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Wednesday, 19 November 2008, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. D'Escoto Brockmann . . . . . (Nicaragua)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Kpotsra (Togo), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda items 9 and 111 (*continued*)

Report of the Security Council (A/63/2)

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

Mr. Sin Son Ho (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): More than 60 years have already elapsed since the Security Council of the United Nations came into existence with a mission of maintaining global peace and security. But, to our regret, the world has never been at peace. In most cases, the Security Council is being used to serve the interests of specific countries, disregarding all fundamental principles, such as respect for sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries, which constitute a cornerstone in international relations.

In today's world, sanctions and coercive measures are imposed against sovereign States under the pretext of conflict resolution and righteous struggles to safeguard sovereignty are condemned as threats to international peace and security. Abuses of power by the Security Council, such as dealing with issues beyond its mandate, have become evermore serious. Furthermore, the debates over the last 15 years on reform of the Security Council have produced no result, due to the serious conflicting views among Member States, including permanent Council members. Consequently, Member States have increasingly less confidence in the Security Council.

The Security Council should remain the United Nations body responsible for global peace and security and never be used as a tool to legitimize the pursuance of strategic interests of certain countries. For that reason, it is important, first and foremost, to ensure that the principle of impartiality is strictly observed in all activities of the Security Council. Peaceful settlement of conflicts through dialogue and negotiations among the parties concerned should be the main remedy in every case.

Sanctions and coercive measures, such as the use of force, should be rejected, as they only aggravate conflicts. That necessitates establishing a mechanism to make Security Council resolutions effective only after endorsement by the General Assembly. The Security Council should not be a court that unjustifiably handles only developing countries. That is also imperative for the democratization of the United Nations and the fair settlement of conflicts.

Secondly, the Security Council should be reformed as early as possible, given the current rapidly changing world situation. In that regard, it is important to ensure that non-member States of the Council and other developing countries, which are the overwhelming majority of the United Nations membership, are fully represented.

With regard to expansion of the Security Council, the delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of

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Korea would like to reiterate its consistent position on first enlarging the Council's non-permanent membership, which can be easily agreed, and deferring enlargement of the permanent category of membership to a later stage.

Even if the permanent membership is to be expanded, a country like Japan, a war-criminal State that has not paid for its past crimes but, rather, distorts its past history of aggression, should never be allowed to occupy a permanent seat in the Council.

Even today, Japan — far from honestly reflecting on its past crimes against humanity and making sincere reparations — resorts to despicable acts to seize Tok Islet, which is a sacred territory of Korea, and suppresses the General Association of Korean Residents in Japan, an organization of overseas Korean citizens of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Worse still, Japan has also attempted to raise issues irrelevant to world peace and security in the Security Council, such as the so-called abduction issue, only evoking the alarm and denunciation of Member States, as revealed last June.

If a permanent seat were given to such an irresponsible and brazen-faced Japan, it would be the same as encouraging Japan's ambition for its old dream of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. That would be extremely dangerous for the entire United Nations membership.

Last but not least, it is equally important that Security Council reform should encompass measures to ensure transparency in the activities of the Council by opening informal consultations to the public and allowing interested countries, including parties to conflicts, to attend informal meetings.

In conclusion, the delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea expresses its confidence that, under the leadership of the President of the General Assembly, His Excellency Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, realistic and practical approaches will be devised to achieve reform of the Security Council, and reaffirms its commitment to actively participate in deliberations on the reform of the Council.

Mr. Kaiser (Czech Republic): At the outset, I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this meeting and Ambassador Jorge Urbina, Permanent Representative of Costa Rica and current President of the Security Council, for his detailed presentation of the annual report of the Council (A/63/2). That report testifies to the enormous workload on that key body of the United Nations, stemming from its mandate to maintain global peace and security. The Czech Republic acknowledges all the efforts that are being undertaken to bring peaceful solutions to various conflicts in many regions of our world today.

I would like to use this opportunity to share some thoughts of the Czech delegation concerning Security Council reform. We believe that that subject should be considered one of the priorities of the sixty-third session of the General Assembly. After many years of preparatory discussions, the time has come to move that agenda forward. Let us therefore fully implement decision 62/557 that has finally opened the door for a meaningful intergovernmental process. That unanimous decision is binding on all of us. From that perspective, we have taken due note of the plans recently announced by the President of the General Assembly.

There is no doubt that the main task today is to launch the intergovernmental negotiations that will eventually lead to a reform of the Security Council that will adapt it to the new realities of the twenty-first century, while safeguarding its effectiveness and functionality. Only by so doing will we truly implement decision 62/557. There is absolutely no reason for any further delays, nor any need to spend much time on preparatory work, since the format and modalities of the intergovernmental process are well defined by that same decision 62/557, namely, an informal plenary of the General Assembly with its rules of procedures. Subsequently, the basis of the negotiations consists of all proposals submitted so far by all Member States and groupings.

The Czech delegation is convinced that under the able leadership of Ambassador Tanin we will proceed quickly, while preserving the basic principles of transparency, openness and inclusiveness that are absolutely indispensable to maintain the confidence and active participation of each and every Member State of the United Nations interested in the reform process. Our delegation is ready to participate in an open and cooperative spirit. At this juncture, we do not want to pre-empt the outcome of the future negotiations. At the same time, we believe that any reasonable reform of the Security Council should lead to an expansion of its membership in both the permanent and the non-permanent categories and make

it more equitable. It should also take into account the legitimate ambitions and needs of small and mid-sized countries.

The previous 15 years of thorough debates should not be lost. Undoubtedly, the deliberations of the Open-ended Working Group on Security Council Reform have created a solid platform on which we can build. Thus, it has fulfilled its mandate. However, none of its future activities should block or slow down the proceedings in the next phase, namely, the intergovernmental process. There is no reason for creating any preconditions on the upcoming deliberations of the General Assembly.

Over recent months, the determination of the vast majority of Member States to make a decisive step forward has been echoed again and again. The challenges of today's world require us to create a stronger and more representative and effective United Nations system, including the Security Council. That is a task given to us by our political leaders at the 2005 Summit. The Czech Republic is ready to work hard towards that goal. Let us start sooner rather than later.

Mr. Swe (Myanmar): At the outset, I would like to thank the Permanent Representative of Costa Rica for introducing the annual report of the Security Council (A/63/2).

Under Article 24, paragraph 1, of the Charter, States Members of the United Nations confer on the Security Council the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security and agree that, in carrying out its duties, the Council acts on their behalf. The Security Council is accountable to the General Assembly and the annual report represents the fulfilment of that important Charter obligation. The report indicates that the Council had yet another year of intensive work.

The principal approach of the report remains similar to that of last year. The report is informative, but not analytical. While we value the information provided in the report, we consider that the Security Council should strive for a report that goes beyond the listing of its activities and meetings.

The Security Council is entrusted with the vitally important responsibility of maintaining international peace and security, and the decisions that it makes impact on millions of people around the world. That underscores the urgency of reforming the Council, so that it can meet the challenges of a new era. The debate on the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters is taking place with that sense of urgency.

The question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council has been on our agenda for some time. However, our collective efforts in the Working Group established under General Assembly resolution 48/26 have not borne fruit.

We share the view that reform of the Council must be an integral part of the ongoing reform process of the United Nations and that the reform of the United Nations will remain incomplete without an actual reform of the Council. It must be stressed that any reform of the Council will be meaningless if the restructured Council does not become more representative, more effective and more transparent in its decision-making process.

Momentum for reform of the Security Council was given a shot in the arm by the 2005 World Summit. Expectations were raised with regard to the prospect of reaching agreement on a formula that would garner the widest possible support. Subsequently, positive developments have emerged from consultations. The important role of the Open-ended Working Group on Security Council Reform as the most appropriate democratic forum was reaffirmed. Accordingly, the Working Group was mandated to continue its work. Furthermore, the General Assembly also agreed to launch an intergovernmental negotiation process on Council reform (decision 61/561). The momentum generated during the sixty-first session was maintained by the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session.

Regrettably, all subsequent attempts have not resulted in significant headway, due to entrenched positions. We are discouraged by the conclusion of the task force that there is insufficient support for launching the intergovernmental negotiations. It is clear from this conclusion that flexibility and compromise will be required of the major interest groups if the discussions on Council reform are to move forward. Such flexibility and compromise will be possible only with a renewed demonstration of political will.

The outcome of the present stage of the discussions on the question of Security Council reform demonstrates that we will not be able to overcome the present impasse. As was the case in discussions on Council reform in the past years, the category of membership is the most challenging. The Council's membership must therefore be expanded in both the permanent and non-permanent categories to reflect the present reality and to strengthen the legitimacy of the Council's decisions.

The expansion of the Council must take into account the need for representation of developing countries, which are currently underrepresented in the Council. The representation of African countries must also be adequately addressed. At the same time, the Council's agenda, procedures and working methods are equally important in making the Council more transparent and democratic.

In connection with the Council's agenda, we are particularly concerned by the failure of the Council to strictly adhere to the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations. The Non-Aligned Movement, which represents the overwhelming number of the membership of the United Nations, has stressed on many occasions that the Council's decision to initiate formal and informal debates on the situation in any Member State or any matter that does not constitute a threat to international peace and security is contrary to Article 24 of the Charter.

Reform of the Council's procedures and working methods must be aimed at promoting transparency and accountability in the Council's treatment of issues of interest to Member States. The Council's lack of willingness to hold open debates on such issues and its restriction on participation in their consideration are at odds with Article 31 of the Charter, under which any United Nations member may participate in any Council debate on issues that it considers affect it.

To promote greater transparency and accountability, the rest of the Member States should be afforded more opportunities to engage in the substantive work of the Council. My delegation considers that continued improvement in the working methods of the Security Council should not be held hostage to progress on the issues of membership expansion and representation. In that regard, we should strive for more progress.

The continued impasse on the question of Security Council reform is highly lamentable. It negatively reflects on the United Nations system as a whole. As the Working Group stated, a realistic approach is the only way forward. Compromise and flexibility on all sides are essential if we are to overcome the deadlock.

At the 2005 World Summit, the heads of State and Government expressed support for the early reform of the Security Council as an essential element of the overall reform of the Organization. It is incumbent on us to continue to work for an overall agreement, based on the progress achieved so far, in a spirit of cooperation and accommodation. The momentum that has been generated must be maintained. My delegation will continue to support the President's efforts to move the present discussions forward.

Mr. Nhleko (Swaziland): I have the utmost honour to speak on behalf of the Kingdom of Swaziland on agenda item 111, entitled, "Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters".

At the outset, my delegation wishes to align itself with the statement delivered at the 53rd meeting by the Chair of the Group of African States, Mauritius.

The subject before us is of long standing. A lot of effort has been expended, but we still fall short of a conclusive resolution. While we agree on accelerated talks and negotiation on the matter, regrettably our words are not matched by actions. The stakes have long been laid and we need to move with urgency, since the democratization of the Security Council has been very inconsequential.

It would be unbecoming of me, at the early stages of my address, if I did not reaffirm and recapture the principles and intents of the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration, which remain beacons of hope for Africa and, by extension, for my own country. Nobody needs a reminder of what is contained in the Ezulwini Consensus, and we will not tire in our efforts to fight for justice characterized by equitable geographical representation in the Security Council. The status quo does not inspire confidence in the United Nations as a credible body that shelters the weak and the unfortunate.

The principles of Ezulwini are very compelling to the African cause. This is by no means a ploy to avoid being realistic. The truth of the matter is that the present regime is surreal. The Open-ended Working Group on Security Council Reform has been constituted since 1994. My delegation reaffirms its unwavering support for the Working Group. Its report makes it succinctly clear that the Security Council should be reformed to ensure that it better represents the world of today. That premise is a good one for negotiations, as some of the Permanent Five can attest.

The intergovernmental process should be undertaken without delay. It is encouraging that the Working Group has identified some common elements. The Kingdom of Swaziland wishes to express its desire to hammer away at such commonalities so that we move quickly to negotiate on the more difficult ones. For this, we support the efforts of the President of the General Assembly to implement a strategy of aggregation to simplification in the areas of categories of membership, extent of expansion, regional representation and the right of veto.

We seek not only structural reform of the Security Council, but also reform of the Council's working methods, which should demonstrate the virtues of transparency, fairness and participation by the membership. This reform should be undertaken in partnership with the Security Council body set up for that purpose.

The "no reform" option is actually not an option at all. Member States should carry this agenda forward as a way to vindicate the United Nations as a just and altruistic body. Failure to act will project injustice, impotency and parochialism far into the future. We must remain firm in our determination to keep the agenda moving forward.

Africa has a commanding oversight regarding the selection and allocation of the two permanent seats. This is true to the virtues of the propensity to collective action and justifiable distribution.

I conclude by giving prominence to the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration, as both are credible springboards for Africa to achieve greater, and justifiable, leverage in its quest for justice in the Security Council.

Mr. Menon (Singapore): The annual report of the Security Council that we have before us (A/63/2) provides a good overview of the scope and volume of issues dealt with by the Council in the past year. We would like to commend Viet Nam for its consultative efforts in drafting the expanded introductory section of the report.

Today's debate allows us to discuss the priorities and challenges facing this important organ of the United Nations. At the same time, we also sense a renewed interest on the part of the wider membership in Security Council reform following the September decision by the General Assembly to commence intergovernmental negotiations on this long-standing question.

What matters most to small States like Singapore are the Council's effectiveness and transparency and its involvement of non-Council members on issues of direct concern to them. As a member of the Group of Five Small States (S-5), Singapore believes strongly that the Security Council must improve its working methods in order to make the Council more accessible and, by extension, more effective. We welcome the increase in public meetings and improved access over the past year.

But much more needs to be done to enhance the Council's transparency and accountability. At present, States that are directly involved in the various issues addressed by the Council do not always have the opportunity to express their views in Council meetings. And even when it is decided that meetings will be open to the wider membership, those decisions often come so late that many States are unable to prepare and make substantive contributions.

Last Tuesday, during the meeting of the Open-ended Working Group on Security Council Reform, the President of the General Assembly spoke about the very first meeting of the Security Council, on 17 January 1946, which was held at Church House, London. What the President did not say, and which might come as a surprise to many of us in this Assembly, is that the first meetings of the Council were in fact held in the open and on record, with reports of the frank exchanges available for all to read. It is said that there was so much transparency at that first meeting that the representative of the United Kingdom, without realizing that his microphone was switched on, was heard to complain, "That bloody Chairman has double-crossed me again!" It is therefore disheartening

to see how much the Council has regressed since its early days.

Moving on to the broader question of Security Council reform, we realize that progress has been difficult because of the divergent interests, aspirations and objectives of the United Nations membership. The September decision by the General Assembly to commence intergovernmental negotiations was a finely balanced but fairly positive outcome. We can appreciate the ambivalence with which some Members States might participate in discussions on Council reform. However, my delegation shares the view of Member States that see today's discussion, the meetings of the Open-ended Working Group and informal plenary meetings to be held in the future as opportunities to move forward on this matter. Most of us agree that the status quo is unacceptable. I hope that we can work together in a pragmatic and realistic manner to achieve meaningful progress on Security Council reform.

Singapore's position on this subject is well known. We have articulated our position on various occasions, and I will not dwell too much on the details. We believe that reform of the Security Council is needed in order to strengthen the United Nations as an organization and to better reflect geopolitical realities. The choice is clear: either we reform to forestall crises, or we wait for crises to force change on us. In this regard, we have consistently voiced our support for an expansion of seats in both the permanent and non-permanent categories. As I said at the beginning, as a member of the S-5, we feel that any reform should include working methods. After all, if the Council's working methods remain questionable, it does not matter whether it has 5, 25 or 100 members.

For small States like Singapore, reform is also about making the Security Council more representative of the Organization's membership. The President of the General Assembly has spoken of the democratization of the United Nations being his number-one priority. I am sure that everyone here has seen his banner, which reads "Towards the Democratization of the United Nations — Every Country Counts". If we are serious about turning this rhetoric into reality, we have to ensure that the views and interests of all of us, in particular the small States, are taken into account in the reform of the Security Council.

I heard some parties argue — I must say rather disingenuously — during the meeting of the Open-ended Working Group last Tuesday that a majority is defined by total population. But I would remind this body that we are all Member States of this Organization. It is the small States, while modest in the size of their populations, that make up the majority of States Members of the United Nations. Therefore, it is crucial to ensure that small States are not disadvantaged in any reform arrangement. With this in mind, I would like to make the following four points.

First, in any expansion of the Security Council, there should be more non-permanent seats, to provide more opportunities for small States to serve on the Council. That is an important aspect of making the Council more reflective of the views of the membership. Small States have few opportunities to serve regularly on the Council. Indeed, many have never served even a single term since becoming United Nations members. I stress this point because all too often the discussions on reform revolve around the interests of the larger and medium-sized Powers. We should not forget that small States have made valuable and constructive contributions during their stints as non-permanent members. Likewise, any increase should accurately reflect geographic distribution. We cannot have any one region dominating the non-permanent seats.

Secondly, there have recently been proposals to create a new, intermediate category of long-term renewable or re-electable seats. Again, this idea sounds like one that caters more to the larger and medium-sized countries. As I stated previously, Singapore's preferred option is to expand both the permanent and non-permanent categories. But if there ever is widespread support for going down the path of creating renewable or re-electable seats, that approach would have to be accompanied by measures like a "time-bar" to prevent larger and medium-sized countries from flip-flopping easily between the traditional non-permanent category and any new, intermediate category, to the detriment of small States.

Singapore sees no reason why any country should have two bites of the cherry. In other words, once a country declares its decision to run for a seat in the intermediate category, and regardless of the outcome of that election, it should be precluded from running for a traditional two-year non-permanent seat for a certain number of years afterwards. Likewise, a country

running for a two-year non-permanent seat should be barred from running for a renewable seat for the same period.

Without such restrictions, many small States may well get the short end of the stick, since it is usually the larger countries that have the resources to run consecutive or concurrent campaigns. We must ensure a fair playing field for all Member States. The right to serve on the Council cannot be restricted to only larger and medium-sized countries.

Thirdly, any reform arrangement should strike a good balance between the size and effectiveness of the Security Council. Members often ask whether we can enlarge the Council without making it more unwieldy. For balance and thoroughness, why not consider the flip side? Can we improve the existing Council structure by reforming both categories of its current composition? As the Ambassador of Costa Rica said in his statement at the Open-ended Working Group meeting last Tuesday, we might want to ask ourselves whether the current composition of the Security Council, especially in the permanent category, reflects today's geopolitical realities.

Perhaps it might be worthwhile, as part of our ongoing exercise, to take a more clinical approach. We may want to go back to first principles and consider how best to reflect current geopolitical realities within the composition of the Council's permanent and non-permanent membership. Maybe we need to undertake some fundamental restructuring of the Council's composition — let me assure you that I am not here to speak heresy. The broader point I am trying to make is that we should leave no stone unturned in our deliberations if we are to seek the most optimal solution in this quest for reform.

Fourthly, there is the question of the veto. We remain opposed to granting the veto to any additional members. It will only complicate decision-making and increase the chances of gridlock in the Security Council. That said, we also recognize that the permanent five will not readily give up their right to veto. But one cannot be overly pragmatic; we simply cannot avoid addressing the issue of the veto in any reform arrangement.

If the Council's permanent members will not give up their veto then, as a start, they should exercise leadership by agreeing to withhold the veto when considering compelling cases, such as instances of genocide or ethnic cleansing. At the minimum, they should be prepared to explain any use of the veto to the other Member States. After all, there should be no privileges without responsibilities.

My aim today was to highlight some long-standing concerns that are shared by Singapore and other small States. As a small country, Singapore has no aspirations for permanent membership. However, we are mindful of the interests of small States. We would like to reiterate that Security Council reform cannot only serve the interests of the larger and medium Powers. The views and interests of small States, which make up the majority of the United Nations, must also be taken into account. Otherwise, there will be little progress on this issue.

Mr. Beck (Solomon Islands): I thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this plenary meeting. I would like to join others in thanking Ambassador Jorge Urbina of Costa Rica, current President of the Security Council, for presenting the Council's informative report (A/63/2). My delegation welcomes the discussion on this document.

It is hoped that in the face of today's global financial and climate change crises, the Council will also look at their security implications. As stated in the past, the Security Council must be proactive and place emerging threats on its agenda.

In the past, the scarcity of water and the failure of agriculture, as well as droughts and other natural calamities, has forced people to migrate. For small island developing States such as mine, migratory movement from low-lying islands to larger islands is already happening. The threat of conflict is real as people leave their ancestral land to go to completely new settings under a different land tenure system and into another ethnic domain.

Solomon Islands is a country of half a million people speaking some 87 different languages. Other low-lying countries in our region are already discussing, at the presidential level, moving to a third country. In this context, we must not address these issues only from the development perspective, but also from a security angle. The Pacific island States will be submitting a draft resolution along those lines as we believe that these threats could worsen if left unaddressed.

In our opinion, the financial crisis will have an impact on official development assistance. Poverty is the root cause of much of today's conflict. President Lula da Silva once said that peace cannot rise from the ashes of poverty and that no amount of peacekeeping will bring peace if the marginalized and the most vulnerable remain unattended. We have seen billions of dollars made available to stabilize the financial crisis and hope, from a security perspective, a stimulus package could be directed to the least developed countries and small island developing States.

The issue of Security Council reform has become important as a matter of preserving international peace and security. However, we are mindful that the issue has been discussed for the last 15 years. As my delegation stated recently at the second Open-ended Working Group meeting, the road to reforming our Security Council has been marked by so many twist and turns that we have measured the journey in terms of the countless meetings of the Open-ended Working Group, convened to justify reforms, while not actually having carried out these reforms.

Over the years we have stated and restated our position on Security Council reform. Since 2005, we have also seen interest groups pronouncing themselves on Security Council reforms; hence we will not discuss something that is already common knowledge.

The unanimous decision of 15 September 2008, mandating the commencement of intergovernmental negotiations before 28 February 2009 (decision 62/557), brings a sense of direction. My delegation is particularly pleased with and supportive of the commitment of the President, Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, to launching the long-awaited intergovernmental negotiations. That decisive action demonstrates true leadership which we commend and would like to build on.

Within the recent Open-ended Working Group, my delegation expressed concern about seeing a debate on the varying interpretations of decision 62/557. My delegation hopes that, under the President's leadership, the eagerness of the Assembly to reform one of the principal organs of our institution will be evident. My delegation is pleased to hear from the opening statement yesterday, that the President will soon present a working plan for the Working Group to commence its work. We hope not to get bogged down with procedural matters in this process.

Since our leaders spoke on the subject, the General Assembly has spearheaded a number of reforms in recent years and we hope that Security Council reform will be accomplished in a similar manner. The reform process will be conducted through the informal plenary of the General Assembly and within the Assembly's rules of procedures to ensure that transparency, accountability and inclusiveness are maintained throughout the process.

Allow me to conclude by congratulating Ambassador Tanin on his appointment as Vice-Chair of the Open-ended Working Group and of the intergovernmental negotiations. My delegation assures the President and his facilitator of our support and cooperation as we continue to look to them for firm and clear leadership in this important matter.

Mr. Ettalhi (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like, on behalf of the members of the League of Arab States, to congratulate the President of the General Assembly on this successful debate on two important items we have been studying for several years. Our consideration of these items stems from our interest in finding an outlet that would lead to Security Council reform which is a sine qua non for overall United Nations reform.

The League of Arab States welcomes the recommendations contained in the report of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters related to the Security Council (A/62/47) especially as concerns the initiation of intergovernmental negotiations.

In this connection, the Arab League emphasizes the need to render these negotiations open, inclusive and transparent. They should take into consideration the positions of all Member States and regional groups.

Member States deployed considerable efforts during the previous General Assembly session to bring about concrete progress in Security Council expansion and reform within the framework 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. At the end of the session, decision 62/557 was adopted which reflects a consensus among Member States that intergovernmental negotiations on the matter should start no later than February 2009.

The Working Group was entrusted with looking into methods for preparing for the intergovernmental negotiations, their facilitation and the submission of a report to an informal General Assembly meeting no later than 28 February 2009.

The Arab States underscore their commitment to constructive cooperation with all parties towards Security Council reform in order to make that body more consistent with today's realities, and hence, better able and more effective in carrying out its role in the area of the maintenance of international peace and security, as enshrined in the Charter.

Once again, the Arab States stress the unified Arab position calling for permanent Arab representation in an expanded Security Council, as mentioned in a letter dated 13 June 2008 addressed by the Chairperson of the Arab Group for the month of June to the President of the Security Council. This letter, contained in the report of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters related to the Security Council (A/62/47), states the Arab Group's view that Security Council reform should include true reform through the Council's modus operandi, respecting transparency and openness in the Council's activities and proceedings.

The reform process should bring about the participation of non-Council members, particularly those countries that are directly concerned with issues under discussion, as set out in Article 31 of the Charter. Informal, closed consultations should be limited, and more open discussions should be available to increase transparency rather than restrict participation by Member States. More inclusive briefings for non-Council members should also take place.

With regard to the item entitled "Report of the Security Council", the Arab Group expresses its appreciation for the initiative of the delegation of Viet Nam to hold an inclusive briefing for Member States on the report before its submission. At the same time, it believes that the report before us today (A/63/2) does not give a clear picture of what is transpiring in the Council. Nor does it reflect the Council's commitment to the content of General Assembly resolutions, in particular as regards avoiding the narrative aspect and including in the report an analysis of the reasons that prompted the Council to adopt such resolutions as well as the various positions of States, especially the permanent members, and the reasons standing between the Council and its taking decisive positions related to important issues, such as the maintenance of international peace and security.

We hope that the future reports of the Security Council will be more useful and incorporate the detailed reasons that prevent the Council from carrying out its mandate in the area of the maintenance of international peace and security in certain regions. By the same token, we hope that the General Assembly will take timely action to make up for the Council's occasional impotence, given the occasional use or threat of use of the veto.

Mr. Argüello (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank the representative of Costa Rica, who holds the presidency of the Security Council for the month of November, for presenting the annual report of the Security Council, contained in document A/63/2.

As we can see from the report, the Security Council had another year of intense activity, in which many of the topics on its agenda continued to occupy a prominent place in their work programme over several years. It is not the intention of the Argentine delegation to examine the work of this body in detail, but we do wish to stress our concern due to the worsening situation in intra-State conflicts, which take place mostly in regions distant from development, with great institutional fragility. In this sense, I am saddened to report that, although last year at this same podium I referred to the situations in Darfur, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Somalia, those situations continue to be desperate.

For this reason, we stress that, faced with the danger of repeated genocide, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, Member States have the responsibility to protect populations from these atrocities when the State that is under the obligation to do so cannot do so or does not have the will to comply with its obligations. In this sense, we reaffirm our commitment and support for the International Criminal Court which will ensure that those responsible for atrocities do not go unpunished. That is why we encourage those States that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the Rome Statute.

Furthermore, we understand that conflicts between States call for renewed efforts for peace within the framework of international and humanitarian

law. We call on the parties involved to make substantive progress directed towards a just, legitimate solution to the conflict in the Middle East, in the framework of the international legality established by the various Security Council resolutions.

Argentina continues to closely follow the evolving situation in Haiti. Demonstrations and the social tension created by the crisis in food prices last April highlighted once again how stability is interrelated with social development. The establishment of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) has contributed from its inception to improving the security situation, facilitating the democratic transition, promoting a framework of greater respect for human rights and strengthening the institutional capacity of the Haitian State.

The formation of a new Government last September has now created an opportunity for renewed cooperation with the Security Council to continue consolidating achievements and reaching the pending objectives. Reform of the police force, the judiciary and the penal system, the development of an effective border management framework, the promotion of a political dialogue and the coordination of international cooperation continue to be priority topics for MINUSTAH's action.

The Secretary-General has presented us with guidelines for a consolidation plan which will make it possible for us to assess the progress in Haiti in five essential areas that are mutually interlinked. Argentina will closely follow the development of those variables and will seek to continue to contribute to the fulfilment of MINUSTAH's mandate.

Security Council reform is a complement to the process of reforming the Organization and should continue to be a priority on our agenda. In its current composition, the Council does not reflect current realities, either in terms of its representativity or in terms of its working methods. As pointed out last year, every day that goes by without reform of the Council makes that body more illegitimate and more ossified — illegitimate because of its inadequate representation of the 192 United Nations Members and ossified because it reflects a 60-year-old historical reality.

Argentina, as a member of the group Uniting for Consensus, believes that we should, in a balanced manner, mirror the Organization's current composition in the Security Council. For example, reserving seats for regional representation would guarantee the interests of developing countries, small States, small island States and all under-represented countries and regions. The Council's membership should be expanded taking into account the principles of democracy, equity and accountability. In our view, those three principles can be guaranteed only by expanding the category of elected members.

On 11 and 17 November, the Open-ended Working Group met pursuant to decision 62/557, which mandates it to define a framework and modalities for the preparation and facilitation of the intergovernmental negotiations that will begin next February in the informal plenary consultations format. In this phase, our primary objective is to define, within the Working Group, objectives, principles and terms that will guide our future work and enable us to identify basic principles for future intergovernmental negotiations. We hope that, at the close of the phase of Working Group consultations, we can present results that are favourable to all parties.

In the view of our delegation, the process of comprehensively reforming the Security Council in all its aspects can succeed only with clear rules and procedures that will guarantee a fair result for all.

Mr. Del Rosario Ceballos (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of my delegation, I should like to thank the President of the General Assembly for having convened this important plenary meeting of the General Assembly. At the same time, I wish to express our appreciation for the way in which my valued friend Ambassador Jorge Urbina, in his capacity as President of the Security Council, introduced the report now before us (A/2008/2).

Today, the General Assembly has before it one of the most important items inscribed on its agenda: the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters. The interest of all United Nations Member States in restructuring the Security Council as a matter of urgency has been amply demonstrated.

In the various statements on the issue, we note a clear tendency to highlight the overall importance of reforming the Security Council to strengthen its efforts to maintain international peace and security so that it can address the challenges before it in the best way possible. In that spirit, we welcome and recognize as a

genuine step forward the adoption of decision 62/557 on 15 September, which truly marked the beginning of the eagerly awaited intergovernmental negotiations in plenary consultations of the General Assembly. Regardless of the interpretations and technicalities cited by some Member States with regard to that important decision in terms of the framework and the modalities for those intergovernmental negotiations, we have an agreement that, we believe, while very general in nature, lays the foundations for the basic principles of reform and the changes needed after more than 15 years of deliberations.

In our long diplomatic career at the United Nations, we have noted with satisfaction a number of changes made to the Security Council's working methods. I am referring to the general increase in the number of public meetings, briefings and informative consultations, the fact that the floor is given more frequently to non-members of the Council during exploratory debates and the fact that non-members are allowed to participate more actively in more important debates, sometimes in the deliberative phase and sometimes in the decision-making phase. That progress is undeniable.

However, those practices must become the rule rather than the exception — hence the need to make more lasting improvements, which must be carried out within the framework of broad reform of the Security Council. We are speaking about the need to reform the Council's composition and functioning in order to make it a more representative organ and to further improve its working methods and its decision-making process so as to ensure greater openness, transparency and democracy within the organ. We are also speaking about the need to examine all aspects of reform — including the periodic review of a reformed Security Council — as an integrated whole.

Undoubtedly, that is an arduous task, given the importance of the interests at stake — such as, for example, the question of the veto. However, what is paramount is the desire of the international community, represented at the United Nations, to carry out substantive reform of the Security Council that will correct the existing imbalance in geographical representation and strengthen the international equilibrium. That would truly reflect the universal nature of our Organization.

We should take advantage of the new framework and the negotiation cycle ahead of us to hold debates and make contributions that can raise the political level of our deliberations, thereby translating the political will that is so often expressed into a truly constructive approach to Security Council reform.

We are fully confident that, under the skilful guidance of Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, President of the General Assembly, we shall continue to find ways to make progress in our efforts to reform the Security Council. We are confident that he will make our debates as fruitful and dynamic as possible and will guide our efforts to undertake intergovernmental negotiations in plenary consultations of the Assembly with the achievable goal of building a more representative and effective Council. We assure the President that he can count on my delegation's full support and cooperation.

Mr. Badji (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): My delegation is pleased to participate again this year, in the consideration of the agenda item on the report of the Security Council. We thank Ambassador Jorge Urbina, Permanent Representative of Costa Rica and President of the Security Council for the month of November, for having introduced the Council's report for this year (A/63/2), which is before is for our consideration today.

We associate ourselves with the statement made at the 53rd meeting by the Permanent Representative of Mauritius, speaking on behalf of the African Group. My country would like to add a few comments in a national capacity.

The Security Council is an organ with a special purpose, as it is charged with ensuring international peace and security on behalf of all Member States of the United Nations. While the source of its actions is legitimate, since it derives from the founding instrument, the United Nations Charter, we need to make sure that its decisions are also in conformity with the Charter and that they are taken in the interest of the international community as a whole. That is one of the reasons why the submission of the Security Council report to the General Assembly is of special significance. Indeed, it should provide an opportunity for the plenary, deliberative body of our universal Organization to be informed in detail about how the Security Council has discharged its responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security as

well as about the reasons underpinning the action or inaction of the Security Council.

However, as several delegations have stressed, the current format of the Security Council report does not always provide the necessary elements for assessment and to spark and sustain a fruitful discussion. We therefore need to work so that the analysis in the Council's report is for both organs, the General Assembly and the Security Council, an opportunity to strengthen their relationship in order to better promote the values, objectives and principles of the United Nations.

Our consideration of the Security Council's report offers us an opportunity to discuss equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Council, which, more than ever before, is a topical subject of concern to Member States. The reason is that Security Council reform has become necessary due to the three-fold requirement of modernity, justice and legitimacy of the Council.

The position of Africa is known. The Permanent Representative of Mauritius described it well in his statement at the beginning of the debate. Senegal defends that position, recalling that we cannot talk of equitable representation on the Council without remedying the injustice of Africa being the only continent that does not have a permanent seat on it.

Decision 62/557, adopted on 15 September 2008, offers new prospects that could finally make it possible for us to embark on genuine intergovernmental negotiations. However, we need to remember that, in addition to gaining a more modern Council, one adapted to the realities of the twenty-first century, we need above all a more legitimate Council, one that is in a position, thanks to enhanced credibility and authority, to deal with the enormous challenges we face in maintaining international peace and security.

In the context of this report, we need to make sure that the negotiating process is open, transparent and inclusive and that it take place completely within the framework of and according to the procedures set out in decision 62/557. Any artificial solution obtained by forcing the issue or any other kind of pressure will only further divide the international community on this question and diminish our chances of success.

Senegal believes that the formula that will finally be agreed must increase the representation of developing countries and small States.

Any reform of the Council, however, must strengthen its effectiveness. To that end, the Council's working methods need to be adapted by increasing the participation of States not members of the Council.

We know that we can rely on the wisdom of the President of the General Assembly and the members of his team to see to it that the momentum of Security Council reform during the Assembly's sixty-first and sixty-second sessions is kept up and strengthened at the current session. The President's diligence and patience will be, when we meet again, the instruments for finalizing this reform that we sincerely want and that will give the United Nations the means to better respond to the aspirations of the peoples of the world.

Mr. Borg (Malta): This year's report of the Security Council (A/63/2) once again demonstrates the array of challenges which the members of the Council were confronted with during the 12 months of the reporting period. The 58 resolutions adopted by the Council as well as the 50 presidential statements clearly indicate the intensive work carried out by the Council, acting on behalf of the United Nations Member States and the international community at large, in the collective maintenance of peace and security.

As stated in the introduction to the report, "Africa again featured prominently on the Council's agenda" during the 12 months. Indeed, 16 African countries were the subject of careful examination by the Council. This situation continues to highlight the critical importance of the Council, working closely with the General Assembly, in timely and appropriate action to prevent, under the relevant provision of the Charter, aggravation of particular situations or disputes.

In that regard, we welcome the mission to five African countries organized last June by the Security Council, which brought the work of the Council closer to the Governments and peoples of conflict areas. It also goes without saying that, in the context of peacekeeping operations, Africa continues to provide considerable human and financial challenges that require us to redouble our efforts to assist those countries to overcome the obstacles they are encountering so that their people can live in peace and security. We commend the interface that has been

established between the Council and the African Union.

The situation in the Middle East continues to be on the agenda of the Security Council after six decades, and yet we are still searching for a lasting solution to the Middle East problem with the Palestinian question at its core. While we do not underestimate the complex nature of this question, we regret that the Council has not been able to agree on timely and urgent measures to address the situations that continue to block progress towards a comprehensive and durable solution to this issue. The international community welcomed the Annapolis conference. The Security Council has a fundamental role to play in solidly backing the outcome of that conference in order to advance the Middle East peace process. It is our hope that in the coming months the Council will review its efforts in support of the current positive engagement between Israelis and Palestinians.

The role of United Nations peacekeepers in the numerous ongoing operations should not be underestimated and therefore needs the full support and encouragement of all Member States. The achievements of the United Nations peacekeeping operations, including in Nepal and in Liberia, are examples showing that, with determination and the close cooperation of all concerned, success is possible, and they give encouragement to others to surmount the difficulties of achieving peace and reconciliation.

Post-conflict peacebuilding is an important element linking the work of the Security Council and of the Peacebuilding Commission. The Peacebuilding Commission has played a valuable role in giving a number of States emerging from conflict the opportunity and the necessary facilities to consolidate progress towards durable peace and security in their war-ravaged countries. We commend the members of the Peacebuilding Commission for their dedication and active contribution in this regard.

In all these areas, the role of regional and subregional organizations in the maintenance of international peace and security must continue to be strengthened. Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations sets out the purpose and objectives for the Security Council in "the development of pacific settlement of local disputes through such regional arrangements or by such regional agencies either on the initiative of the states concerned or by reference from the Security Council" (Article 52, para. 3). The roles being played by the African Union, the European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Organization of American States and the League of Arab States are to be lauded and encouraged.

Mr. Beck (Solomon Islands), Vice-President, took the Chair.

My delegation welcomes the initiative of holding thematic debates, which have taken place in the Security Council with the participation of a considerable number of Member States. We commend the Council for its unfailing efforts to encourage global justice and fight impunity for crimes related to the violation of human rights. It is increasingly acknowledged that the vulnerable groups of our societies, particularly women and children, must find the necessary refuge and protection offered by the Security Council in times of armed conflict. The presidential statements on the protection of civilians complement and reinforce the valuable work being carried out by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.

Likewise, the work of the five subsidiary bodies of the Security Council is commendable and must be recognized as an important building block in the Council's overall work.

I would like now to turn my attention briefly to Security Council reform by highlighting a few points that I raised during the last meeting of the Open-ended Working Group concerning the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and other matters related to the Council. Last Monday, the Open-ended Working Group continued its consideration of the follow-up to decision 62/557 of the General Assembly's sixty-second session. My delegation welcomed that decision, which builds on the progress achieved so far, in particular during the 2006 and 2007 Assembly sessions, as well as the positions of and proposals made by Member States to continue immediately to address within the Open-ended Working Group the framework and modalities in order to prepare and facilitate intergovernmental negotiations.

We acknowledge the Open-ended Working Group's role in Security Council reform even though that Group has recently been unfairly accused of not delivering the goods. We firmly believe that the time is ripe to commence intergovernmental negotiations, no

later than 28 February 2009. We still believe that, in order for the intergovernmental negotiations to succeed, we need a programme of work that defines a structured plan for meetings in the Open-ended Working Group that should serve as a basis for the preparation of the launching of intergovernmental negotiations. As we stated in the Working Group on Monday, we have never been so close to starting intergovernmental negotiations.

As a representative of a small island State, I would be remiss if I did not seize this opportunity to exhort small and medium-sized countries to be involved in the negotiating process as soon as it is launched. We believe that Security Council reform must perforce accommodate the interests and concerns of all Member States, be they large, medium or small. All Member States, large and small, must claim ownership of the reform by ensuring that their interests are fully taken into account. Any formula for Security Council reform that addresses the interests of only a few, in total disregard for the wishes of small and medium-sized countries, can hardly be expected to produce legitimate reform. A comprehensive reform of the Security Council must lead to a more democratic, inclusive, equitably representative, transparent, effective and accountable Council. Any process undertaken in this regard must be all-inclusive.

Our primordial consideration continues to be the democratization of the work of our Organization, the United Nations, and one of its principal organs, where every country counts. The central element guiding the reform of the Security Council should be the strengthening of its authority through its nature and legitimacy, whereby all Member States have the equal opportunity to represent their country on the Security Council.

Mr. Gonsalves (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): Saint Vincent and the Grenadines aligns itself with the statements made at the 53rd meeting by Barbados on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and by Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

According to our Charter, the Security Council has the “primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security”. It is through the prism of that formidable responsibility that Saint Vincent and the Grenadines views this report and the question of Security Council reform.

In our own region, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines would like to thank the Council for continuing to focus its attention on the threats to peace and security that confront our brothers and sisters in Haiti. We welcome the continued presence of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti and call for its further extension and expansion in a manner that reflects the current situation on the ground and is cognizant of the ongoing threats facing our fellow Caribbean Community State.

There are also many hotspots and flashpoints for conflict across our troubled planet, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines thanks the Council for the work that it has done, and continues to do, in pursuing its functions and responsibilities. We are grateful for every conflict contained, resolved or avoided through the work of the Council. We also acknowledge the magnificent bravery and sacrifice of troops, police and other personnel, and we thank those States who have volunteered their sons and daughters to the noble cause of world peace.

However, it is the nature of the Council’s work and mandate that its shortcomings and failures will attract more attention than its successes. That is as it should be, because every failure of the Council represents lives lost, peoples uprooted and development being reversed.

In that regard, my delegation confesses some disappointment with the content of the report (A/63/2) before us. I am reminded of the job applicant, who, lacking the necessary accomplishments to really distinguish himself, resorts to puffery and padding of his résumé to dazzle with verbosity and mind-numbing assemblages of data that are devoid of context.

Take, for example, the Council’s assessment of its work in the Sudan, where, as we speak, another slow-moving genocide is staining humanity’s conscience. On pages 14 to 17 of the report, my delegation learned that the Security Council condemned, condemned in the strongest possible terms, expressed strong concern, expressed deep concern, expressed serious concern, considered reports, heard briefings, adopted statements, took note of developments, exchanged views, and extended the mandate of existing ineffective missions and panels of experts, essentially perpetuating an unacceptable status quo. But what did the Council actually do to stop people from being massacred? Is that what we meant by “never again”? An endless

stream of impotent statements and interminable hand wringing is of no comfort to the murdered innocents in Darfur and represents a stark failing by the Council to fulfil its mandate.

Similarly, regarding the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, we learn from the report that: "the Council was not able to reach the unanimity needed for it to take any action during the current 12-month reporting period, despite the seven attempts that were presented by different delegations in due course" (*A/63/2, p. 1*). The Council was also limited to merely reviewing the situations in Kenya and Zimbabwe, apparently since "neither situation is a formal Security Council agenda item" (*A/63/2, p. 1*).

Those failings, and many others, speak to both the absence of the requisite political will and the structural inadequacies of the Security Council. Political priorities that justify billions to save profligate financiers but pinch pennies in lifesaving efforts, or that sacrifice our young in far more ignoble adventures than the cause of international peace cannot be blamed solely on the Council. However, we can and must address the issue of the reform of the Security Council, because its current track record does not inspire confidence in its ability to operate effectively as it is.

When the Security Council was created in 1948, the United Nations consisted of 58 Members. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, like 133 other current Member States, was neither consulted nor afforded an opportunity to address the composition and function of the Council. When we joined the United Nations, like 133 other countries, the composition of the Council was presented to us as a fait accompli — an immutable and immovable object in the United Nations landscape.

As the world has moved from great-Power unilateralism to multipolar, multilateral interconnectedness, and as new Powers and threats have emerged and old ones have faded, the Council remains stubbornly resistant to change and impervious to the logic of an evolving world. As the United Nations trumpets equality, the Council remains fundamentally unequal. As we cheer emerging democracies, the Council is firmly undemocratic and unrepresentative. As we demand transparency, the Council's functions remain shrouded and opaque. And as we decolonize the world, our most cherished international function remains the sole province of a virtual five-headed monarchy, largely unchanged in 60 years of global metamorphosis.

How, for example, can this report state that "Africa again featured prominently on the Council's agenda" (*A/63/2, p. 1*), while the Council itself remains devoid of a permanent African presence? Surely, Africa deserves appropriate membership on a body that is often preoccupied with the continent, quite apart from the undeniable overarching logic of equitable and developmental representation.

To be fair, the stagnation of reform is not entirely the fault of the Council itself, but of us, the members of the General Assembly. We have for too long succumbed to paralysis by the analyses or the undue pressures exerted by minority groups with a narrow self-interest in inaction.

We therefore welcome decision 62/557, which the President of the Assembly described on Monday as our road map and yesterday as our platform for progress. Decision 62/557 has finally cleared the way for intergovernmental negotiations to begin no later than February of next year, but hopefully much sooner. There will undoubtedly be hiccups on the road to substantive Security Council reform. However, we urge all Member States to approach the process in good faith and with flexibility.

Yesterday, the President again reminded us of the noble imperative of: "a more democratic United Nations, where every country counts" (*A/63/PV.53*). That imperative is rooted in the principle of the sovereign equality of States, which underpins the operation of this body. That equality might be a legal fiction, but the legality of that fiction is enshrined in our Charter and there is no place for Orwellian notions that some States are more equal than others. It follows naturally from that concept that negotiations are open to all States and that the voices of all States are to be equally respected in that process.

As such, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines rejects, as a matter of principle, any undue pressure being applied by minority groups or any backroom gentlemen's agreements that supersede the letter and spirit of unanimous decisions. Similarly, we repudiate the concept that we must somehow avoid voting on the substance of Security Council reform, lest influential members of a small minority question the credibility of a reformed Council. In response we ask: What of the 134 Members who have never had the opportunity to

voice an opinion on the current Council? Are we not collectively and individually influential? And why should we accept the credibility of a process that denies us our right to stand up and be counted?

To fear the transformative democratic power of the vote or to weigh and rank States' positions by their military and financial might is to debase the foundations upon which this institution stands. We have as our road map a decision that explicitly divorces the consultative role of the Open-ended Working Group on Security Council Reform from the substantive negotiations to come in the General Assembly plenary. It serves no one to revisit, renegotiate or subvert a unanimous decision of such recent vintage. The clarity of decision 62/557 leaves no doubt as to the urgency of our task.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has no aspirations to join the permanent membership of a reformed Council and is under no illusions as to the difficulties inherent in the reform process or the myriad modern challenges facing a reformed Council. Instead, we approach this issue from a position of principle and pragmatism, and we see the efficacious functioning of a democratic, representative, nimble, responsive and transparent Council as absolutely essential to the core values of the United Nations. Let us rise above pettiness and dilatory tactics and get on with the serious work of reform.

Ms. Štiglic (Slovenia): At the outset, let me thank the President of the Assembly for convening this meeting. I would also like to thank the Permanent Representative of Costa Rica, His Excellency Mr. Jorge Urbina, for presenting to the General Assembly the report of the Security Council covering the period 1 August 2007 to 31 July 2008 (A/63/2), which contains revealing facts regarding the diverse agenda, the ever increasing workload and the complexity of the issues before the Council.

There is still much room for improvement in the Council's transparency, inclusiveness and accountability, so that it can fulfil its responsibility to maintain international peace and security in the most effective and efficient way. Slovenia believes that urgent consideration has to be given to the transformation of existing structures. Reform of the United Nations Security Council is long overdue, and it is an essential part of overall United Nations reform. With regard to the Council, reform needs to address both the enlargement of membership and the improvement of its working methods.

We welcome the open debate that took place under the Belgian presidency of the Security Council in August on the working methods of the Security Council. Regardless of the Security Council's size, we need to promote improvements in its working methods and the Council's interaction with the entire membership of the Organization. We also appreciate and support the initiatives of the "Small Five" (S-5) in this regard.

While progress has been made in the area of working methods, the second part of the reform agenda, namely, enlargement of Security Council membership, has been lagging behind. Although the discussions on Security Council reform in recent years have produced useful ideas, and valuable work has been done by the facilitators appointed by previous General Assembly Presidents, the time has come for specific proposals and, ultimately, decisions. Enlargement of the Security Council is not only a matter of fairness, but it is also the necessary condition for the Council's effectiveness. The time is ripe for changes in the Council's structure that will make it more representative and strengthen its authority and legitimacy.

We have to maintain the momentum generated in previous discussions and move forward. We, therefore, welcome General Assembly decision 62/557 of 15 September 2008, adopted unanimously, to continue immediately with discussions within the framework of the Open-ended Working Group and to commence intergovernmental negotiations in informal plenary of the General Assembly not later than 28 February 2009. These negotiations, in order to be successful, have to be conducted in an open, transparent and inclusive manner. We also welcome the appointment of His Excellency Mr. Zahir Tanin, the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, to facilitate the process. We are convinced that under his able leadership we can achieve some tangible results at the end of this process.

Allow me, Sir, to take this opportunity to draw the General Assembly's attention to some ideas put forward by the President of Slovenia, His Excellency Mr. Danilo Türk, in his address to the General Assembly during this year's general debate. Those ideas could be helpful to the General Assembly

presidency during the coming discussion on the Security Council.

The membership of the Security Council could be expanded in three directions. First, there should be six additional permanent members from all the regions of the world. Secondly, there should be an additional category of non-permanent members with a more frequent rotation, six in any particular composition of the Security Council, elected in accordance with a formula to be determined by the General Assembly and alternating every second two-year term. Thirdly, the remaining eight non-permanent members would be elected in accordance with the principle of equitable geographical distribution. Thus, the total size of the reformed Security Council would not exceed 25 members. The amendment to the Charter authorizing the enlargement of the Security Council would also need to include a review clause allowing for a comprehensive review of the new system.

We must not fail to use the momentum created by the unanimous decision by Member States to move forward the negotiations on the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council.

We are convinced that the leadership, guidance and wisdom of the General Assembly President, coupled with the necessary political will, good faith and flexibility among the membership, will bring us to a successful conclusion of these prolonged debates on the issue of Security Council reform.

Mr. Ali (Malaysia): At the outset, I wish to thank the Permanent Representative of Costa Rica, in his capacity as President of the Security Council for the month of November 2008, for introducing the report of the Security Council, contained in document A/63/2.

My delegation regards this debate as an important opportunity for Member States to appraise the performance and effectiveness of the Security Council in discharging its responsibilities. Article 24 of the United Nations Charter states that the Security Council is entrusted with primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security and that in carrying out this responsibility the Security Council acts on Member States' behalf. Since this is the mandate, Member States should ideally be the ones to periodically assess the work and performance of the Security Council. This report of the Security Council to the General Assembly is one way to discharge that responsibility. We thank the Permanent Representative of Viet Nam for organizing a meeting in July during his presidency of the Council to hear views from Member States as the report was being prepared.

Another avenue by means of which Member States can be kept apprised of Security Council deliberations is through periodic briefings by the President of the Council. We thank those who briefed us during their presidencies. We note, however, that these briefings have been sporadic. Malaysia reiterates its call for there to be more regular, open briefings on the work of the Security Council, so that non-members of the Council can be kept abreast of its work.

We note that the overall international peace and security situation remains very challenging, including during the period covered by the report. The Security Council has maintained the same rigorous pace as last year in holding 219 formal meetings, as compared to 224 meetings in 2007, including 191 public meetings. The Council also adopted 58 resolutions and 50 presidential statements. We note, too, that the Council held 177 closed consultations of the whole and an undisclosed number of informal consultations. We see the sense and need for non-members of the Security Council, particularly those directly involved in the issues being considered, to participate and provide input at those meetings and consultations. My delegation reiterates the oft-repeated calls by Member States for greater transparency, accountability and improved participation of the general membership of the United Nations in the work of the Security Council.

We note the continued focus by the Security Council on the challenging situations besetting several regions in Africa, which also reflect the complex socio-economic and political developments of the continent as a whole. One third of the 42 main items relating to the maintenance of peace and security deal with conflicts in Africa. Several debates relating directly to Africa were held, including those on peace and security in Africa and the role of the Security Council in conflict prevention and resolution, particularly in Africa. In addition, several thematic issues also have reference to Africa, including the issues of the role of regional and subregional organizations in the maintenance of peace and security, post-conflict peacebuilding, children and armed conflict, small arms, and women and peace and security. We note also that a Security Council mission was organized to visit five African countries. There have been some encouraging

results in mitigating a number of conflicts in Africa, with some movement towards a peacebuilding mode. But there still remain many daunting challenges that pose serious threats to regional and international peace and security, notably with regard to the situation in the Horn of Africa, the Great Lakes region and Sudan/Chad.

Malaysia had been among several countries from outside the region that were affected by the situation in the Horn of Africa, in particular piracy in the Gulf of Aden, which has become more pronounced recently. We therefore urge the Security Council to continue to increase its efforts at restoring and ensuring peace and stability in the region. Efforts at continuing to engage and work closely with regional organizations, including the African Union, are among several options that the Security Council could pursue.

While we agree that the Security Council should give greater attention to developments in Africa, we regret that little, if any, is given to addressing the Palestinian question. This continues to be the main cause of instability and insecurity not only in the Middle East region but in the world at large. Despite the monthly public briefings and debates conducted by the Security Council, the Council has of late failed to adopt a single outcome on the question. What is most frustrating is that even the most obvious violations, such as the continuing construction of illegal settlements, which has been acknowledged at many meetings, including at Annapolis, have failed to get any response or reaction from the Security Council.

We do not understand why the Council should be so concerned and eager to act on matters such as climate change, where security implications are debatable, yet be stone silent on the Palestinian question. We are deeply disappointed, and we regret that the Council has been rendered ineffective in finding a workable solution to the Palestinian question, an issue that has been with the Security Council since its inception.

We also regret that the Security Council has failed to implement its own resolutions on this subject including its resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). The continued failure of the Security Council to solve the Palestinian question has undermined its credibility in the maintenance of the international peace and security, which I should recall, is a responsibility conferred on it by Article 24 of the Charter.

Malaysia takes note of the Security Council's own effort to improve its working methods. During the period covered in the report, the Council adopted presidential note S/2007/749, which outlined new measures regarding participation in informal consultations of the general membership of the United Nations and of experts, the issuance of the summary statement of issues of which the Council is seized and the preparation of the annual report to the General Assembly. We applaud the thickness of this year's Security Council report in terms of volume but note that, even with the extra detail, the report is limited to the mere factual presentation of the activities of the Council and its subsidiary bodies.

My delegation is of the view that the report of the Security Council should be more substantive and analytical, so as to enable Member States to make a proper assessment and gain an understanding of the effectiveness of the Council in discharging its responsibilities. The report should provide the justification and rationale behind major actions and decisions of the Council. Likewise, the report should also be transparent concerning the failure of the Council to adopt a particular draft resolution or action.

In August 2008 the Security Council held an open debate on the subject of improving its own working methods (see S/PV.5968). Malaysia believes that a number of useful proposals were made during the open debate which are worth revisiting. We hope that those proposals will not merely be relegated to the annals of history.

It seems to my delegation that the workload of the Council has increased in recent years. This seems to be a ongoing trend and is likely to continue in view of the outstanding issues and breaking conflicts that necessitate the Council's attention. The Council is thus fast reaching its capacity. In order to avoid the Council becoming overstretched in areas which are not within its specific mandate to oversee, the Council should refocus on its core business: the maintenance of international peace and security under Chapters VI and VII of the Charter of the United Nations.

The item on the "Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and other matters related to the Security Council" has been on the agenda of the General Assembly since September 1992, though attempts were made as early as 1979 to include it in the

agenda. We understand that the background to this was the increase in United Nations membership from 113 in 1963 to 152 countries in 1979, and the amendment of the Charter in 1965. The amendment resulted in an increase in the membership of the Security Council from 11 to 15. The membership of our Organization has since increased to 192 countries, which makes it even more relevant to address this question. Fifteen States, with five having permanent membership and the right to veto, seems an incongruous arrangement for a body entrusted with international peace and security.

The inclusion of this agenda item in the work of the General Assembly and the establishment of the Open-ended Working Group on Security Council reform have enabled us to have discussion. Yet very little progress has been achieved on this question. While we believed that there was much value in taking carefully considered steps rather than a giant leap into the unknown, the movement was too snail-paced for the comfort of all.

However, the adoption of decision 62/557 on 15 September 2008 gives us cause to be optimistic that the day has finally arrived when we can all begin to engage in intergovernmental negotiations. We believe that we actually have a chance to make concrete progress. Decision 62/557 provides a definitive timeline, by which we should begin intergovernmental negotiations no later than 28 February 2009.

We saw the divisiveness that was apparent in the first meeting of the Open-ended Working Group, which concluded last Monday. There seemed to be a reinterpretation of decision 62/557, which we had adopted by consensus. We are quite concerned at this development and hope that it is not a reflection of what we should expect to encounter when we begin intergovernmental negotiations. We reiterate that, amid the interpretation of 62/557, including on whether the commencement of intergovernmental negotiations would be determined by the outcome of the Open-ended Working Group's addressing of framework and modalities, the intergovernmental negotiations will proceed as agreed by 28 February 2009.

We trust in the leadership and wisdom of the President of the General Assembly to ensure that the process leading towards reform of the Security Council will yield concrete results in negotiations that are open, transparent and inclusive. We reaffirm our support and cooperation in working with the President and other members of this body to successfully complete our task of reforming the Security Council so that it is more democratic, representative, effective and transparent.

Mr. Yáñez-Barnuevo (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation appreciates this opportunity to take part in this joint debate on the annual report of the Security Council to the General Assembly and on the question of the necessary reform of the Security Council.

At the outset, with regard to the Security Council's report to the General Assembly (A/63/2), I would like in particular to thank the Permanent Representative of Costa Rica, as President of the Council for this month, for his presentation of the report. Costa Rica is making a very laudable effort in fulfilling this important responsibility, through which it is promoting transparency and the broadest possible participation in the work of that principal organ of the Organization, which, according to the Charter of the United Nations, bears primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.

The report submitted by the Security Council on this occasion is more analytical than last year's, as requested by a large number of delegations during the discussion held at the sixty-second session of the Assembly. We are thus moving forward, in that Members of the Organization can adequately evaluate of the work carried out by the Council during the specified period. As can be seen in the report, the Security Council has considered a set of cross-cutting issues which are of particular relevance to the General Assembly. I am referring to issues such as non-proliferation and disarmament, the fight against terrorism, the protection of civilians in armed conflict and the protection of women in armed conflict, to cite only a few examples.

Those are issues that the Security Council has considered in depth and areas in which the two principal United Nations organs should have greater interaction, exploring the various avenues opened up to us by the United Nations Charter itself. Specifically, I am referring to the implementation of Article 15, which establishes that the General Assembly shall receive and consider annual and special reports from the Council concerning the measures that the Council has decided upon or taken to maintain international peace and security.

My delegation understands that, if we encourage the drafting and submission of such reports on

particular issues — a possibility that is also addressed in Article 24, paragraph 3, of the Charter — we can improve the interaction and cooperation between the two principal United Nations organs. We believe that that would result in the adoption of more effective measures aimed at preventing and eliminating threats to peace and promoting conditions conducive to international security.

Better interaction between the two principal United Nations organs is an issue of great importance to the Organization's future and should be addressed in the forthcoming intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform. As members are aware, the commencement of those negotiations was agreed upon at the close of the previous Assembly session, when we adopted decision 62/557 in order to achieve a more democratic, representative, responsible, legitimate, effective, participatory and transparent Council. In that decision, we also agreed to continue to hold consultations within the Open-ended Working Group on the framework and the modalities for future intergovernmental negotiations. Therefore, we are convinced that we must take the maximum advantage of the time available to us — until 1 February 2009 at the latest — to prepare for and facilitate the holding of the intergovernmental negotiations so that, as we all hope, they can lead to as broad a general agreement as possible among Member States on the various aspects of Security Council reform. That will make it possible for such reform to be truly owned and accepted by the entire membership, to enter into force as soon as possible and to be implemented and effective.

As for the various issues that will arise in the forthcoming negotiations, our position is well known concerning the size and composition of the Security Council. We are convinced that a more democratic, representative, responsible and thus more legitimate Council can result from an expansion of the category of non-permanent members, which are the only members elected periodically by the Assembly and thus accountable to it. Our position, which does not favour an expansion of the permanent-member category, should be interpreted not as a rejection of a particular country or group of countries, but rather as a matter of principle based on the general interest of the Organization, which is far greater than the individual interest of any Member State.

With regard to the Council's decision-making mechanisms, it should be recalled that any expansion of the Council's composition will necessarily require that the majority needed to take decisions be adjusted. From that perspective, our position is that a distinction should be made between the various types of Council decisions — just as the Charter distinguishes between procedural and substantive issues — and that we should also take into account the diverse scope of substantive Council decisions affecting Chapter VII or other types of issues under the Charter.

We believe that the use of the veto should be reserved exclusively for decisions that the Council adopts to implement Chapter VII of the Charter, because such issues require agreement among the permanent members. We are in favour of the various proposals aimed at limiting the use of the veto in cases in which it is not really necessary or required under the Charter.

Concerning the issue of regional representation, we are convinced of the need to give regional groups a greater role in designating and endorsing their Council candidatures, ensuring appropriate subregional representation in each of them. We also favour the establishment of mechanisms that would guarantee the representation of transregional groups, such as the League of Arab States and the Organization of the Islamic Conference, including through arrangements among the regional organizations concerned.

In any case, we need to find formulas that ensure adequate representation for small and medium-size States and for countries of the developing world, particularly in Africa. However, a more prominent role for regional groups must not call into question the competencies of the General Assembly, which, under the Charter, has the last word in electing non-permanent members of the Security Council. That gives them the legitimacy of having the support of the Organization's entire membership.

With regard to the Council's working methods, my delegation supports the proposals submitted by the Group of Five Small Countries. In particular, we support the proposed reforms related to monitoring the implementation of Council decisions — through the establishment of appropriate assessment mechanisms — and to the functioning of the Council's subsidiary bodies.

I should like to take this opportunity to emphasize that, in addition to strictly monitoring the Council's functioning, we must promote greater

dialogue and interaction between Council members and representatives of civil society, including non-governmental organizations and personalities from the parliamentary, academic or business worlds. If we truly want credible reform of the Security Council that makes it more democratic, representative, responsible, legitimate, effective and transparent, we must be able to adequately address the main reform issues, without any exception, during the intergovernmental negotiations that will begin on 28 February 2009 at the latest. We are fully prepared for those negotiations and hope that all other Members of the Organization will be at that time.

Mr. Hill (Australia): Given the time pressure, I will deal just with the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters. Australia recognizes that intergovernmental negotiations on equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council are long overdue. We support their imminent start and the initiative that the Assembly President has shown in commencing that process.

Reform of the Security Council is one of the most important institutional issues currently before Member States and is something in which all Member States have a stake. Australia will participate in intergovernmental negotiations with the goal of bringing about a more representative Security Council that acts with greater authority, unity and credibility and functions more efficiently and democratically.

We will approach the negotiations with open minds, recognizing that reform will be achievable only if we, as Member States, can develop a solution that gains as broad support as possible. Australia looks forward to working with delegations from across the diversity of positions to find a solution that achieves that support, while keeping an eye at all times on ensuring that the Security Council remains relevant to the modern world. Throughout the negotiations, we must focus on ensuring that the decision-making capacity of the Security Council is not diminished, but rather enhanced. That can be achieved only if effectiveness and equitable representation are balanced.

We must keep in sight that, through the United Nations Charter, we Member States have conferred upon the Security Council primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. At a time when the agenda of the Council is full and the challenges facing countries are many, we must take a global view and not confuse the Council's responsibility with our own national or regional preferences.

Australia considers that, for the Security Council to remain relevant, any reform must acknowledge the contribution to international peace and security made by Japan and India and include them as permanent members. Japan is a major financial contributor to United Nations peacekeeping missions and a leader in developing peacebuilding activities. India is an emerging economy with over 1 billion people. We also envisage that an expanded Council would include appropriate representation for Africa, a region comprising over one quarter of United Nations Member States, and for Latin America.

Australia recognizes that any increase in non-permanent membership will need to balance the representation of regional groups that have changed in size since the last expansion, particularly Eastern Europe and Asia. We also believe the expansion of the Council should not be so large as to diminish its ability to fulfil its responsibilities under the Charter.

Australia still believes a particularly important aspect of Security Council reform is that of its working methods. While the process of intergovernmental negotiations could be lengthy, there are measures that we could undertake today to improve the decision-making ability of the Council and the openness and transparency of its processes, including access by non-members.

Australia considers that reform of the membership and working methods of the Security Council is vital to enhancing the credibility of the United Nations and the Organization's capacity to fulfil the goals set out in the Charter. The commencement of intergovernmental negotiations will be timely, and Australia looks forward to contributing constructively throughout that process.

Ms. Ochir (Mongolia): Let me begin by thanking His Excellency Ambassador Jorge Urbina, Permanent Representative of Costa Rica and President of the Security Council during the month of November, for presenting the report of the Security Council (A/63/2) to the General Assembly on behalf of the Council. My delegation would also like to thank His Excellency Mr. Srgjan Kerim, President of the General Assembly

at its sixty-second session, and the members of his task force — the Permanent Representatives of Bangladesh, Chile, Djibouti and Portugal — for their hard work to move the process forward during the previous session.

The sixty-second session of the General Assembly made a historic breakthrough in the long-stalled process of Security Council reform with the unanimous adoption of decision 62/557, which concluded our preparatory phase for launching intergovernmental negotiations. And now, we believe, the time has come to seize that momentum and move forward expeditiously.

The last two meetings of the Open-ended Working Group on Security Council Reform have vividly revealed that a large majority of Member States are willing and ready to engage in the intergovernmental negotiations as soon as possible. In that respect, my delegation regrets that it was found somehow impossible to start the intergovernmental negotiations on 21 November this year, as originally proposed by His Excellency Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, President of the General Assembly, in his letter of 10 October 2008. However, we remain hopeful that the intergovernmental negotiations will start soon and are eagerly looking forward to new dates being announced by the President of the General Assembly, as he has stated that "A better Council cannot wait until tomorrow, if we want to have a better tomorrow" (*A/63/PV.53*). We also remain encouraged by the determination and commitment of the President of the General Assembly to implement the letter and the spirit of decision 62/557.

My delegation shares the view, expressed by many, that having considered the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters over the course of the past 15 years, the Open-ended Working Group has already made its contribution to the process and has largely exhausted its potential. We would only welcome it if the Open-ended Working Group somehow came up with constructive recommendations over the next few weeks. But either way, whether the Open-ended Working Group produces an outcome or not, its work should not in any way stall the start of the intergovernmental negotiations on comprehensive reform of the Security Council and the ensuing process.

As we are poised to start the intergovernmental negotiations, I would like to reaffirm the principled position of Mongolia on Security Council reform. Mongolia has consistently stood for a just and equitable enlargement of the Security Council by increasing the number of both permanent and non-permanent members, while ensuring due representation of developing and developed countries alike.

We also believe that the Security Council needs to further improve its working methods. This is part and parcel of a comprehensive reform package. Taking note of last August's open debate of the Security Council on its working methods (see S/PV.5968), we support the proposal of Costa Rica, Jordan, Liechtenstein, Singapore and Switzerland — Small Five States — aimed at enhancing the accountability, transparency and inclusiveness of the Council's work with a view to strengthening its legitimacy and effectiveness. We also believe that open debates and interactive briefings by the Security Council are a commendable practice to be further enhanced to the benefit of non-members.

As to the report of the Security Council, we support the view that its content needs more in-depth analysis and that relevant amendments to that effect could be introduced into the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council. We would also like to commend the innovative efforts of the Permanent Mission of Viet Nam, which sought to interact with non-members before the finalization of the Security Council report. We believe that that initiative could also be followed by future Presidents of the Security Council.

In conclusion, I would like to assure the President of the General Assembly of my delegation's full support for his efforts to move forward with Security Council reform through the launching of intergovernmental negotiations and to steer the conduct of the negotiations together with Ambassador Tanin in the spirit outlined. Let us come together, keep together and work together.

Mr. Cancela (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): Uruguay, as it has already indicated on previous occasions, shares the view that Security Council reform is a matter of urgency. We deem this process necessary, on one hand, in order to comply with the mandate given us by the heads of State and

Government in 2005 and, on the other, because there is the need for the Council to adapt to current circumstances so as to confront the new challenges. We would like the Council to be a more effective, representative, democratic and transparent body. To that end, reform must also encompass the Council's working methods.

We welcome the circulation of the resolution of last year's General Assembly on the subject in question, which was orally amended in one of the last sessions presided over by your predecessor. The resolution definitively clarified the main points decided upon during that session, although the process of its development was, quite frankly, confused. We would also like to welcome the decision on the timetable for the meetings of these various negotiations, in particular the call to begin intergovernmental negotiations by 21 November next year. However, I must note with sincerity that we would have liked the presidency to carry out broader consultations, in particular with regional groups, in drawing up the calendar for these meetings, since such important occasions should enjoy the strongest possible guarantees of transparency.

With regard to the negotiations, Uruguay does not wish to repeat its position on Security Council reform. That position is already well known and has remained unchanged throughout all the sessions of the Open-ended Working Group. We would, however, like to reiterate one point that has been central to all the statements by the delegation of Uruguay, namely, our firm opposition to all solutions that grants the right to veto to new members of the Security Council, either directly or indirectly, through moratoriums or any other mechanism aimed at prolonging the extension of that right over time.

Uruguay's principled position can be traced back to the very establishment of the Organization. In the San Francisco Conference, the delegation of Uruguay stated that members of the Security Council should enter that body without distinction as to prerogative or rights, while accepting that those countries that had carried the greatest burden in the war be assured seats on the Council but not indefinitely and only for a period that might be judged advisable, say eight or ten years, for example.

We are about to begin a phase of direct intergovernmental negotiations, as called for by various delegations seeking to overcome the difficulties encountered by the Open-ended Working Group. All issues will be on the table, but we cannot ignore the fact that many topics have already been debated for more than 12 years and that no agreement has been reached on them. Thus, we do not believe it prudent to continue, for the moment, with questions on which we know we will not reach a consensus or a broad majority. We understand that the topic of the veto is among those questions.

Mr. Park In-kook (Republic of Korea): I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for organizing this debate. I would also like to thank the President of the Security Council for this month, His Excellency Ambassador Urbina of Costa Rica, for introducing the report of the Security Council. We appreciate the informative content of the report, as well as the intensive work undertaken by the Council during the period covered by the report.

Today I would like to focus on the vital issue of Security Council reform. It is the view of my delegation that meaningful reform should uphold the principles of the Charter of the United Nations in order to render the Council more representative, accountable, transparent, efficient and democratic. My delegation is in favour of enhancing the democratic legitimacy of the Security Council through an increase in elected members with terms of varying duration. Only through elections can democracy and accountability be sustained; not just a single election that entitles the winners to remain in office in perpetuity but periodic elections, whereby Member States will have the opportunity to review the performance of Council members and respond accordingly. Similarly, only through elections can the door of opportunity be opened to qualified Member States to present their candidatures in the hope of serving the international community in the pursuit of international peace and security.

An integral part of reforming the Security Council is improving its working methods. We must meet the goal, agreed upon in the World Summit Outcome document, of making the Council more efficient and transparent, further enhancing its effectiveness, legitimacy and the implementation of its decisions. We welcome the proposals that have been put forward so far to enhance the transparency, accountability and inclusiveness of the Council's work. We support the steps taken so far by the Council in this regard and believe that consistent effort should be

made to improve the working methods on an ongoing basis.

Our Working Group has been mandated to address the framework and modalities in order to prepare and facilitate the international negotiations in accordance with General Assembly decision 62/557. I think we are now on the right track, in the sense that many Member States have shown their understanding and agreement on the sequential link between the preparatory work to be undertaken by the Open-ended Working Group and the intergovernmental negotiations to be launched no later than the end of February 2009. It was in this vein that my delegation, together with that of Mexico, presented a joint proposal on a draft timetable for consultations to the last Open-ended Working Group meeting. My delegation is fully committed to working towards the successful launch of intergovernmental negotiations no later than the end of February. We propose that we make the best use of the time remaining to utilize the Working Group as a preparatory committee for the intergovernmental negotiations, as proposed by Mexico in previous meetings of the Open-ended Working Group.

We should now start conducting open, transparent and inclusive consultations, with a view to making the most accurate possible assessment and agreement on the framework and modalities. In doing so, we will be able to draw on the progress made thus far in the Open-ended Working Group, in particular, the reports of the facilitators and the work of the task force. The accumulation of progress made in the Open-ended Working Group is embodied in paragraph (e) of decision 62/557.

Let me take this opportunity to reiterate several points on the issue of the framework and modalities of negotiations. First, as a matter of principle, we should aim to achieve the widest possible political acceptance by the membership and, in any case, well above the required two-thirds majority in the General Assembly. Member States have time and time again come together as an overwhelming majority to adopt important reforms, as eloquently observed yesterday by the Ambassador of Italy, as they did in adopting landmark resolution 1991 (XVIII) on 17 December 1963, which only increased the number of non-permanent members from 11 to 15. This objective is also stipulated in the report of the Open-ended Working Group contained in document A/61/47. The rationale is clear — the impact of the reform of the Security Council on the membership is of such magnitude that we cannot afford to alienate a significant portion of the membership.

Secondly, Security Council reform is comprised of extremely delicate and complex elements that need to be addressed in a comprehensive and organic manner. All the key issues are so closely interlinked and all-encompassing that it would not make sense to arbitrarily dissect them and deal with them separately. Security Council reform is a comprehensive issue that requires holistic approaches by which all the relevant issues are discussed in tandem with one another.

Thirdly, the negotiations on Security Council reform should build on the progress made thus far, in particular, the work of the sixty-first session of the General Assembly. My delegation agrees with the facilitators' conclusion that intermediate approaches are the only feasible compromise option that can break the current impasse. As their report points out, flexibility is key in moving forward on Security Council reform. At this stage, it is reasonable to consider the best possible solution. We believe that the facilitators' report could be a point of convergence that might serve as a basis for inclusive negotiations.

Lastly, my delegation reiterates the following objectives and guiding principles of Security Council reform. First, the sovereign equality of Member States must be respected. Secondly, equitable geographic distribution must be ensured. Thirdly, the democratic underpinnings of the Council to enhance its accountability to the membership must be strengthened. Fourthly, ownership of the reform must be solidified through the accommodation of interests of all Member States and of regional and other groupings, in particular, those that have been traditionally underrepresented. Fifthly, we must increase the opportunity for all Member States to serve on the Security Council, particularly groups that have been historically underrepresented, such as small and medium-sized States, as well as African States. In this regard, we hope to continue our dialogue with all interested Member States with a view to finding ways to address their concerns and interests.

The Republic of Korea has always been ready to embark on a negotiations process with a view to reaching our common goal of a comprehensive and timely reform of the Security Council. We are willing to participate in consultations and negotiations in a flexible way, based on our principled positions. It is

our hope that Member States and groups will also show greater flexibility, political will and commitment, in order to advance Security Council reform.

Mr. Çorman (Turkey): I would like to begin by thanking the President for convening this joint meeting which provides a very timely opportunity to reflect on the activities of the Security Council as well as on the Council's ongoing process of reform.

I would also like to express our appreciation to Ambassador Jorge Urbina of Costa Rica, President of the Security Council, for presenting the annual report of the Council to the General Assembly (A/63/2).

The report provides an accurate account of the work of the Security Council and demonstrates the multiplicity of issues considered by the Council under its responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. It also confirms the increased workload of the Council whereby African issues, particularly within the context of peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts, remain at the forefront of its agenda. Finally, the report points to many of the important challenges which lie ahead for the Council, albeit indirectly, as well as the challenges that await our Organization as a whole.

While the report could have been more analytical and less descriptive, we are also well aware of the complexity of many of the issues that are featured on the Council's agenda — a complexity that would have rendered such an analytical approach extremely difficult to implement. That said, there is still much room for further improvement of the working methods of the Council to enhance its transparency, accountability and inclusiveness. We therefore encourage the Council to continue its efforts to that end.

I would like to take this opportunity to briefly reiterate Turkey's position on Security Council reform. As we have emphasized on numerous occasions, Turkey remains fully committed to an early reform of the Council that will render the Council more democratic, representative and transparent. We believe that such an approach will further increase the legitimacy and credibility of our Organization. We also believe that these widely shared general principles should continue to guide our efforts in every stage of the reform process.

In addition, while focusing on Council reform, we should not overlook the other important components of the reform process at the United Nations, particularly the revitalization of the General Assembly. In fact, the reform of the Security Council and the revitalization of the General Assembly are inevitably two interrelated issues and should proceed simultaneously.

My country has taken an active part in the discussions and consultations that are under way in the Open-ended Working Group on Security Council reform. We attach importance to the Working Group, which, as the main forum for this discussion, should set the stage for the intergovernmental negotiations that will soon start informally at the General Assembly. In our opinion, setting the stage means completing the consultations and discussions in the Working Group on the main parameters of the intergovernmental negotiations. With these considerations in mind, we have lent our support to the proposal by Mexico and the Republic of Korea on scheduling several more meetings of the Working Group prior to the start of the intergovernmental negotiations by February 2009.

We believe that, with sufficient preparation prior to these negotiations and mutual flexibility to be demonstrated by all parties, we will be able to bring the process of Security Council reform to a successful conclusion. The General Assembly may count on our delegation's full cooperation, support and flexibility in this process.

Mr. Valero Briceño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela would like to welcome the convening of this meeting because of its importance to the consideration of the reform of the Security Council and of the United Nations system in general. Likewise, we would like to acknowledge the report of the Security Council presented to us by Ambassador Jorge Urbina, Permanent Representative of Costa Rica, in his capacity as President of the Security Council for November 2008. We would also like to highlight the work carried out by Ambassador Le Luong Minh, Permanent Representative of Viet Nam, in the preparation of the report in question.

The changes to the international scene following the end of the cold war reaffirmed the need to encourage discussions on adapting the United Nations and its bodies, especially the Security Council, to

current realities in order to allow them to effectively respond to the challenges of peace, security and development.

As members are aware, the General Assembly adopted decision 62/557 by consensus, renewing the mandate 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. The Assembly approved an ambitious plan to move from the discussions that have been taking place to the phase of effective intergovernmental negotiations within the framework of the Assembly itself. As the President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Hugo Chávez Frías, said during the interactive dialogue that took place at the Millennium Summit, the United Nations cannot continue to navigate with a map dating from 1945.

Venezuela has expressed its support for an increase in the number of both permanent and non-permanent Security Council members and has repeatedly advocated the suppression of the use of the veto. An agreement on that matter would make the Council more representative and reflect the new, current composition of the United Nations.

We have likewise expressed support for countries of the developing world, from Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, respectively, being included in the Council as permanent members. Such a decision would serve to crown the legitimate aspiration of peoples and countries that have not been able to exercise this responsibility for over 60 years.

Venezuela believes that the inclusion in the Security Council of new permanent members representing regions of the developing world would be an appropriate measure to correct the asymmetries of power in that organ. A multipolar world is taking shape. The hegemonic positions inherited from the Second World War must be overcome, and current realities must be expressed in the composition of the major bodies of the United Nations.

Our country also advocates an increase in the number of new non-permanent members, bearing in mind the principle of equitable geographic distribution enshrined in Article 23 of the United Nations Charter. The Government of Venezuela expresses its firm opposition to the veto power, since it is an anachronistic decision-making mechanism and is contrary to the principle of the sovereign equality of States enshrined in the letter and spirit of the Charter. The issue of the veto is inseparable from that of reform and expansion. Both objectives will contribute to the democratization of this global forum.

With a view to achieving the elimination of the veto in the future, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela favours, on an immediate basis, the regulation of the use of the veto through the establishment of certain criteria, which should be applied to issues of both procedure and substance. Along those lines, it could be considered that, for situations involving a threat to or a breach of peace in situ, in accordance with the nature and scope of Chapter VII of the Charter, two concurrent negative votes of Council member States would be required to prevent the adoption of a decision. Likewise, the veto would not be used in decisions under Chapter VI of the Charter, which lays out guidelines for the pacific settlement of disputes.

In terms of the working methods of the Security Council, we recognize that, in recent years, some small progress has been made. Nevertheless, this progress remains insufficient, since it does not duly reflect the calls for greater openness and transparency in the functioning of that organ.

Peace is a matter for everyone, be they small States or large States, rich or small. Peace should not be supported by privilege, and Venezuela therefore expresses its rejection of the practice — and there have been efforts to implement this — of making a rule of closed and informal meetings. That type of meeting should be an exemption. The predominant rule should be public meetings, as established in rule 48 of the Council’s provisional rules of procedure. That type of proceeding prevents greater participation by the majority of Member States in the daily life of the United Nations.

We cannot advocate the democratization of international relations or the promotion of democracy in countries while defending the status quo, which excludes and marginalizes the majority of Member States when it comes to taking major decisions. In a spirit of greater transparency, openness and participation, the Security Council should hold consultations with the countries affected by its decisions. Non-member countries should be invited to participate in informal consultations using a procedure

similar to that established in Articles 31 and 32 of the United Nations Charter.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela believes that efforts to reform the United Nations should necessarily strengthen the General Assembly, the Organization's main body for deliberation and policymaking and the most representative body of the Organization. In this context, in order to ensure the necessary level of Council accountability to the Member States, the Council should submit periodic, substantive and analytical reports to the Assembly. The current method applied by the Council of presenting annual reports that are only factual in nature has not produced the desired results. Let the Council render a regular, systematic account of its activities to the Assembly in accordance with Articles 15 and 24 of the Charter.

To conclude, I wish to reiterate the support of my delegation for your work, Sir, as head of the Working Group. We hope that Ambassador Zahir Tanin, Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, in his role as facilitator, will direct with moderation and equanimity the work in the negotiations phase in the Assembly.

Mr. Sangqu (South Africa): We thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this meeting. We would like to align ourselves with the statement delivered by the Permanent Representative of Mauritius in his capacity as Chairman of the African Group. We would also like to commend the President of the Security Council for the month of November, the Permanent Representative of Costa Rica, for presenting the annual report of the Council (A/63/2), and the delegation of Viet Nam for preparing the report.

The annual report of the Security Council before us indicates the many areas all over the world, particularly in Africa, where the Council remains engaged in helping to resolve conflicts. The Council also stimulated constructive debate on important global issues such as security sector reform, the role of women in peacekeeping operations and the relationship between the Council and regional organizations in terms of Chapter VIII of the Charter. The Council's sustained engagement on these issues is testimony to what it can achieve when it fully and robustly assumes its responsibilities in terms of the Charter.

At the same time, we must unfortunately lament the fact that the Security Council has not been as successful in resolving some conflict situations or has failed dismally to intervene in others. The most serious threat to the credibility of the Council remains its inability to resolve protracted conflicts, such as in Palestine and Western Sahara. It is our hope that the Council will stem the erosion of its credibility by transcending its divisions and the national interests of its members and by uniformly discharging its Charter-based mandate to maintain international peace and security.

Membership on the Security Council confers a global responsibility in that all its members are entrusted with the task of helping to advance peace throughout the world. South Africa does not accept a status quo where some issues on the agenda of the Council, such as anti-terrorism, non-proliferation and the Western Sahara, are regarded as the preserve of some countries to the exclusion of others.

Over the past two days, we have heard an overwhelming call for a fundamental reform of the Council. All that remains is for us to commit to implementing decision 62/557, unanimously endorsed on 15 September by this Assembly. Through that watershed decision, the general membership of the United Nations decided to move away from a process of endless consultations on the issue of the reform of the Council and to commence meaningful, direct intergovernmental negotiations in informal plenary of the General Assembly during its sixty-third session, but not later than 28 February 2009.

As you indicated, Sir, in your statement of 11 November, there is a need to implement that decision in letter and spirit. Decision 62/557 indicates that positions and proposals of Member States, regional groups and other Member State groupings shall form the basis for the intergovernmental negotiations. We believe that the positions of Member States, regional groupings and other Member State groupings are quite clear and have been presented over and over again. The basis, therefore, for starting intergovernmental negotiations does exist.

As for my delegation, we are on record as supporting the African position as espoused in the Ezulwini consensus. We also have a clear African Union Summit mandate to participate in the forthcoming intergovernmental negotiations on the basis of the Ezulwini Consensus and Sirte Declaration. We should also proceed with the negotiations by clustering issues, as indicated in paragraph (e) (ii) of

decision 62/557, and focus on the following five key issues: categories of membership; the question of the veto; regional representation; size of an enlarged Council, and working methods of the Council, as well as the relationship between the Council and the General Assembly.

South Africa would have no problem with 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 meeting as many times as it wishes to consult on all matters related to the reform of the Security Council. In fact, paragraph (f) of the decision decides that the Open-ended Working Group should continue to exert efforts during the present session of the General Assembly aimed at achieving general agreement among Member States.

However, looking at the substance of the issues proposed for discussion, my delegation is concerned that it seems that we again want to rehash and repeat the same consultative discussions the Open-ended Working Group has had over the past 15 years, which unfortunately have not been very helpful in moving the process of the reform forward. Decision 62/557 was significant, as it moved the process away from ongoing consultations and ushered us into direct meaningful intergovernmental negotiations. We cannot reopen, renegotiate or amend that decision in any way. All Member States signed up to that decision unanimously, as is, and it must now be implemented in letter and spirit, as is.

In conclusion, South Africa strongly urges you, Sir, to convene the informal plenary of the General Assembly to commence intergovernmental negotiations as soon as it is possible. We shall participate in this process in good faith, with high expectations, in the hope that we can make progress on the issue of reform of the Security Council during the present session.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.