the Southern African Development Community, made important proposals to the Security Council on 21 September 1999 relative to the implementation of the ceasefire agreement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Those proposals are still before the Council. I must emphasize that the apparent slow response on the part of the Security Council may lead to a breakdown in the confidence and the hope that has been built up by the ceasefire agreement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. No one wants a vacuum to develop as that would ultimately lead to a recurrence of war and further violence.

In fulfilling its role under the Charter for the maintenance of peace and security in the world, the Security Council should endeavour to be seen to be consistent in its reactions to crises, wherever they occur. The Security Council should move quickly to erase the impression of double standards by according equal treatment to all crisis situations in the world.

Mr. Dahlgren (Sweden): On 10 September last year, the representative of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. Nicholas Morris, briefed the members of the Security Council on the situation then prevailing in Kosovo. Mr. Morris had just arrived from the region, and he gave a very vivid description of the critical humanitarian plight of the people of Kosovo. He made the suffering of the Kosovars seem very real in the consultation room. I was presiding over those consultations as President of the Security Council at the time, and I had the feeling that no one left that room untouched by what we had heard. Shortly afterwards the Council adopted resolution 1199 (1998), which demanded that immediate steps be taken to avert the impending humanitarian catastrophe. Further action would otherwise be considered by the Council.

I have taken that particular example from the report we are discussing today because I believe that it is an appropriate starting point for addressing some of the crucial issues regarding the work of the Security Council during the year covered by that report. I will deal in particular with two such issues: the credibility of the Security Council, and the openness of the Council; they are, indeed, related.

At the time of Mr. Morris's briefing, the Security Council was very much on top of what was going on in Kosovo. Many delegations worked hard to maintain that order. We believed that the situation in Kosovo, which came to be characterized by massive violations of human rights, with clear implications for the security of the region as a whole, merited resolute action by the Security Council. However, mainly due to the possibility of a veto, such action proved out of reach even as the heinous acts of "ethnic cleansing" accelerated.

Another moment in the Council which is vivid in my memory was on 16 December 1998. The Security Council again held informal consultations of the whole, dealing, as so often in the past, with Iraq. We were assembled to discuss the latest report of the United Nations Special Commission regarding flagrant violations by Iraq of its obligations under United Nations resolutions. Halfway through our discussions, the meeting was interrupted, as we were informed by people coming in from the so-called "silent room", where they had been watching CNN, that unilateral action was already being taken by two States, both permanent members of the Security Council.

I could add to those two examples a third. I am referring to the veto of yet another permanent member, cast at the height of tensions in the Balkans, in effect putting an end to the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force (UNPREDEP) in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia — one of the more successful preventive United Nations missions.

I have given those three examples because to my mind they reflect situations which, for different reasons, have contributed to a debate that cannot be ignored. Kosovo, Iraq and UNPREDEP represent three issues where the credibility of the Security Council has been seriously questioned. For those of us — I believe that we are many — who put our trust in the United Nations as the ultimate upholder of peace and human dignity, and who firmly believe that the Security Council must carry out its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, this debate is a very serious one.

One key question today is how the credibility of the Council can be restored. To my delegation, the answer lies in how the members of the Security Council make the best use of its full potential. In our view, this entails several steps: first, to take action earlier. True preventive work is still virtually absent from the Council agenda, and as a consequence the Council is confronted with urgent emergencies and will constantly be perceived to be doing too little too late. Better use must be made of preventive tools, many of which are provided by the Charter. Prevention, of course is a question both of information and of political will. The Secretary-General has a key role to play in alerting the Council to potential conflicts as early as possible. Using this information, the Security Council, as well as the Secretariat, could focus more on identifying specific options available to them before the conflicts hit the headlines: by quiet and public means, through activities in the field and through action here in New York. Let us not forget, however, that the key challenge and responsibility is that of mobilizing true political will to act.

Secondly, it is the view of my Government that the security of the individual must be regarded as being as important as the security of States. Human security ought to be promoted, for example, by putting more emphasis on the protection of civilians. Mandates devised by the Security Council should be calibrated to the real tasks at hand, and there should be no shying away from the real needs when it comes to manpower and rules of engagement robust enough to protect the personnel who have been sent out. In the case of sanctions, another Council issue, more can also be done to avoid negative humanitarian side-effects, in the first place through targeted sanctions. The trend of revitalizing the sanctions committees to make the sanctions instrument an effective tool, as has been the case in Angola, is very welcome.

Thirdly, when decisions for action are taken by the Security Council, we as Member States have a clear responsibility in the follow-up through rapid deployment of adequate personnel, both civilian and military.

Fourthly, peace and security is a matter of global concern. The Security Council must act even-handedly and with the same commitment all over the world. It cannot afford to be perceived as promoting double standards. Some very important decisions were indeed taken at the end of last year regarding core issues pertaining to peace and the prevention of conflict in Africa. These range from the enhancement of regional peacekeeping capacities to curbing illegal flows of small arms. But such decisions may be of a more generic nature; they should also be translated into true political will of the Security Council to act in specific cases — in Africa as much as in other places.

Our fifth point relates to the veto. The veto should not be allowed to block the Security Council from shouldering its responsibilities. This issue will indeed be discussed under another agenda item here in the General Assembly and perhaps later on in a working group, but a number of interesting suggestions regarding the possibility of arriving at agreements on how to restrict the use of the veto were made during the general debate, some of which would indeed contribute to increasing the credibility of the Council.

Finally, the same is true regarding the composition of the Security Council. To us, an enlarged Council better reflecting the general membership of the United Nations would act with greater authority and increased credibility, and thereby increase the security of both individuals and States.

Allow me once again to come back to that briefing by Mr. Morris one year ago in the Security Council consultations room regarding the humanitarian situation in Kosovo. That meeting also highlighted, to us, the need for the Security Council to be more open to outside expertise and influence. More can be done by Council members to allow parties concerned, United Nations agencies and relevant non-governmental organizations to contribute to its deliberations on specific issues. Also, the Security Council would be well served to build on a practice that has been developed during the last year more often to allow the Secretary-General or his representatives, Chairpersons of sanctions committees and others to brief the Council in open meetings. This is not only a question of democracy and transparency — which are important enough — but also a way for the Security Council to better get messages across to the general membership. We feel that measures to involve the membership to a greater extent in the work of the Council will also contribute to enhancing its authority. We realize and understand full well the need for Council members to deliberate behind closed doors when specific situations so require, but we also expect substantial briefings to follow such meetings. Gradual improvements in this regard have been duly noted during the past year.

I have mentioned but a few, and for the Security Council, perhaps more problematic issues. But before I conclude I would also like to put on record due credit to the Council for its efforts on several other questions on its agenda, as reflected in the report before the Assembly.

The Security Council has indeed asserted itself in many areas. In East Timor the Council has shown commitment in support of the process, led by the Secretary-General, for the East Timorese people to have their say in the future of that territory. Peace has also come closer for the peoples of Sierra Leone, the Central African Republic and Guinea-Bissau. The issue of Libya has progressed considerably this year. At the same time, we hope to see renewed efforts regarding Iraq, Ethiopia and Eritrea, Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia and the very tense situation prevailing in Burundi, among other matters. The endurance and the commitment of the Security Council will be thoroughly tested.

An important debate was started by the Secretary-General when on the opening day of the general debate he delivered a statement on his annual report on the work of the Organization, regarding how far the responsibility of the Security Council goes when it comes to humanitarian emergencies, and when it is faced with massive breaches of human rights or other crimes against civilians. We have put forward our views on this matter, and they coincide very much with those of the Secretary-General. Here I would just like to say that we surely realize that the Security Council may not be able to resolve all conflicts. But we as members of the United Nations — and all of us as human beings — have reason to expect that the Council will at all times manifest a serious effort to stop human suffering resulting from threats to peace, no matter where they occur.

That is indeed a heavy burden that falls on its 15 members. We know that the Charter says that they carry out their obligations on behalf of all States Members of this Organization. Therefore, they must also be able to count on the support of us all when they take on this immense task.

Mr. Moushoutas (Cyprus): I would like at the outset to thank the President of the Security Council, Ambassador Sergey V. Lavrov of the Russian Federation, for introducing the report of the Security Council. That report, document A/54/2, summarizes the enormous workload the Council carried from 16 June 1998 to 15 June 1999. The 121 open meetings, the 239 informal consultations, the 72 resolutions and the more than 90 reports considered by the Council indicate an increase in the volume of the Council's work and at the same time evidence the increased expectations of the international community with regard to the Council's responses to conflicts and disputes.

Following the 1997 decision of the Council, an effort was indeed made again this year to enhance the analytical nature of the report by incorporating brief personal assessments by members of the Council of the months during which they served as President; these assessments are not binding on the Council. An innovation in this year's report is the inclusion of reports of the sanctions committees as an appendix.

While we view these additions to the report as efforts towards further transparency in the work of the Council and towards greater participation by the United Nations membership at large, we feel that still more can be done, especially in the following areas.

First, more information is needed on the proceedings of the informal meetings of the Council. Full transparency, which is as important as efficiency, should be seen in the light of accountability. In this regard, we support the idea of convening consultation meetings of the Security Council open to the general membership.

Second, in the voting procedures of the Council, there are occasions where the Council votes on a draft resolution and proceeds thereafter to debate the very resolution which has already been adopted. We believe that, except in extraordinary situations of urgency, which are very rare indeed, the sequence should be reversed, especially on issues which usually draw a considerable number of non-member speakers. Such a sequence should also enhance the positive impressions made by the United Nations on viewers of the Council's proceedings.

Third, while we understand the beneficial effects of informal consultation meetings, we feel they should be used sparingly, not routinely as they are today, when they far surpass in number the regular open meetings. The Council must do more towards increasing the participation of non-members of the Council in its deliberations. Closed meetings frustrate such participation.

Fourth, there should be more restraint on the part of the Council with regard to issues which may be considered to fall within the domain of the General Assembly. Expansion of the activities of the Security Council in matters of peace and security is a welcome phenomenon. The expansion of the activities of the Security Council, however, in issues which may be within the domain of the General Assembly does not conform to the division of work between the two most important organs of the United Nations. The need for close coordination between them cannot be overemphasized.

Fifth, we are willing to consider and discuss the proposal by Germany of reporting to the General Assembly the reasons for the use of a veto.

Sixth, we support the Indian proposal as to the incorporation in the annual report of an assessment by the Council itself of the usefulness and helpfulness of its actions.

Seventh, we reiterate our belief that greater collaboration between the United Nations and the regional organizations is needed, as provided under Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter.

Eighth, sanctions cause economic losses, creating problems for neighbouring States and for all those countries that have to observe them. The Security Council needs to become more sensitive to these problems, as well as to the general humanitarian impact of sanctions, and should therefore be more selective so as to affect those targeted and not innocent people.

We attach great importance to the item under consideration. The Security Council, being the United Nations organ entrusted with primary responsibility for the maintenance of peace and security and whose decisions are binding, as determined by the Charter, plays a key role which affects the international community as a whole. Though more needs to be done, we are happy to concede that progress has been made in recent years towards ameliorating the working methods of the Council, especially in transparency. The evidence of the progress made by the Open-ended Working Group on the working methods of the Council is therefore obvious.

The delegation of Cyprus will have more to say on the working methods of the Council during the discussion of the item entitled “Equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters.” We would just like to state at present that an equitable increase in the Council's permanent and non-permanent seats, so as to render it representative, will go a long way towards earning the confidence of the general membership.

Representing a country whose problem remains inscribed on the agenda of this body and on the agenda of the Security Council, and expecting a just solution, I would like to express the appreciation of my Government to the members of the Council for their contribution and to congratulate the five newly elected members, while pledging at the same time our cooperation and full support.

Miss Durrant (Jamaica): I wish to join other delegations in thanking the President of the Security Council, Mr. Sergey Lavrov of the Russian Federation, for his lucid and concise introduction of this year's report of the Security Council (A/54/2) covering the period 16 June 1998 to 15 June 1999.

The annual discussion of the report of the Security Council clearly illustrates the symbiotic relationship between the General Assembly and the Security Council as the United Nations seeks to pursue the cause of international peace and security. Before addressing the substance of the report, allow me to make a few comments on some procedural matters.

My delegation has noted that considerable effort has been made to give effect to the principle of transparency. Open debates of the Security Council have to a large extent allowed Member States to participate in the deliberations and to be directly informed about the proceedings of the Council. We welcome this development, and we wish to offer for consideration the fact that further transparency could be facilitated if there existed a mechanism allowing countries which are involved in disputes to brief members of the Security Council during informal meetings.

The regular statements to the press, as well as the briefings for non-members, have also been very useful. We especially appreciate the availability of the Council's programme of work and statements made to the press on some Missions' Web sites. The monthly reports of the Presidents of the Council have proved to be an effective medium through which the activities of the Council can be reviewed. It would be useful, however, if these reports could be more analytical in content instead of being a compilation of documents.

It was gratifying to note that efforts continue to be made to improve the methods of work of the Security Council. We also note that non-papers have been presented by past and present members of the Council aimed at improving the Council's work. The measures suggested in these non-papers, we believe, could serve as a basis for action by the Council.

The Charter of the United Nations has ascribed to the Security Council the primary role in the maintenance of international peace and security. While one agrees that collective security and responding to crises and emergencies must be the major focus of its activities, we concur with the observation made by Secretary-General

Kofi Annan, in paragraph 58 of his report on the work of the Organization (A/54/1), that "reaction, and not prevention, has been the dominant Security Council approach in dealing with conflict over the years." Preventive action by the United Nations encompasses a broad range of political, economic, social and humanitarian measures aimed at averting or de-escalating the development of conflict.

My delegation is heartened that in recent years, the Council has shown increased interest in tackling these issues in extensive debates on post-conflict peace-building and on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa, as well as through the endorsement of a range of conflict-prevention measures. We welcome the continuous dialogue between the Security Council and the Secretary-General on preventive measures and encourage cooperation between the Security Council and other organs of the United Nations.

We note that threats to peace have become more or less pandemic. Ethnic strife and political divisiveness have continued to fuel internal conflict, leading to heavy loss of life, economic disruption and regional instability. The Security Council cannot afford to divorce itself from this phenomenon and must pronounce itself in pragmatic ways.

As was clearly articulated in the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization, the past decade has been one of tension and difficulty for the United Nations in fulfilling its collective security mandate. We note that earlier this year the Security Council was precluded from intervening in the Kosovo crisis by profound disagreements between Council members over whether such an intervention was legitimate. The dilemma we face is the search for an acceptable threshold.

When is the level of human suffering within a country of such a magnitude as to warrant international action? Questions concerning the principle of intervention, the use of force, the scale of military enforcement and the role of the Security Council are all relevant. The debates on these questions have revealed differing perspectives, as well as elements of consensus, on the applicable principles of international law. In recent times we have witnessed atrocities committed as a result of the practice of ethnic cleansing, as communities rise up against each other to settle old grievances. We must all continue to condemn these practices and understand the need for some kind of action to halt such excesses, which violate international humanitarian norms.

By the same token, however, we believe that the principles of international law affecting sovereignty and the use of force cannot be ignored. The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Jamaica, in his address to the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly advocated the adoption of an approach which

> "has the confidence of the international community whereby diplomatic and any necessary enforcement action is taken or authorized by the multilateral institutions entrusted with safeguarding international peace and security." *(A/54/PV.17)*

In this regard, we share the view of the Secretary-General that

> "enforcement actions without Security Council authorization threaten the very core of the international security system founded on the Charter of the United Nations." *(A/54/1, para. 66)*

African issues have dominated the agenda of the Security Council for some time. The report of the Secretary-General (A/52/871) on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace in Africa has been the springboard for discussion and action on African issues. We share the concern of the Secretary-General that too little attention is given to the conflicts arising in Africa, despite the enormous toll in loss of life, disruptions and suffering resulting from armed insurgencies and inter-State conflicts.

In addition to the substance of the report, Jamaica attaches great importance to the reform of the Security Council. In this regard, we commend the efforts of the Open-ended Working Group in the conduct of its extensive discussions. Those discussions have generated many concrete ideas and proposals pertaining to the decision-making process of the Council, as well as to its structure. We believe that some of these discussions could contribute to making the Council more effective and efficient. We are therefore disappointed that further progress has not been achieved and that the realization of the reform of the Security Council remains a distant hope.

In conclusion, we wish to reiterate that the effectiveness of the Security Council can be measured only by its ability to address the challenges to international peace and security. The Council must be geared to the current realities of the international community while upholding the principles enshrined in the Charter.

Let me take this opportunity to convey my Government's sincere appreciation to the members of the General Assembly for electing Jamaica to serve as a non-permanent member of the Security Council for the period 2000-2001. Please be assured that Jamaica will seek to effectively discharge its responsibilities as a non-permanent member of the Council during our tenure.

Mr. Ibrahim (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): I wish first of all to thank the current President of the Security Council, Ambassador Sergey Lavrov, Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation, for having clearly and succinctly presented the report of the Security Council for the period 16 June 1998 to 15 June 1999. I would also like to thank the Secretariat for its efforts in the preparation of this important document, and the members of the Security Council for their great efforts in tackling the difficult task entrusted to them by the Charter and the Member States. I wish to congratulate Tunisia, Mali, Bangladesh, Ukraine and Jamaica for having been elected non-permanent members of the Council.

The presentation of this report to the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session reflects the solid ties between these two bodies and their shared interest in peacekeeping and international security. The report reviews in detail the items considered by the Council and its various activities, as well the activities of the Council's subsidiary bodies.

While we welcome the report and appreciate the improvements in the quality of the information provided and the addition of sections, such as the one on the work of the sanctions committees, we feel that the level of analysis must be increased so that Member States can be given more detailed information as well as an evaluation of the work of the Council. This evaluation should include a discussion of the effectiveness of past Council actions in dealing with conflicts. Such analysis is essential. We also insist that the General Assembly be given the opportunity to play a more active role in the area of international peace and security.

Past experience has shown that sanctions imposed by the Security Council against certain countries have not met the Council's stated objectives. The sanctions have caused enormous damage and harm and have led to horrible human tragedies, as has been the case in Iraq.

While confirming our recognition of the right of the Security Council to impose sanctions under Chapter VII of the Charter, we feel that greater caution must be exercised in the adoption of such measures. Such consideration should focus, *inter alia*, on the consequences of the sanctions for the States concerned as well as for third parties. This need is clearly stipulated in the Charter.

The Republic of Yemen has close historical ties to Africa, and thus we are concerned about the deterioration of the situation in the Horn of Africa and in both Central and East Africa. The leaders of my country continue to strive to reach solutions in cooperation with our friendly brotherly countries. In this respect, my country calls upon the Security Council to give great attention to the conflicts in Africa, to help put an end to humanitarian catastrophes and to support the efforts of the Organization of African Unity to achieve that goal.

The Republic of Yemen supports the goal of reforming the United Nations, the Security Council in particular. Therefore we support the Open-ended Working Group. We urge the Working Group to conclude its work as soon as possible, bearing in mind the ongoing critical changes that are taking place in the world.

We hope that, at the threshold of the third millennium, the Security Council will become a more open, democratic and transparent body, faithfully reflecting the aspirations and hopes of the Member States and of the world's peoples for a better future for all mankind, so that all may enjoy peace, security and stability.

Mr. Balzan (Malta): The significant number of delegations choosing to speak on this agenda item illustrates the interest and paramount importance attached to the report of the Security Council as the organ with primary responsibility for the maintenance of peace and security — a responsibility that reflects in the clearest of manners the objectives set forth in the Charter that gave birth to this Organization. The Security Council as originally envisaged was meant to ensure that the cause of peace would be more effectively served by a smaller group of States, sitting permanently or temporarily on the Council, not in their own interests, but in the interest of the international community. The debate on this report is another expression of the accountability that these members owe to the general membership of the Organization as a result of that greater responsibility.

The members of the secretariat of the Security Council deserve our thanks for the arduous work that must have gone into the publication of this voluminous document. The inclusion in the report of the Council Presidents' monthly assessments and press statements

make the document more informative and complete. Nevertheless, it will remain difficult for the document to satisfy the non-members' interest in gaining an understanding of the rationale behind the actions of the Council so long as it continues to reflect its over-reliance on informal consultations as its primary method of work.

The involvement of the general membership of the Organization in the workings of the Security Council remains hampered by the practice whereby the real debates and deliberations take place behind closed doors, while only the official adoption of the resolutions takes place in open sessions of the Council. While Malta welcomes the few deviations from this method of work witnessed in the past year, it is hoped that they will he more frequent in the years to come. The adoption of a practice whereby briefings from the Secretariat are delivered in open Chamber would perhaps be a positive move in the right direction. In this context, Malta welcomes the views expressed by the delegation of Ireland.

For what is to be gained from keeping the often unpleasant details of the situation on the ground from the general membership of the Organization? Undoubtedly, the divulging of this information can only help non-members to better understand the eventual decisions of the Council. It would also add to the conviction with which non-members conform to those decisions which they are duty-bound to implement and would enhance the involvement and support they already give to the work of the Council in places such East Timor and Kosovo.

Taking action in areas experiencing precarious humanitarian situations is in the nature of the Security Council and its onerous mandate. At times, even positive and necessary action on the part of the Security Council may instigate population movements with humanitarian implications. The open debates on protection for humanitarian assistance to refugees and others in conflict situations, children in armed conflict and the protection of civilians in armed conflict are a welcome development that further sensitizes decision-makers on these issues.

Indeed, too many of the Security Council's less satisfactory endeavours in the past year relate to the African continent. The case of Angola illustrates a level of ineffectiveness of the Security Council that is cause for concern. Not only were several resolutions on the situation sidelined by the parties to which they were addressed, but the sanctions that were imposed were not duly implemented. The United Nations Mission there was eventually forced to abandon the field. It is hoped that the new initiative on Angola taken by the Council last week will meet with greater success. If it is to do so, the Council will require firm leadership and conviction in its actions. It will also need to provide the swift and solid support that it has shown itself capable of mustering elsewhere. African members expect no less, especially as comparisons continue to be drawn to actions taken in other regions.

In concluding, may I extend our congratulations to the representatives of Bangladesh, Jamaica, Mali, Tunisia and Ukraine upon their election to the non-permanent membership of the Security Council and wish them every success in the discharge of their responsibilities.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

May I take it that the Assembly takes note of the report of the Security Council contained in document A/54/2?

It was so decided.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 11.

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The meeting rose at 11.40 a.m.