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New York

President: The Hon. Julian R. Hunte . . . . . (Saint Lucia)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 11 (*continued*)

Report of the Security Council (A/58/2)

Mr. Aguilar Zinser (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am speaking today as we meet to exchange views on the annual report on the activities of the Security Council from 1 August 2002 to 31 July 2003.

We wish first to thank Ambassador John Negroponte, the Permanent Representative of the United States, for having introduced the report in his capacity as President of the Security Council for this month. We also thank the delegations of the United Kingdom and Spain for their support in the preparation and streamlining of the report's introduction.

As it did last year, Mexico, as a member of the Security Council, insisted on the need to draft a substantive introduction to the report to include analytical elements of interest relating to the issues being considered by the Council, an account of how they are addressed and the corresponding decision-making process. While the members of the Council — the five permanent members in particular — appear to have become more open to and aware of their responsibility to be accountable to the General Assembly by submitting a substantive report, we recognize nonetheless that much remains to be done to fulfil the obligation under paragraph 3 of Article 24 and paragraph 1 of 15 of the United Nations Charter so as to ensure that the report is genuinely a useful reference for those Members of our Organization that do not take part in the Council's decision-making process.

We stress the relevance of including in the report indices of progress in the activities of the Council that would enable all the Members of the Organization to determine more clearly the areas requiring redoubled action and reorientation. The monthly appraisals of the Council's work prepared by its Presidents have helped to enhance knowledge and understanding of that work and therefore represent an important contribution to the preparation of the annual report with a view to ensuring the report's inclusion of analytical elements on the Council's work in a form wherein such information may be of service to the Members of the United Nations.

During our term as a non-permanent member of the Council, we have striven to make the organ more transparent, responsible and sensitive to the need to base its actions on the common interest. This requires not only initiatives, but also daily action to make the Council's working methods more transparent. We have also reiterated the vital need to promote greater openness in the decision-making process and the broader inclusion of all 15 members of the Security Council in that process. There should be no first- and second-class members of the Council. All of us should participate in decision-making on the same footing.

We have also voiced our positions in 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

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Security Council, with a view to improving its working methods and transparency. Some progress has been made, but much remains to be done. We hope that the Council will continue to adopt measures to improve its work, promote transparency in its decision-making process and encourage greater interaction between the Council and the General Assembly with a view to improving coordination of the Council's work with that of other bodies that play an active role in addressing conflict situations. The General Assembly may be assured of Mexico's determination to continue to participate constructively in the Working Group's reflection on this issue.

We are convinced that Security Council reform is one of the issues of greatest interest and importance on the United Nations current agenda. We are therefore grateful for the opportunity to state our views, as we have in previous years, on the arduous exercise under way in the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council.

The need for reform in the Security Council is not a new one. For several years now, the States Members of this Organization have been considering ways and means of achieving it. The activities of the Working Group are extremely valuable, not only because of the intensity of its discussions, but also because of its contribution to changing practices and processes in the Council's working methods. No one can deny either the constructive effect that the Working Group's deliberations have had on the Security Council's practices, particularly over the past five years, or the prevailing deadlock on the issue of expanding membership. We must acknowledge that the latter is the result of a polarization of positions and not of the negotiating format adopted by the Working Group.

At the same time, as noted a few weeks ago in this very Hall by President Vicente Fox of Mexico,

> "There is little worth in considering a Council with a larger membership if the resolutions that it issues are not respected or if they lack a common interpretation of the scope of their provisions. We must ensure the right kind of representativeness, limit and regulate the right of veto and call for greater transparency and for creating a more balanced relationship with the other organs of the United Nations system, particularly the General Assembly". (*A/58/PV.9, p. 22*)

Mexico stresses yet again that the way to achieve reform is not by expanding anachronistic privileges within the Security Council, such as the status of permanent membership or the right of veto, and underscores the need for reform in order to secure better representativeness and geographical balance on the Council. While certain States not only have unacceptable pretensions, but continue to block agreement on elements that would otherwise enjoy consensus, neither the Working Group nor any other exercise will be able to achieve the overall agreement required for any reform of the Security Council, in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 48/26 and 53/30.

Finally, we express our readiness to continue to participate actively in the Working Group in the hope that all Member States will demonstrate the necessary political will to find common political positions, abandon unattainable claims and work together in the interests of the international community as a whole.

Mr. Amer (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): The President of the Security Council for this month has introduced the Council's report covering the period from 1 August 2002 to 31 July 2003. My delegation believes that the General Assembly's discussion of the report will provide an opportunity to review developments in the maintenance of international peace and security, to assess the Council's performance in that context, and to determine the adequacy of that performance with respect to the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and to its own mandate.

We are discussing the report of the Security Council in the context of measures adopted by the General Assembly to strengthen the relationship between the decision-making bodies of the United Nations and the Council. In that context, I would refer to resolution 47/233, in which the Assembly encourages Member States to participate actively in a substantive and in-depth discussion on and consideration of the reports of the Security Council, and to resolution 48/264, in which the Assembly calls on its President 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 Security Council. Resolution 51/193 of 17 December 1996 specified a number of measures related to the annual reports that are submitted by the Security Council to the General Assembly.

In the framework of decisions adopted by the General Assembly, we note that the Council's report, contained in document A/58/2, stresses the fact that consultations of the Council with troop-contributing countries for peacekeeping have continued on an ongoing basis throughout the reporting period. We call on the Council to hold even more consultations with Member States with respect to fulfilling the objectives of peacekeeping operations. We believe that briefings by the Council to Member States should be improved by being made more appropriate and regular.

We thank the Presidents of the Council for the monthly assessments they give to the General Assembly so that it may comprehensively and objectively assess the Council's accomplishments. I would stress the need for the Council to brief Member States on missions to crisis areas, their mandates and their conclusions. We would also highlight the need for consultations between the Presidents of the General Assembly and the Security Council in moments of crisis and for the institutionalization of such measures, which should be inscribed in the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

We believe that the Council should solicit the views of the International Court of Justice more often on legal questions, in accordance with Chapter VII of the Charter. That practice proved very useful during the joint meeting with regional organizations in April, when great interest was shown in adopting it as a way of accelerating our response to the challenges of our changing world. Article 48 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Council stipulates that the Council's meetings should be public unless otherwise indicated. We have noticed that the Council has increased its open meetings, which give Member States an opportunity to express their viewpoints.

We are concerned about the informal private consultations of the Council, which do not allow Member States to be informed about developments, contravene resolution 51/193 and disregard the requests of the General Assembly. While we believe that these consultations may help the Council to discharge its duties, it is unacceptable for States to have to deal with a given situation without having any information on it. We ask that the relevant provisions of the Charter, in particular Articles 31 and 32, be implemented in order to allow States to participate in the consultations and to provide greater transparency in the Council's work.

During the reporting period, the Council debated items on the maintenance of international peace and security, missions were dispatched and troops deployed to resolve crises. Such activity, however, did not extend throughout the world. In one specific case, the Council was silent while war raged. On the issue of Palestine, the right of veto paralysed the Council's ability to adopt measures to end the aggression against the Palestinian people and to dispatch any international forces. This paralysis prompts us to reconsider the role of the Council and the exercise of the right of the veto.

It is clear that Africa has been a priority in the Council's work. The Council spent a great deal of its time in open meetings to discuss Africa. My delegation welcomes measures adopted to end the conflicts in Somalia, Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and other parts of the continent. We are convinced that development must be accompanied by peace and security and that measures therefore need to be taken to reflect the economic and social problems of Africa, including poverty, marginalization and debt.

In conclusion, it has become customary for the General Assembly to hold this discussion on the report of the Security Council. It is not enough, however, merely to take note of the report, however great a priority the maintenance of international peace and security may be. The proposals of Member States must be submitted to the Security Council in accordance with rules 10 and 11 of the Assembly's rules of procedure in order to enhance the Assembly's contribution to the maintenance of international peace and security.

Mr. Nguyen Thanh Chau (Viet Nam): I would like to join previous speakers in registering our thanks to the Ambassador of the United States, Mr. Negroponte, for his introduction of the report of the Security Council. Along the same lines, we wish to thank the Council and the Secretariat for their preparation of the annual report of the Security Council for the period from 1 August 2002 to 31 July 2003. The report, which provides an invaluable insight into the business of the Council, represents an endeavour by the Council to make itself accountable to the membership of the United Nations, in accordance with the provisions of Article 24 of the Charter.

Reading the report, I am not at all envious of, but rather sympathetic with our colleagues on the Council

who sat days on end through consultations and deliberations on so many important issues. It has indeed been a unique and challenging year for the Security Council, with the fight against international terrorism always high on the working agenda, along with peacekeeping and nation-building missions that consumed so much of the time of the Council members. We note with satisfaction that, last year, the Council succeeded in adopting resolutions on some conflicts, including in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Western Sahara, Somalia and elsewhere. Although the collective response to events has in some cases been hesitant and tardy and peace in those parts of the world remains highly fragile, such developments certainly give rise to optimism and hope.

It was unfortunate, however, that the work of the Council did not always bear fruit, as in the case of the Iraqi crisis. The whole world was holding its breath over the Council's lengthy negotiations of the resolution, sensing that war was imminent, and our confidence was eroded in the process. It is sad that, although the United Nations did not make the bed — as the saying goes — it had to lie deep in it and suffer tragic losses as its headquarters in Baghdad were bombed twice. It is even sadder to note that, although arriving with a noble mission, the United Nations did not turn out to be the frog that the Iraqi princess might kiss.

For the sake of fairness, however, we wish to applaud the work of the Council in assisting the Iraqi people through the oil-for-food programme before and after the war. Timely United Nations humanitarian assistance may have lightened the burden of suffering for the people over there.

We also welcome the efforts made by the Council in combating international terrorism. During the year, the Council itself and its subsidiary Committees contributed significantly to implementing resolution 1373 (2001) and sanctions imposed upon Al Qaeda, the Taliban and other associated terrorist groups and individuals. It is heartening to note that the response of States Members of the United Nations was so positive and that concerted actions have been taken throughout the world, as indicated with concrete figures in the report. This serves as solid testimony to the determination of the community of the world's States to fight terrorism in all its forms. It does not mean, however, that we should forget the other half of the story. The root causes of terrorism — poverty, injustice and oppression — should resolutely be tackled as well.

With regard to sanctions, we are of the view that, while unable to attain their intended objectives, they only hurt the general population, especially women and children, and that they must be abolished. In this connection, my delegation warmly welcomes the Council's decision to lift the sanctions against Iraq and Libya.

The ongoing crisis in the Middle East has continued to be a source of profound concern for the States Members of the United Nations. It is again a challenge to the credibility of the Security Council. The failure to secure the implementation of some resolutions and to reach consensus among the Council members on certain issues of the conflict has led to the further deterioration of the already volatile situation and the stamping out of hope for a comprehensive settlement. The Palestinian people deserve the Council's resolute commitment to alleviating their plight and putting the peace process back on track. Unilateral acts only worsen the situation. The precedence of resorting to pre-emptive force against perceived threats or the erection of walls cannot bring about security on either side of the wall.

We are pleased that the Security Council's members have devoted much attention to making the Council's work more transparent to and inclusive of the rest of the United Nations membership. We welcome the fact that the concerned members have been invited to take part more frequently in the Council's public discussions on pressing issues related to the maintenance of peace and security. We sincerely believe that this practice has helped the Council to produce more balanced and impartial decisions on the issues under consideration. My delegation also notes with pleasure the continued practice of the Council Presidents of holding briefings and monthly assessments of the work they chair for the non-Council members.

The Security Council was established more than 50 years ago. It has lived up to the expectations of the founders of the United Nations, playing a very important role in the maintenance of peace and security throughout the world. In order to earn the confidence and meet the expectations of the highly diverse nations that have joined the Organization, the Security Council must be stronger and more democratized, with better representation of the developing countries and of those

able to make positive contributions to the common objectives. I concur with the Secretary-General's view that the Council must urgently become more broadly representative of the international community as a whole, as well as of today's geopolitical realities. To do so, the Security Council's membership should be broadened in quantity as well as in quality, in the permanent and non-permanent seats alike. Along this line, Viet Nam has repeatedly expressed its support for the membership of Japan, Germany, India and other eligible States from all continents in an enlarged Council, in the conviction that it would be better for the Security Council and for the United Nations as a whole.

Democratization, transparency, accountability and broader representation are what we States Members of the United Nations expect from the Security Council.

Mr. Hakeem (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like at the outset to thank the President of the Security Council, the Permanent Representative of the United States, for having introduced the report on the work of the Council over the past year.

Despite the many difficulties that have faced our Organization and its bodies, in particular the Security Council, over the past year, my delegation welcomes the Council's achievements in the cause of international peace and security in that time. My delegation also reaffirms the great importance we attach to the Council's highly effective work pursuant to its responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.

While we appreciate the interest which the Council has shown in the Middle East, where the Arab-Israeli conflict persists, and the resolutions adopted concerning our region, we remain concerned that most relevant resolutions on this issue have yet to be implemented. Israel, in utter disregard for international law, has refused to implement any of the Council's resolutions seeking to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict. Such disregard is dangerous in international relations and seriously hinders the Security Council's action, damages its credibility and impedes its effectiveness. Israel's refusal to implement the Security Council's resolution demonstrates its determination to continue its occupation of Palestinian and Arab territories and to torpedo any effort to restore peace in the Middle East.

My country has followed the role played by the Security Council in the strengthening of stability and security and in resolving conflicts throughout the world. Saudi Arabia fully approves the efforts of the Security Council and the Secretary-General to establish peace and security. My country calls on the States members of the Council to develop a resolution that would enable our Organization to play a pivotal role in Iraq and help its people once again to live in the protection of international law.

With regard to the consideration of agenda item 57 on the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters, there is an intention to introduce some reform in United Nations bodies, the Security Council first and foremost, prompted by the sense that the world is still far from fulfilling the purposes and principles of the Charter, chief among which are the maintenance of international peace and security, and justice, development and prosperity for all peoples of the world.

The establishment in 1993 of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters related to the Security Council certainly reflected a consensus among Member States on the need to introduce the necessary expansion of the Council's membership, which would allow it to embody equitable geographical representation for all regions of the world, as well as to make its working methods more transparent. Despite all the time it has devoted to this issue, the Working Group has been unable to resolve many issues. We hope that the reform of the Security Council will help to make it more active and confirm its ability to maintain international peace and security. We also hope that the members of the Council will eschew double standards in the implementation of the Council's resolutions.

Mr. Rosenthal (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): In past years, we have participated in the debate on this agenda item basically in order to voice our concern over the fact that the reports we have been receiving under Article 15 of the Charter are too descriptive, excessively lengthy and lacking the elements that would allow the Members of the United Nations that do not have the privilege of sitting on the Council to assess the work of that body. We did recognize, however, that there was a slight improvement during the fifty-seventh session, inasmuch as the report submitted at that session was both shorter and more analytic than those of past years.

And yet, we note again, with dismay, that the current report in document A/58/2 restores the old

pattern, characterized by an abundance of information but containing little in the way of analysis, much less of interpretation. This is all the more worrisome given the profound divisions that plagued the work of the Council last March and have indelibly marked the atmosphere that has prevailed in recent months, even though, as the report itself reminds us, the Council managed to regain unity in adopting its resolutions 1472 (2003), 1476 (2003) and 1483 (2003).

As other colleagues who have taken the floor today have pointed out, Article 15 of the Charter was meant to involve more than a merely symbolic or ritualistic act. It seeks to provide one of the basic connections between the two organs and, above all, a tool enabling the General Assembly to fulfil its role as the principal United Nations organ for deliberation, the adoption of policies and representation. It is a matter of regret that the limited analysis offered in the report hardly provides a basis for the accomplishment of those goals.

On the positive side, this year's report reminds us that the work of the Council was not limited to the situation in Iraq, but ranged over a wide and very substantial agenda. The latter, to be sure, reveals certain advances, both as regards peace-building in certain countries that were the object of the Council's attention — notably Sierra Leone and Burundi — and the belated but unquestionably welcome intervention in Liberia. The activity in Afghanistan should also count among the Council's achievements. In addition, headway was made in the work of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1373 (2001), initially under the chairmanship of Sir Jeremy Greenstock of the United Kingdom and then under that of Ambassador Inocencio Arias of Spain. Our delegation appreciates the transparency that has characterized the work of the Committee.

We are also grateful for the role that Chile and Mexico have played over the past year in keeping us informed, through the Latin American and Caribbean Group, of the main developments within the Council.

We feel, in brief, that the relationship between the United Nations organs, and particularly between the Security Council and the General Assembly, leaves much to be desired. It can be contended that the concentration of decision-making power on issues of the highest importance within that 15-nation body, which is dominated by the five permanent members, has hitherto been at the expense of the General Assembly. That does not necessarily have to be the case, inasmuch as the Charter provides that the various organs, each of which is unique in composition and has its own specialized field of competence, should mutually support one another. Experience has nevertheless demonstrated — and this is something over which we have repeatedly expressed regret in this Hall — that, as the Security Council gains ascendancy, the General Assembly loses it.

Whatever the case may be, the report of the Security Council implicitly reminds us of two crucial tasks that remain unfulfilled. Needless to say, I am referring to the incomplete reform of the methods of work of the General Assembly and to the long-drawn-out efforts to reform the composition of the Security Council, a matter that the Secretary-General has addressed in his report on the work of the Organization and in his statement before this Assembly on 23 September.

Mr. Kim Sam-hoon (Republic of Korea): My delegation extends its appreciation to Ambassador Negroponte, the President of the Security Council for this month, for introducing the annual report of the Security Council.

We welcome the efforts of the Secretariat to produce an informative and concise annual report of the Security Council. In particular, we appreciate the clarity of the introductory chapter on the Council's work. This straightforward and analytical approach is a welcome trend and we look forward to further improvements in this regard.

In recent years, the Security Council has endeavoured to improve its working methods and to enhance transparency. As the report aptly reflects, the increase in the Security Council's workload has corresponded to the enhancement of its transparency. Initiatives, such as the regular briefings by the President of the Council, the statements to the press and the much-improved and regularly updated Security Council web site, have all contributed in meaningful ways to improving transparency and ensuring the timely dissemination of information to the wider general membership. Moreover, the Council's efforts to hold more frequent open debates have helped to actively engage the general membership in the work of the Security Council.

Over the past year, the Security Council has focused much of its work on the situation in Iraq.

Given the complexity of this issue, it was and remains a subject of much debate. Regardless of all the divergence of views, the fact remains that the people of Iraq have been liberated from a long-standing brutal dictatorship. Despite this positive development, there are still many challenges to overcome. In particular, we express our grave concern over the growing number of casualties that have tragically resulted from the recurrence of violence and terror, including those of United Nations personnel and those claimed by the Baghdad hotel bombing just two days ago.

The Republic of Korea believes that the underpinnings of peace in Iraq are dependent on effective nation-building. The establishment of democratic institutions and the promotion of socio-economic development are particularly important in that regard. Accordingly, the international community is duty-bound to assist and support the ongoing work in Iraq. The Security Council, too, has an important role to play in achieving progress in Iraq's reconstruction and in facilitating its transition to a fully representative Government.

As the institution charged with the primary responsibility for maintaining global peace and security, the Security Council has considered many other major and complex issues in the period under review.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, remains a pressing issue in the Security Council and an ongoing concern for the rest of the international community. We hope that Israel and Palestine will both reaffirm their commitment to the road map as elaborated by the Quartet. That proposal offers the best hope for a political settlement whereby the two States of Israel and Palestine will be able to live side by side within secure and recognized borders. Furthermore, the recent acts of violence, such as the suicide bombing in Haifa and the air strike against Ain Al Sahib, are deeply deplorable and must not be allowed to escalate into a broader conflict. We would urge all parties at this time to exercise maximum restraint.

We value the Security Council's attention to conflict situations in Africa. The Council has shown tremendous resolve in dealing with the outbreak of conflict in Liberia. We commend its prompt authorization of a multinational force, which prevented the situation from escalating into a humanitarian tragedy. Moreover, the Council's efforts in Sierra Leone, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi have resulted in an overall improvement on the ground and now offer opportunities for real peace. It is with satisfaction that we note the visits of the Security Council missions to West and Central Africa. In our view, such initiatives are crucial, as they not only provide the Council with a first-hand account of the reality on the ground, but also convey a clear message to regional leaders about the Security Council's commitment to peace and stability in afflicted areas.

Regarding the Council's work in Asia, we welcome its significant contributions to restoring the peace in Afghanistan. Since the implementation of the Bonn Agreement, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan has been tireless in its efforts across all fields.

Credit is also due to the International Security Assistant Force for its efforts to provide security on the ground under extremely trying and tenuous circumstances. Going forward, the sustained attention of the Council will be needed to address the formidable challenges to Afghanistan's fragile security situation, the viability of the peace process and the elections scheduled for 2004. We hope that the upcoming visit of the Security Council mission will make positive contributions in this regard.

Timor-Leste has become yet another United Nations success story. The Republic of Korea is proud to have actively participated in the mission through its contribution of peacekeeping forces, logistics support and other assistance. The recent downsizing of the United Nations Mission of Support in East Timor attests to the progress achieved. However, many challenges remain, such as the need to improve public administration, justice and policing. As in all post-conflict situations, the international community should continue to assist the people of Timor-Leste in the coming years.

Turning to our part of the world, we note that the Security Council is seized with the North Korean nuclear issue. With all due respect for the Council's responsibility to address cases of non-compliance and to respond to threats to the international peace and security presented by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, my Government hopes that this issue will be resolved expeditiously through the process of the six-party talks.

Among the general items on the Council's agenda over the past year, terrorism continues to be a priority

issue. Recent acts of terror have demonstrated that no continent is immune from the scourge of international terrorism. The Republic of Korea strongly supports the continued efforts of the Counter-Terrorism Committee of the Security Council to strengthen counter-terrorism measures and to promote capacity-building at the national, regional and global levels. Such efforts reflect an increased scope of work for the Security Council and we welcome this trend.

We note the crucial role of the Security Council in promoting regional and international efforts to curb the illicit trade in small arms. In this regard, the Council's close monitoring of its arms embargoes, as well as the incorporation of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes into its peacekeeping missions, are essential to breaking cycles of conflict.

In conclusion, the Republic of Korea reiterates its unswerving support for the Security Council in its efforts to address all issues pertaining to international peace and security in accordance with its mandate under the United Nations Charter.

Mr. Requeijo Gual (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): The annual report of the Security Council offers the sole practical opportunity available to all Member States to discuss the Council's work in depth.

This is the second time that a brief analytical summary has been included in the report; although insufficient, it marks a step forward towards the objective of providing genuinely substantive reports on the Security Council's work. In our opinion, the report should reflect not only what has been done, but also that which proved impossible to accomplish and the reasons therefore, particularly in cases in which the Council has been unable to act or has demonstrated evident disunity. Without disregarding the value of the current report as an element of the Council's institutional memory, we continue to hope for a report with greater analytical substance that would lay down the political and juridical foundations of at least the most important decisions taken by the Council.

The submission of the annual report is not a privilege granted to Member States. Rather, it is an obligation under Articles 15 and 24 of the Charter. Our demands do not arise from merely journalistic or academic curiosity, but are based on the fact that the States Members represented in this Assembly have the legitimate right to expect a proper accounting from the organ that has been entrusted with the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security and which, pursuant to the Charter, acts on behalf of all Member States.

Other appeals made by the majority of Member States have yet to be heeded. There is still a need for progress in the implementation of the proposals contained in resolution 51/193, adopted by this Assembly at the initiative of the Non-Aligned Movement. The General Assembly still awaits the special reports that the Council should submit, when necessary, pursuant to paragraph 3 of Article 24 of the Charter. The submission of such reports on specific issues would help to promote the active interrelationship between the two organs that we are all eager to see. On that basis, the Assembly would be able to draft useful recommendations for the Council's work.

In the past year, the credibility of the Security Council — which had already been diminished — suffered severe harm when certain countries decided to launch a war against Iraq without prior authorization from the organ that embodies the collective security mechanism established by the United Nations. And yet, this issue has neither been addressed analytically in the report nor presented to the Assembly in a special report. Is it possible that a special report is not warranted with respect to the crisis that has arisen in Iraq following the military action undertaken in blatant violation of the most elemental principles of the United Nations Charter and international law? This is clear and further proof of the need for thoroughgoing reform of the Council, which has become the most sensitive task in the reform process of the United Nations as a whole.

There is an urgent need for greater transparency in the work of the Security Council. In an increasingly interdependent world, Security Council decisions increasingly affect all Member States directly or indirectly. Moreover, implementation of many Security Council resolutions must be financed by all Member States and not just by those making the decisions.

Although the number of its public meetings appears to have increased, the Security Council continues to carry out the greater part of its work behind closed doors, in spite of the fact that such conduct contravenes its own rules of procedure and has emphatically and repeatedly been called unacceptable by the majority of Member States. We believe that the briefings by the Secretariat and representatives of the Secretary-General — except when very exceptional circumstances prevent it —

should take place in public meetings of the Council, and not behind closed doors, as now occurs on many occasions.

Until changes are made to the Council's current practice, its annual report should contain detailed information on the discussions that take place behind closed doors. The diverging views that members of the Council may hold on given questions should also be reflected in the report. Because of the ongoing limitations of the annual report, the assessments by former Presidents and the daily informal briefings by the monthly presidency are the only arrangements that provide a small degree of information on what takes place in private consultations.

In order to exercise our right to obtain the information our Governments require to take the appropriate political decisions, most delegations are obliged to wait for hours in the south lounge until a member of the Council is ready to share information with us and thus help to overcome, as is necessary, the syndrome of secrecy in the Council's work. It is counterproductive to see how some delegations pass information to the press, while Members of the United Nations are deprived of that immediate source of information.

We take this opportunity to pay tribute to the efforts made by the countries of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States that are current non-permanent members to keep the countries of our region as well informed as possible on the Council's work.

Not only must the number of open meetings be increased, but they should also be turned into a real opportunity to ensure that the views and contributions of States non-members of the Council are duly taken into account.

We note that the annual reports of the sanctions committees have been included this year. That practice should be continued. At the same time, we emphasize that the meetings of those committees should be open and that the records of their discussions should be included in the annual report of the Security Council. It would also be useful to set standards for the minimum amount of information to be contained in the monthly reports of the Presidents of the Council.

There is no logical explanation for the fact that the Council's rules of procedure continue to be provisional after so many years, or for the fact that they have not been amended in more than 20 years. The modifications of the rules that the Council has adopted or now applies in practice should be codified in the rules of procedure.

In various debates, we have voiced concerns about the Council's growing tendency to assume functions that it does not rightly hold. The adoption of Security Council resolution 1487 (2003), on the International Criminal Court, extended the unacceptable expansion of the Council's powers established previously by Security Council resolution 1422 (2002). It is a well-known fact that the authority to amend international treaties belongs solely to the States parties to those treaties. We reaffirm that the Security Council is not the proper organ in which to debate the law of treaties or the International Criminal Court, simply because the Charter does not confer upon the Council the power to do so. While the Council exceeds its competence in some areas, in others, such as the question of the occupied Palestinian territories its paralysis is disturbing.

The consequences of the veto and threats of the veto, as well as other issues relating to the Council's reform, will be addressed in detail by my delegation when we consider agenda item 56, on Council membership and so on, as this year we have reverted to the earlier practice of discussing that item separately.

Mr. Mahbubani (Singapore): I begin by thanking and congratulating the President of the Security Council, Ambassador John Negroponte, for presenting the report of the Security Council this morning. In his typical style, it was short, succinct and focused. We were also very pleased to hear from him that the Council has continued to shorten the report; it is now 60 pages shorter.

There has already been an interesting debate on whether the two items, the work of the Open-ended Working Group on Council reform and the report of the Security Council, should have been kept separate or been put together, as they were last year. But I think that on balance it may have been better that we decided to keep the two debates separate, because we now have an opportunity in this debate to focus on the performance of the Security Council. Hopefully, that is why we are here today.

That brings me to my most important point. We have been meeting each year, for 40 or 50 years, in this same way, debating the report. But are we clear about the purpose of this annual debate? Why does the

Security Council submit a report to the General Assembly, and why does the General Assembly meet to discuss that report? One of the most remarkable things is that, after 58 years of the Assembly's existence, there is still no consensus on why we do this. Why is there no consensus? The reason is that the relationship itself between the Security Council and the General Assembly has never been clarified or, indeed, properly understood by the Members of the United Nations.

Many believe that the Security Council should, logically, be subordinate to the General Assembly. Indeed, Article 24, paragraph 1 of the Charter states:

> "In order to ensure prompt and effective action by the United Nations, its Members" —

that is, the members of the General Assembly —

> "confer on the Security Council primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, and agree that in carrying our its duties under this responsibility the Security Council acts on their behalf."

I guess the key word here is "confer".

Article 24, paragraph 3, states:

> "The Security Council shall submit annual and, when necessary, special reports to the General Assembly for its consideration."

Article 24, paragraph 1, and Article 15 would seem to imply that the Security Council is subordinate to the General Assembly and therefore, as my good friend the Permanent Representative of Malaysia said today, accountable to it. But one important lesson that we learned after spending two years in the Council for the period 2001-2002 was that the Security Council does not consider itself to be in any way subordinate to the General Assembly. Indeed, some members of the Security Council argue the point, with some logic and persuasion. Their scholars say that the Security Council was never intended to be in any way subordinate to the General Assembly, but that it was meant to be equal to the General Assembly.

If we do not have a common understanding within the General Assembly on the one hand and the Security Council on the other with regard to what their relationship should be, then how can we possibly have a proper discussion of their respective roles?

What complicates this picture is the fact that, as we all know, in real terms the Security Council has become far more important in recent years and the General Assembly — I say this with some sadness — far less important. That makes it even harder for the General Assembly to hold the Security Council accountable for what it is trying to do.

The first point we would like to register today is that, after 58 years of the existence of the United Nations, it may be useful, before we go on with this annual ritual of looking at the report of the Security Council, for this house to take some time to reach a common understanding, within the General Assembly and the Security Council, about their respective responsibilities and their relationship with each other.

Let me turn now to the report that is before us. Various comments have been made about the report so far. Are we clear that this report should be purely a factual account of what the Council has done — or should it be, as earlier speakers have said, an evaluation of the Council's activities? Again, frankly, there is no consensus as to whether the report should be factual or whether there should be an evaluation.

Many people in this Hall believe that the Council should provide an evaluation, that it should tell us how it performed, what it did right and what it did wrong. But if we are to get the Council to do that, we — the General Assembly — must in turn come up with clear criteria about what we expect of the Security Council in any such evaluation.

In this context, I would like to mention the fact that when we spoke on this subject in the General Assembly last year, we suggested four criteria for evaluating the performance of the Council. First, has the Council successfully managed issues under its purview? Have lives been lost, saved or improved as a result of the work of the Security Council? Secondly, has the Security Council improved its procedures and working methods to generate greater efficiency and effectiveness in its work? Thirdly, has the Council become more transparent and open in its work and in its relations with the wider United Nations membership? Fourthly, has the Council enhanced or diminished its credibility and prestige in the international community?

We suggested those criteria in the hope that they would lead to a discussion among Member States. Sadly, last year at least, only one ambassador added an

additional criterion. Ambassador Jeremy Greenstock, then Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom, added a fifth criterion, with which, frankly, I am comfortable. He said that we should also ask whether the Council has responded adequately to the greater demands put upon it by globalization.

Unfortunately, he was the only one to come up with additional suggestions for criteria. We would therefore like to express the hope that in the course of our discussions this year we will move towards a consensus on the criteria that we can use to measure the performance of the Council because if we do not have such criteria, how can we tell whether the Council has done better or done worse?

We would also like to suggest that the failure of the General Assembly to reach such an understanding may, perhaps, explain why in this year's report the Security Council has, unfortunately, taken a major step backwards in the way that it has reported to the General Assembly. I am glad that other Permanent Representatives noted this. The Permanent Representative of Japan said earlier,

> "I understand that there was an active discussion among the Security Council members on how each member's views should be reflected in the report during the drafting process. I was looking forward to hearing these frank views in an open meeting of the Council, as has occurred in previous years. However, contrary to the previous practice, no Council members took the floor to present their views this time." (*A/58/PV.28*)

I should, in all fairness, admit that when we were in the Council, Singapore pushed very hard for Council members to give their views at the time of the adoption of the report, and that one might think, therefore, that we are, in a sense, being churlish in mentioning this. We are doing so, however, because we believe that the General Assembly has been deprived of a very valuable tool that it could use to measure the performance of the Security Council.

The best demonstration of that, by the way, is the verbatim record of the Council's discussion of 26 September 2002, as contained in document S/PV.4616. I urge members of the General Assembly to read that document, because if they do so they will begin to understand the limitations and inadequacies of the report that is submitted to us. The reason why the report submitted to us will always be inadequate is that 15 members of the Council can never agree on a common evaluation of the performance of the Council. Each has a different perspective. In fact, the report can contain only the lowest common denominator — what the 15 can agree on. Everything else has to be provided individually by the 15 members.

I want to read one paragraph from the record of that meeting, because it illustrates the quality of the debate and discussion that emerges when 15 members speak about the report — as opposed to the bland report itself. This is what Ambassador Gerard Corr of Ireland said:

> "Isaiah Berlin titled one his books 'The Crooked Timber of Humanity', and that is a fundamental point. Life and politics are untidy; many of the crises that the Council deals with are both complex and difficult. They can be a cauldron of forces; spirits summoned from the deep when conflicts start are not easily put back into the deep. So the world that the Council deals with in the issues on its agenda are inherently untidy in many respects. They are extremely complex, and there is rarely a straight line from A to Z. So the Council must, using its best judgement, take due stock of the situation, advance its goals and give proper monitoring to that." (*S/PV.4616, pp. 12-13*)

That paragraph explains simply and vividly the difficult work that the Council does and why sometimes it has to make less than perfect decisions. This can only be done when the members were given an opportunity to speak when the report was given, and that opportunity was missed this year. As Members know, there is a General Assembly decision whereby the President of the General Assembly is supposed to produce a report on this debate. For reasons that are still mysterious — we do not know why previous Presidents have not done it — we think that the time has come for it to be done.

I wish to mention a point that is a slightly delicate one to put across in this Hall. It is a pity that fewer members of the Council have decided to speak in this debate on the report of the Security Council. We think that it would be healthier for the Organization to have all 15 members, and certainly all the permanent members, speak on the report when it is debated this year.

But what makes this particular session of the General Assembly on the report of the Security Council

particularly unreal is that the year 2003 may well go down as perhaps one of the most important years in the history of the Security Council. To understand that, let us recall where we were a few months ago, when we were debating the issue of Iraq. I do not have the facts. I do not have the figures. But I think that you would all agree with me that in terms of the pairs of eyes that were looking at the Security Council, there were probably billions of pairs of eyes all over the globe fixed on their television sets, watching the performance of the Security Council day by day. So billions of our own population have watched the Council, and they assume that, when we, here, meet in the General Assembly to discuss the same performance that they have watched on television, we will address the same thing.

Indeed, Secretary-General Kofi Annan, in a recent press interview, pointed out the fact that, during those debates, he received more telephone calls from heads of State or Government than at any other previous time in his career. There was a lot of interest and excitement about the Security Council and its performance a few months ago, but we have barely taken note of it. I want to mention that, in the case of Singapore, when our Foreign Minister spoke in the general debate, he put across his views on how the United Nations community should assess the Iraq debate and its impact on the United Nations community. I hope more of us will do it, because that was clearly an issue that was fundamental to the work of the United Nations community this year.

Let me conclude by summarizing three key points. The first point is that, if this debate is to be useful and meaningful for the United Nations community, we think that the time has come for the General Assembly to work out clear criteria for assessing the performance of the Council. If we cannot agree on such criteria, then why have this debate? It may actually serve no purpose. I hope this will be discussed.

The second point — a procedural point — is that if the General Assembly is to get more information from the Security Council, we hope that we, collectively, in the General Assembly, will reach a consensus and request the Council to go back to its previous practice and ensure that when it adopts its report, it will also provide an opportunity to all its 15 members to speak in the Council on the report and to give us their views on how the Council performed.

But I want to ensure that one point is not misunderstood here. Indeed, if an objective assessment of the performance of the Council were made, one could argue that, in real terms, in terms of the work that the Council has done, in terms of the successes it has achieved, its work and performance in some areas has improved. But the reason why we cannot take note of the improvements is that we do not have the criteria to judge where and how they have improved.

In conclusion, my third and final point is that, if I had to make one simple prediction about the Council, it is that its role and importance within the United Nations family and, frankly, within the international community, will continue to grow. That seems almost certain. But, unfortunately, the role and influence of the General Assembly, by contrast, is not likely to grow. So where is the problem? The problem is that the Security Council and the General Assembly are necessarily linked in a symbiotic relationship.

To explain the symbiosis, let me ask members a simple question: If the current 15 members of the Security Council left the United Nations premises, walked across the street to the hotel and had the same meeting among themselves, perhaps calling themselves a global security council, would we or anybody in the international community pay any attention to them? We would not.

All the legitimacy that surrounds the work of the Security Council comes from the fact that it is part of the United Nations family, and it results from the fact that all 191 States have ratified the Charter and have agreed to abide by the decisions of the Security Council.

The Security Council may be becoming more important, but its legitimacy comes from this Hall, from the Member States' presence in this Hall. So if we are going to be linked symbiotically forever, is it not time that we achieve in due course an understanding on both sides — within the General Assembly and the Security Council — of what our respective roles and responsibilities are and how we should interact with one another? We believe that the time has come to reach such an understanding.

The President: Before calling on the next speaker, I wish to reiterate what I said this morning — that I intend to report on this debate as President of the General Assembly. I also wish to state that I do not know why this did not happen in the past, but I certainly intend to rectify the situation.

Mr. Mekdad (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Let me begin by thanking you personally, Mr. President, for your interest in this discussion and for attending it consistently.

My thanks also go to Ambassador John Negroponte, President of the Security Council for October, for his introduction of the Council's report covering the period from 1 August 2002 to 31 July 2003. I also thank the members of the Secretariat for their efforts in preparing the report.

The General Assembly's discussion today of the report of the Security Council on its work over the past year demonstrates its vital role in monitoring all matters relating to international peace and security, pursuant to Article 10 of the Charter. This debate is all the more important inasmuch as it is part of increasingly broad-ranging discussions of the reform of the United Nations as a whole. It reaffirms yet again the role of the General Assembly in the consideration of all matters in the purview of the Charter. The debate gives Member States the opportunity to express their views on the work of the Security Council and the way in which it discharges its responsibilities for maintaining international peace and security.

The Security Council has made remarkable progress towards ensuring a degree of transparency of its work. A great many public meetings have been held and non-member States have increasingly taken part in the Council's work, allowing them to express their views on policy matters under consideration. Moreover, the Security Council has held closed meetings at which its role has been candidly discussed by members and non-members alike.

In the year prior to this session, the Security Council addressed important issues related to its role and competence, such as its failure to prevent the war against Iraq and to end the barbaric Israeli practices in the occupied Palestinian territories. My delegation reaffirms the need for the Security Council to adopt the draft resolution submitted by Syria in condemnation of the latest Israeli aggression against its territories, which represents a flagrant violation of the Charter and of the disengagement agreement between the two countries and is a major escalation of violence in the Middle East, the repercussions of which will be felt indefinitely throughout the region.

It is clear that, during the reporting period, the Security Council vigorously sought to address questions related to Africa, which represent more than 70 per cent of the items on its agenda. The Council has striven arduously to restore stability to regions in conflict in various African countries. It has called on States concerned to respect agreements they have undertaken under the auspices of regional and international organizations. We welcome the newfound synergy between the efforts of the Security Council and those of the Secretary-General and his representatives with a view to facilitating peace negotiations in various African countries. In this regard, we are also pleased with the progress made in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, Liberia and Sierra Leone. We stress the importance of dispatching Security Council missions to find solutions to conflicts in various regions around the world.

In its capacity as a Security Council member, Syria has striven above all to champion issues of relevance to developing countries and to international peace and security. Thus, Syria was the first State to propose the provision of monthly briefings. The Council has responded positively to this proposal and more than 20 such briefings have been held on the Middle East. This is a step in the right direction, as some members of the Council have noted, with a view to addressing certain hotbeds of tension throughout the world. The briefings have been useful in giving all Member States an opportunity to review developments in that sensitive region of the Middle East and to hold open debates on a range of other issues.

My delegation has always sought to achieve unanimity or consensus in the Council in addressing certain matters that threaten international peace and security. However, we regret the fact that the Council has been unable to take necessary decisions in several instances because of a lack of objectivity and the unjustified use of the veto. The Council has thereby been prevented from adopting resolutions on issues that challenge international peace and security, thus necessitating recourse to the General Assembly to hold emergency sessions, such as that on the Middle East.

In the course of Syria's second presidency of the Council this past August, the Council held a great many meetings at which a wide variety of issues, covering many regions of the world, were addressed. A wrap-up meeting was held on the role of peacekeeping operations in the maintenance of international peace and security, at which the members of the Council were able to develop an overarching vision for peacekeeping

operations and several countries offered specific proposals. The Security Council has also addressed such thematic issues as women and peace and security, children in armed conflicts, small arms, the protection of civilians in armed conflict, interaction between the Security Council and regional organizations and the fight against terrorism, among others. The delegation of Syria believes that these discussions have allowed many States Members to give their own views on such issues of primary importance.

We have heard a number of opinions, all of which deserve our attention. I refer in particular to the statement of Ambassador Mahbubani, who spoke earlier. These are matters that we have discussed at great length on other occasions, especially when Singapore was a member of the Council. We hope that the ideas and contributions of non-permanent States members of the Council will not be forgotten once those States are no longer members, because such creative ideas are often very important to the work of the Council and the General Assembly and to the close relationship between the two United Nations organs.

This will be the last time we speak on this item as an elected member of the Council. We therefore wish to say that we have carried out our duties with a sense of responsibility, sincerity and dedication throughout our term. We have honoured all the promises we have made and cooperated with the other members of the Council. We have promoted principles of the United Nations Charter and international legitimacy that we have always been proud to champion. We wish the remaining members of the Council and the newly elected members every success and hope that they will continue to work to uphold international peace and security and to address legitimate and just issues throughout the world.

Mr. Pak Gil Yon (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): The delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea considers that it is imperative for the Security Council to serve the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter in its activities in order to fulfil its mission.

The Security Council holds a key position in the overall United Nations activities for international peace and security. However, the Security Council should recognize the fact that it has been abused for the political purposes of the super-Power on a number of occasions and departed from the principles of equity and objectivity in dealing with international cases against the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter.

The Security Council should give priority in its activities to rejecting unilateral acts and ensuring multilateralism based on sovereign equality. Reality shows that the elimination of unilateralism and high-handedness is a prerequisite to enhancing the role of the Security Council. The world community is raising its voice to declare that the Security Council should thoroughly prevent unilateralism and the high-handedness of individual countries in using or threatening to use military force against other Member States without a clear-cut resolution of the United Nations. It is also vital for the Security Council to ensure transparency in its work in order to properly carry out its missions.

Informal consultations remain a mainstream activity in the current work of the Security Council and resolutions adopted therein are being used by individual States, in most cases, for the pursuit of political purposes. If this practice is to be overcome, the Security Council should establish a firm principle of discussing and agreeing upon major issues in open meetings. Even if the holding of informal consultations remains inevitable, steps should be taken to invite parties directly concerned to speak up and express their views.

In order to ensure fairness in the activities of the Security Council, in conformity with the expectations and demands of the Member States, it is urgent to accelerate its reform. If the current ineffective bureaucratic working methods and structure, which were systematized and hardened during the cold-war era, remain unchanged, the Security Council will no longer be able reliably to ensure the security of the international community.

The Security Council should maintain fairness with regard to the issue of the Korean peninsula, particularly the nuclear issue, the solution of which has become a pressing issue in the maintenance of world peace and security. The nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula is an outcome of the United States hostile policy with regard to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The United States and certain countries have made attempts to bring the nuclear issue to the Security Council. This is not an issue in which the Security Council should intervene.

In this regard, my delegation is of the view that the Security Council should, on the basis of the

principles of justice and impartiality, draw attention to the fact that the United States hostile policy towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the threat of pre-emptive nuclear attack have combined with the nuclear issue to threaten peace and security on the Korean peninsula.

The Security Council should also pay due attention to the current situation of the so-called United Nations command in South Korea. The so-called United Nations command, which was created by the United States, has nothing to do with the United Nations and the Organization is making no contribution to its activities. The so-called United Nations forces in South Korea are United States troops by nature. The United States has been abusing the United Nations name and flag for more than half a century to cover up its sinister political purpose of isolating and stifling the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and particularly of hindering improved relations, cooperation and exchanges between the North and South of Korea.

My delegation urges the Security Council to take appropriate measures to enable the United States to return the United Nations flag and helmets to the Secretariat as soon as possible.

Mr. Aliyev (Azerbaijan): Allow me to start by associating myself with the statement made earlier today by the Permanent Representative of Ukraine, Ambassador Kuchinsky, who spoke on behalf of the States of the Georgia, Uzbekistan, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Moldova Group, and in my national capacity to add some remarks related to items 11 and 56 of the agenda.

We believe that today's discussion is extremely important, since it provides all of us with another opportunity to take stock of where we are in terms of promoting, as the Assembly of United Nations, the achievement of the ambitious goal of adapting our Organization to the drastically changed security environment. And of course, in this regard, the work of the Security Council — which, in accordance with the United Nations Charter, bears primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security — is of particular importance.

These days, the entire international community shares a common vision of the aforementioned security environment, as well as a determination to face new threats and challenges together. There is probably no need to stress that we are all living now in an era of greater and globalized instability that respects no borders. The threats, risks and challenges have undergone serious qualitative transformation.

In the meantime, the scale of those threats has also increased. Today, terrorism and other asymmetric threats and challenges to security are more international and far more lethal than ever before. The deadly terrorist attacks that, unfortunately, have recently taken a strong grip on the news headlines prove that, despite some progress achieved in addressing those challenges, the threat is still with us.

Azerbaijan therefore welcomes the constructive role that the Security Council continues to perform, including by means of its Counter-Terrorism Committee, in mobilizing the efforts of all interested States with the aim of making the fight against this evil more sophisticated and efficient. While reiterating our continued readiness to make an important contribution to this work, we would like to stress once again that the fight against terrorism cannot be successful if this evil is addressed on its own, in isolation from such terrorism-breeding threats as organized crime, aggressive separatism, militant nationalism, drug trafficking and the proliferation of small arms and weapons of mass destruction.

It is imperative to target the ways and means of accumulating the huge financial assets that feed organized criminal groups, which have close operational ties to international terrorist networks and illegal armed separatist movements. The illicit profits, gained in territories that are controlled by separatists and have been turned into grey zones of criminal activity, are further used to feed armed separatism and terrorism.

The increased magnitude of the tasks and goals faced by the Security Council in the context of the foregoing proves the pertinence of the thought clearly elaborated by the Ukrainian Ambassador in his remarks to the effect that

> "an adequate response to the new threats should reflect our common desire for a strong peace and security framework, based firmly on the international rule of law". (*A/58/PV.28*)

Unfortunately, this issue is sometimes still considered to be a luxury or side issue.

The Security Council should be resolute and bolder in promoting and, where necessary, enforcing international law and restoring peace and security, including the undermined sovereignty, territorial

integrity and political unity of its own member States. It should also be consistent in doing so, because the notorious practice of resorting to double standards and selective approaches can seriously shatter its credibility.

Inaction or lack of sufficient action on the part of the Council in ensuring the implementation of its own decisions sends another wrong and dangerous signal to the violators of justice and the rule of law. The latter start to believe in their permanent impunity and will be deprived of any reason to change to engage in a meaningful search for peace. Therefore, putting an end to this environment of impunity should be the primary role and responsibility of the Security Council.

In saying this, Azerbaijan wants once again to draw the attention of this audience to the ever-increasing validity and relevance of Security Council resolutions 822 (1993), 853 (1993), 874 (1993) and 884 (1993), adopted with regard to the ongoing conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. A situation in which the aggressor State, Armenia, continues blatantly and with impunity to ignore those resolutions should finally attract the attention of the Security Council, which ought to ensure the implementation of its own decisions.

Speaking in favour of a stronger, more proactive and powerful Security Council, I would like to stress that unity, strong political will, increased efficiency and transparency are the key elements for reaching this goal. In this context, Azerbaijan attaches critical importance to the achievement of more tangible progress in the issue of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council. Allow me to reiterate our well-known support for the candidacies of Germany and Japan as new permanent members. Adequate permanent representation in the Council should be also ensured for the African, Asian and Latin American States. Given the two-fold increase in the quantity of Member States in the Group of Eastern European States, it is necessary to allocate one additional non-permanent seat to our Group. We hope that, with greater effort and dedication, a reasonable compromise can soon be reached on the issue of the reform of the Security Council in all its aspects.

Mr. Motoc (Romania): I would like to begin by expressing my gratitude to the representative of the United States of America, the current President of the Security Council, for introducing so aptly the annual report of that principal United Nations body.

As a country that strongly supports the work of the Security Council and has put forward its candidature for membership of the Council for the coming two years, Romania is keen to contribute its share towards consolidating the effectiveness and impact of the Council in pursuing global peace and security.

Turning now to the report before us, we acknowledge it as a remarkable outcome of joint efforts by members of the Council and the Secretariat to reflect last year's vast amount of Council work in a concise and consistent document that has the real potential to meet the information needs of the wider United Nations membership on issues related to international security. We welcome the ongoing improvement of the report, both in format and substance.

Mr. Van den Berg (Netherlands), Vice-President, took the Chair.

We are pleased to note that this year's report not only builds upon the new approach initiated in 2002, but also provides increased transparency and a better reflection and analysis of Council activities. We welcome in particular the analytical summary as a good starting point for providing an integrated vision of the overall international security situation at the present time.

Apart from its obvious informative merits, this year's report has succeeded in clearly identifying both the main difficulties faced in addressing ongoing conflicts and the successes achieved by the Council in establishing and maintaining peace and security across a wide range of situations. The report reflects with high fidelity the important protagonism of the Security Council in the current political and security international environment.

The 12 months under review — from August 2002 to July 2003 — correspond to a very busy agenda for the Security Council, as international relations have become increasingly more complex and diversified. We acknowledge the new opportunities fostered by globalization. At the same time, we are aware of the new risks and threats to international security, calling for global approaches and solutions. Globalization is, in our view, the main challenge to the adaptation of the United Nations and the Security Council to the ongoing evolutions of political, economic and security realities.

The Security Council provides the institutional and conceptual framework best suited to dealing with most of the major challenges of globalization. An

increased role for the Security Council in dealing with the current complex international security environment requires all of us to take up increased responsibilities. The United Nations in general, and the Security Council in particular, are what the Member States want them to be. It is within the scope of our will and capacity to achieve a more effective and participative Security Council.

The report we are now considering is a perfect mirror for the significant increase in the magnitude and objectives of United Nations peace missions. We are witnessing the transition from traditional conflict prevention and conflict management operations to new post-conflict rehabilitation and even nation-building operations. Some relevant cases in point are Timor-Leste, Afghanistan, and, to a certain extent, Kosovo.

It is good to note from the report that real progress has been achieved on many questions considered by the Security Council under its responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. We are encouraged by all the successes that the Security Council has delivered in addressing critical issues on the international agenda. The more success stories we can achieve, the more relevant and significant a Council we will have.

The engagement of the United Nations in so many areas of the world — as the report so clearly reflects — is evidence of the leadership and wide range of responsibilities that the Council can effectively assume. This gives us reason for optimism with regard to the Member States' determination to uphold the Council's prominent role in maintaining international peace and security.

Nevertheless, as the situation in many parts of the world has seriously deteriorated over the past year, we must redouble efforts to put an end to ongoing conflicts. We must find the most proper ways to secure peace and rebuild those countries that are recovering after conflicts. We commend in particular the progress made by the Council in combating terrorism. We strongly support the intense work of the Counter-Terrorism Committee and we welcome the strengthening of its dialogue with the Member States, especially the active part it is playing in identifying the needs of and possible sources of assistance to countries in meeting their obligations under the relevant United Nations Conventions. We also commend the practice of holding thematic debates, which we find very useful. Such generic themes as the protection of civilians in armed conflict, the relation between the Security Council and regional organizations or the proliferation of small arms remain of the utmost current relevance.

Much progress has been made in improving the working methods of the Security Council. My country also welcomes the increased number of open meetings and of consultations among troop-contributing countries, the practice of convening wrap-up meetings and the periodic briefings offered to non-member States.

Almost three months elapsed between 31 July 2003, the final date of the reporting period, and the current consideration by the General Assembly of the important document before us. In historical terms, that lapse of time might seem rather insignificant. However, projecting it against the backdrop of the extremely dynamic security environment, we have to acknowledge that, during the past three months, we have witnessed so many developments in the world, all of them relevant to the Security Council's mission.

What is indeed encouraging in this context is the fact that, in several cases, we have been able to ascertain the continuation and strengthening of the logic of reconciliation and peace initiated and supported by the Security Council. In other instances, neither the Security Council nor regional organizations have been able to prevent a further plunge into chaos and instability. Hence, the importance for the Council and all the rest of us, States and regional organizations alike, to put in place and operate more effective early warning and preventing systems. Hence, the importance for the Council to be supported in its determination and capacity to address conflicts where they could not have been prevented or avoided.

In conclusion, my country views the report as testimony to the Security Council's having kept up and stepped up the pace of its work for peace and security, the prospects for success in this noble enterprise depending on the synergy of all the instruments it possesses.

Mr. Ivanou (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): The delegation of the Republic of Belarus read the annual report of the Security Council with interest. We believe that the report duly reflects the highest priority areas of the work of that organ over the past year: the situation in Iraq, the Middle East, conflicts in Africa and counter-terrorism.

At the outset, I should like to note some of the Council's positive achievements. We are particularly pleased at the active role played by the Council in settling conflicts in Africa. Thanks to its decisions, a humanitarian tragedy was averted in Liberia and the country is gradually being stabilized. The situations in other countries of West Africa have also been the focus of the Council's attention. We hope that this positive trend in the region will be maintained. Progress was made in the political process and in the creation of a transitional Government in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Council gave due to the situations in Angola, Burundi, the Central African Republic and Somalia and to the peace process between Ethiopia and Eritrea. A significant event in the Council's work was the recent decision to lift sanctions against Libya.

Counter-terrorism remained an important issue before the Council in the context of its relevant committees. The delegation of the Republic of Belarus commends the efforts of the Security Council in this area, which have given new impetus to the counter-terrorism element of the Organization's activity. We highly commend the interaction between the Counter-Terrorism Committee and States Members in implementing resolution 1373 (2001). For its part, Belarus has submitted three reports on its implementation of the resolution and is prepared to cooperate further with the Counter-Terrorism Committee. In this context, we applaud the work of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1267 (1999) concerning the prosecution of persons connected to the terrorist organization Al-Qaeda and the Taliban movement. Our country has also submitted a report on our implementation of that resolution.

However, the Security Council did not fully meet our expectations with regard to a settlement of the conflict in the Middle East. Despite the Council's ongoing efforts in support of a comprehensive and just settlement in the region, it regrettably failed to agree on some important aspects of the process. As a result, violence and acts of terrorism in Israel and the Palestinian territories are continuing.

An even more serious test for the Council was the problem of Iraq. The unanimity of Council members in the settlement of the Iraq situation, demonstrated by the adoption of resolution 1441 (2002), was dissipated with the start of the military operation undertaken against that country without an appropriate Council decision. The Council's inability to maintain the settlement of problems of war and peace within its purview starkly highlights the issue of its role and that of the entire Organization within the system of international relations.

The delegation of the Republic of Belarus is profoundly convinced that the Security Council should remain the central element of the system of maintaining international peace and security. Actions that circumvent its Charter authority undermine the legal basis of international relations and threaten the bedrock of our world order. Few would doubt, however, that the Security Council can retain that crucial role only if it successfully adapts to changed conditions in the world. We believe that the Council should reflect changes that have occurred in the international system, primarily the significant expansion in the membership of the Organization; become more representative, democratic, transparent and accountable; and improve its working methods and procedures.

We must note, unfortunately, that almost 10 years after the establishment of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters related to the Security Council, no real progress has been achieved in Council reform. Clearly, the increase in the membership of the Council is the main problem complicating the process of comprehensive reform. Significant differences in the positions of the participants in the negotiating process make it impossible to reach consensus on the Council's structural reform. During the past 10 years, Belarus has been consistently in favour of thorough Security Council reform. The principal elements of our position were submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session in document A/54/909.

The Republic of Belarus considers it necessary to increase the membership of the Security Council in both categories by no fewer than 11 seats. We have no doubt about the need to eliminate the current imbalance in the regional representation on the Council, which hurts the interests of the developing countries. The allocation of additional seats in the category of permanent membership to countries of the three developing regions of Asia, Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean is required by contemporary geopolitical realities. If there is no agreement on expanding the category of permanent membership, however, our delegation is prepared at this stage to support expanding the category of non-

permanent membership, taking into account the interests of all regional groups.

Another controversial issue is the problem of the veto. The Republic of Belarus agrees with the approach regarding an interim decision on the veto through a gradual codification of its scope of application. This issue should be resolved solely by consensus.

With regard to other aspects of Security Council reform, we should support efforts to ensure transparency, democratization and accountability in the Council's working methods and procedures; improve the information and advisory components of the Council's activities; strengthen its interaction with the General Assembly; and create a permanent mechanism for the Council's consultation with States that contribute troops and materiel to peacekeeping missions. Our delegation believes that the Security Council should adopt the practice of holding orientation sessions at the foreign ministerial level on the majority of the most important matters on the international agenda.

In calling on Member States to be more active in reforming the Security Council, the delegation of the Republic of Belarus also cautions against any hasty steps artificially to accelerate the negotiating process. The process of Security Council reform must be the subject of consensus and should take into account the interests of all States of the world.

In seeking the optimal and most widely applicable formula for reforming the Council, the delegation of the Republic of Belarus supports the future work of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters related to the Security Council. For its part, my country is prepared to cooperate constructively with all interested parties in developing decisions on the entire reform package for the Security Council.

Mr. Gaspar Martins (Angola): We are pleased to reiterate to Mr. Hunte our sincere congratulations upon his election as the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session.

We extend our gratitude and appreciation to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his continuous efforts towards the implementation of the Millennium Declaration Goals and the establishment of a more secure world where justice, the rule of law and peace prevail.

We would like to commend Ambassador Negroponte for the report of the Security Council which he presented to this Assembly this morning on behalf of all 15 members of the Council.

As a member of that Council, and having participated therefore in its work since January 2002, we took special note of the Secretary-General's statement at the opening session.

The report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Security Council, submitted to General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session, portrays the activities of the Council in a concise manner. We recognize that the Security Council has shown noticeable improvement in its working methods during the period covered by the report. Besides adopting a large number of resolutions and presidential statements during the period under consideration, the Council held meetings with troop-contributing countries to assess the peacekeeping operations, allowing a greater interaction to increase the effectiveness of such operations. During the same period, the Council held public meetings on a regular basis and made broader use of open briefings. Though still insufficient, this demonstrates the increased transparency of the Security Council's proceedings. The trend is clearly for the better, although Ambassador Mahbubani has expressed some views, to which we should remain very attentive, regarding the work of the Security Council.

Conflicts resulting from breaches of peace and security remain the Security Council's raison d'être. Conflicts and their prevention is a cross-cutting issue and cannot be implemented in isolation from policies in the development, social and political spheres. The report shows that the Security Council was involved in responding to threats to international and regional peace and security and how it dealt with problems affecting peace and security at the international level.

We welcome the positive developments that emerged in the field of peacekeeping operations. Although the Security Council bears the main responsibility for peacekeeping operations, there is a need for it to interact with other bodies of the United Nations system engaged in security sector reform, disarmament, demobilization, reintegration, the promotion of human rights, combating the proliferation of small arms, and strengthening the rule of law in countries emerging from conflict situations.

The report underlines the contribution of the African countries and regional organizations to peacekeeping operations and in the fulfilment of the United Nations Charter provisions relating to regional arrangements. The roles played by the African Union and by the Economic Community of West African States are of great importance to United Nations peacekeeping operations.

We are pleased to note that, during the period under review, three peacekeeping missions terminated their mandates — the United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the United Nations Mission of Observers in Prevlaka and the United Nations Mission in Angola. As mentioned in the report, members of the Security Council welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on the completion of the United Nations Mission in Angola. The report also mentions the decision of the Council to dissolve the Committee established pursuant to resolution 864 (1993) concerning the situation in Angola.

Peace is now a reality in Angola. One of the critical components of the implementation of the peace process was well advanced by August 2002 with the disarmament, demobilization and integration of former military personnel into the Angolan Armed Forces. In the aftermath of a devastating and destructive war, the assistance of the international community, integrated into a wider context of reconstruction for sustainable development, is the most important condition of success for countries, such as Angola, emerging from conflict situations. We therefore reiterate our appeal to the United Nations and to the international community to do their utmost to secure adequate resources to assist Angola and other countries emerging from conflict situations.

Another important issue in the Council's work is related to the linkage between the illicit trade in rough diamonds and the fuelling of armed conflicts. In adopting resolution 1459 (2003), the Council stressed that the widest possible participation in the Certification Scheme established by the Kimberly Process is an essential measure that should be encouraged and facilitated. This topic will be addressed later when we discuss it under the specific item on our agenda.

As mentioned in the report, the Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa, as well as the sanctions Committees, are also useful working instruments. We commend the regular reports on the activities of the Council's working groups and sanctions Committees, as well as the close cooperation between the ad hoc working groups and the advisory groups of the Economic and Social Council in dealing with problems faced by countries emerging from conflict.

The response to the threat of terrorism through the Counter-Terrorism Committee and the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1267 (1999) is also illustrative of the real value and indispensability of the Security Council in fighting international threats to peace and security. The close cooperation between the Counter-Terrorism Committee, the 1267 (1999) Committee and the regional organizations, as well as the encouraging developments in the peace process in some regions, reinforce the need for closer cooperation in the work of the Security Council with the regional organizations and provides important lessons for the international community in its efforts to establish credible and robust sanctions regimes applying to different situations.

Despite the significant progress achieved in the Council's work, as portrayed in this year's annual report, some of the issues on the Council's agenda clearly needed further attention. For instance, despite the adoption of resolution 1397 (2002), which was a landmark resolution embodying the vision of a region where two States, Israel and Palestine, can live side by side within secure and recognized borders, the Middle East crisis remains unsettled, and, since March 2003, has been further aggravated by the Iraqi conflict.

As noted by the Secretary-General in his opening address to the fifty-eighth session, the Council needs to consider how it will deal with the possibility that individual States may use force preventively against perceived threats. The members of the Security Council may therefore need to begin a discussion on the criteria for an early authorization of coercive measures to address certain category of threats when they arise.

Another issue that deserves much attention is related to the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. For many countries of the world today, these are in fact the real weapons of mass destruction, given their destructive impact. At a Security Council meeting held in October 2002, Member States were encouraged to continue to fully implement the Programme of Action on small arms and light weapons, an approach that we fully support. Arms embargoes help to reduce the flow of weapons to targeted regions and groups, but

do not address the issue of weapons already in conflict areas. Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes should be resorted to as comprehensively and effectively as possible as vital elements to curb the illicit trade in small arms.

In conclusion, I should like to reiterate the commitment of my delegation to the work of the United Nations as a whole, stressing the importance of greater transparency and coordination within the United Nations system in order to make the Security Council's work more effective.

Mr. Alcalay (Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of my delegation, I thank the President of the Security Council, Ambassador John Negroponte of the United States, for his introduction this morning of the report of the Security Council to the General Assembly.

The submission of the Council's report always raises great expectations for my country's delegation, because its consideration gives the States Members of the Organization the opportunity to express and exchange their views on the work of that organ, which is crucial to the functioning of the United Nations. At the same time, we bring to this debate the conviction that the views expressed here will be received in a constructive spirit.

We have listened with great interest to the statements that have been made at this meeting. We wish to commend the President of the General Assembly for reaffirming his readiness to prepare a report for members on the debate in this forum, taking the many suggestions into account. This important initiative will allow us to accommodate all the views expressed here.

In that spirit, I wish to note that the past two years have seen the Security Council endeavour to submit a report that would respond to the many suggestions and ideas put forward by countries that are not members of the Council, reflecting the need for analytical substance and an effective management of available resources.

We note, in last year's and this year's reports of the Security Council, some changes that begin to move in that direction. We encourage the Council to pursue this course. We know that it will not be easy, but we are convinced that this exercise will in practice allow us to achieve more tangible and substantive results in the future, yielding a report that will respond to the views that we have been expressing here in our debate. The Council's evolution must enable us to appreciate, with a forward-looking vision, the changes our Organization is experiencing, which will certainly provoke a fundamental shift in course in our institution, as well as the development and impact of the issues on our agenda — not just those basic items on the Council's agenda relating to international peace and security, but also those that may arise in other organs of the Organization, as the Ambassadors of Angola and Singapore noted earlier.

We are glad to see innovations and elements reflecting progress in the Council's working methods included in the report. These new elements allow us to give due consideration to the thematic discussions and wrap-up meetings, which have been very useful to non-members of the Council. In this connection, however, we regret that there is no summary review of all such meetings.

With respect to the thematic content of the report, my country's delegation attaches great importance to the Council's management of certain issues that, given their relevance to and impact on the maintenance of international peace and security, deserve special attention. The current international dynamic has made the Council's agenda increasingly heavy. That is why we believe that the Security Council must keep its priorities very clear and, in order to avoid overloading its agenda unnecessarily, must focus on those issues that, pursuant to the provisions of the Charter, relate to the maintenance of international peace and security and other priority issues that may emerge as we discuss the overhaul of the United Nations.

As the great majority of speakers in the recent general debate rightly noted, issues such as the situation in Iraq, the crisis in the Middle East and counter-terrorism have had and continue to have an impact on the international agenda. The Security Council is, of course, compelled to address such questions. Venezuela fully concurs that these are issues of special significance, since they have not only been a principal feature of the work of the Organization over the past year, but have also underscored the importance of multilateralism and the urgent need to enhance the role of our Organization in the face of the most topical and serious problems on the international scene.

The struggle against terrorism has become one of the main pillars of Venezuela's foreign policy. In this regard, we have undertaken a series of specific measures.

My country's Minister for Foreign Affairs recently deposited three instruments of ratification of international conventions on combating terrorism and related crimes, reflecting our determination to tackle terrorism. Venezuela has also submitted its reports to the Counter-Terrorism Committee and the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1267 (1999), thereby ratifying its outright rejection of terrorism and its firm commitment to joining the fight against such criminal activity.

The post-conflict situation in Iraq is also a cause of great concern to Venezuela. We repeat that multilateralism and strict compliance with international law are the frameworks within which the process of reconstructing that country must take place. That is why we believe that a broad and active United Nations presence is necessary and indispensable to ensuring full respect for Iraq's sovereignty and territorial integrity. We trust that that sovereignty will be restored to the Iraqis as soon as possible.

With regard to the Middle East, Venezuela reaffirms its position on this issue, which is oriented towards the achievement of peace and respect for the rights of both parties. In this connection, my country reaffirms its support for the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and recognizes the right of the States of the region to exist within secure and internationally recognized borders. We support the United Nations efforts to find a peaceful settlement to the conflict. We condemn all acts of violence and believe that a fair solution must be based on the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, especially resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

In conclusion, I emphasize our country's firm belief that, with genuine political will, it is possible to achieve the goals to which we all aspire and which have been clearly reiterated in this debate. We hope that the readiness shown by the Security Council to improve its report will also steer its work towards the genuine and comprehensive reform that the States Members of the Organization are eager to see in the Council. We will continue to hear these issues debated tomorrow. I wish once again to thank the President of the General Assembly for this opportunity to debate an exercise that will make the Security Council and the entire Organization more forward-looking, to the benefit of all our peoples and humanity as a whole.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item for this meeting.

Several delegations have asked to speak in exercise of the right of reply. May I remind members that statements in the exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention and should be made by delegations from their seats.

I now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. Jon Yong Ryong (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): The delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea would like to exercise the right of reply to the allegations made by the representative of South Korea, who referred to the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula. My delegation categorically rejects his allegations.

The nuclear issue between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States is the outcome of the hostile policy of the United States towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. It is therefore not a matter to be handled by the Security Council. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea does not care about whether or not the Security Council discusses the nuclear issue, but if the Security Council wants to handle this issue it should in all fairness call into question the responsibility of the United States, which is chiefly to blame for the emergence of this issue. However, the South Korean representative has intentionally attempted to draw it into the Security Council.

The delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea takes this opportunity to declare once again that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea fully implemented its obligations in accordance with the provisions of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea-United States Agreed Framework of 1994 until it withdrew from the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

My delegation recommends that the South Korean representative understand what would happen if the nuclear issue were brought to the Security Council, including its effect on peace and security on the Korean peninsula. On behalf of my delegation, I wish once again to caution that it will not be beneficial for South Korea, following the direction of the United States, to attempt to create an atmosphere of pressure on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Mr. Martirosyan (Armenia): My delegation would like to respond to the statement made earlier by the representative of Azerbaijan.

His reference to the so-called aggression by the Republic of Armenia against his country is totally misleading. The resulting situation is a forced reaction to Azerbaijan's own decision to use military force to suppress the legitimate and just quest of the people of Nagorny Karabakh to peacefully exercise their right of self-determination, guaranteed by international law and the United Nations Charter.

With regard to the implementation of the Security Council resolutions of 1993 on the Nagorny Karabakh conflict, a clear attempt has been made by the representative of Azerbaijan to read and apply those resolutions selectively and in a partial, self-serving manner. Indeed, Azerbaijan is itself in violation of those resolutions, which urge the parties concerned to pursue the negotiations within the framework of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group, as well as through direct contacts between them. Azerbaijan's refusal to engage in direct negotiations with the elected representatives of Nagorny Karabakh is one of the main impediments to the resolution of the conflict.

The Azerbaijani representative has continuously failed to acknowledge that Armenia has done exactly what the Security Council resolutions call on it to do — to use its good offices with the leadership of Nagorny Karabakh to help find a peaceful solution to the conflict. Azerbaijan's denial of various positive developments since the adoption of the Security Council resolutions is regrettable, as the representative of Azerbaijan tries to discredit numerous efforts and initiatives undertaken by the co-Chairpersons of the OSCE Minsk Group, the very body entrusted with the settlement of the conflict under the aforementioned Security Council resolutions.

Mr. Amirbayov (Azerbaijan): It comes as no surprise to us that the representative of Armenia reacted in such an inadequate manner to our statement on the issue in question. Of course, it would be much more appreciated if Armenia were to provide its audience with at least one relevant argument that would support its statement. On the other hand, it is hard to find a black cat in a dark room, especially if it is not there.

Having no desire to be dragged into a useless and counterproductive exchange, which is certainly not the purpose of today's meeting, I would nevertheless like to draw the attention of delegations to the following points.

First, Armenia is an aggressor State because it has violated the United Nations Charter and continues to undermine fundamental norms and principles of international law.

Secondly, Armenia has violated the territorial integrity and sovereignty of another United Nations Member State and continues to occupy almost one fifth of the territory of that State.

Thirdly, Armenia continues blatantly to ignore the will of the international community and of the Security Council, which, in its resolutions 822 (1993), 853 (1993), 874 (1993) and 884 (1993), demanded the unconditional, immediate and complete withdrawal of Armenian occupying forces from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan. Ten years have passed since then and the aggressor, enjoying an environment of impunity, goes on with these practices.

Fourthly, Armenia continues its more than 10-year blockade of the Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic of Azerbaijan, thus causing enormous suffering for the civilian population of that part of my country, and is exploiting the myth of a so-called blockade against itself.

Fifthly, Armenia is responsible and should be brought to justice for the ethnic cleansing operations that it has committed in all the Azerbaijani-populated areas within its own territory, accompanied by indiscriminate pogroms and the killing of hundreds of innocent women and children. Under its criminal policy, it has orchestrated and carried out the eviction of almost 1 million Azerbaijanis from Armenia proper as well as from the occupied Azerbaijani territories inside and outside the Nagorny Karabakh region of Azerbaijan.

I could continue with this list, but I will not do so. Having committed all these crimes, Armenia finds the impudence to justify its policy and mislead the international community.

With regard to the Minsk Group negotiations mentioned earlier, Azerbaijan has been a supporter of the peaceful settlement of this conflict from the very start, but will nevertheless spare no effort to restore its sovereignty and territorial integrity by all possible means. The sooner Armenia realizes the benefits of restored peace with its neighbour, the better it will be, above all, for itself and its population.

Mr. Martirosyan (Armenia): Azerbaijan's claim for the restoration of its territorial integrity is historically, legally and politically deficient, since Nagorny Karabakh has never been a part of independent Azerbaijan. The only period when Azerbaijan enjoyed sovereignty over the Nagorny Karabakh autonomous region was under the Soviet Union, which was based — like all empires — on the policy of divide and rule.

The manifestation of such a policy was the arbitrary decision by the Stalinist-led Communist Party bureau to hand over an entire Armenian region to Soviet Azerbaijan in 1921. Consequently, during the breakdown of the Soviet Union, the people of Nagorny Karabakh exercised their right of self-determination peacefully and in accordance with the existing Soviet and international laws.

This is not the place for me to reveal facts that are well known and well documented. I would rather call on the representative of Azerbaijan to refrain from giving in to the temptation of serving his country's narrow internal political goals at the expense of falsifying the truth before this global forum.

The people of Nagorny Karabakh have all the legitimate credentials, supported by realities on the ground, to pursue a just solution to the conflict. Armenia is determined in its endeavours to take all possible measures for a peaceful, negotiated outcome that would ensure the right of the people of Nagorny Karabakh to live free and secure in their homeland. Let me reassure the Assembly that, in contrast to the Azerbaijani military rhetoric — unfortunately greatly exacerbated recently — the settlement of conflicts by peaceful means remains the fundamental principle of Armenia's foreign policy.

Mr. Amirbayov (Azerbaijan): I am sorry for taking the floor for the second time. I would just like to say that I have nothing to add to my previous statement and I would advise the Armenian representative to study the talking points to which I referred.

The only point to which I would like to react is that Azerbaijan was recognized as a Member of the United Nations when it joined this Organization in March 1992 within its current borders. There is therefore no reason whatsoever for any Armenian representative to speak of any kind of right of Nagorny Karabakh to secede from Azerbaijan.

As regards the rhetoric concerning military, internal and other points, I think that all those issues have been covered by our representatives many times.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.