United Nations A/68/PV.56

General Assembly
Sixty-eighth session

Official Records

56th plenary meeting
Thursday, 21 November 2013, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Ashe . . . . . (Antigua and Barbuda)

In the absence of the President, Mrs. Miculescu (Romania), Vice-President, took the Chair.

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

Agenda item 29 (*continued*)

Report of the Security Council

Report of the Security Council (A/68/2)

The Acting President: The General Assembly will resume its consideration of agenda item 29, "Report of the Security Council", in order to further deliberate on the report of the Council, circulated in document A/68/2, in accordance with the decision taken at its 49th plenary meeting, on 8 November 2013.

Members will recall that the Assembly considered agenda item 29 jointly with agenda item 123, "Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters", at its 46th to 49th plenary meetings, on 7 and 8 November.

Mr. Seger (Switzerland): I am speaking in my capacity as the coordinator of the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency (ACT) group, a cross-regional group of 22 States. ACT is composed of Austria, Chile, Costa Rica, Estonia, Finland, Gabon, Hungary, Ireland, Jordan, Liechtenstein, Maldives, New Zealand, Norway, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Portugal, Saudi Arabia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, Tanzania and Uruguay.

ACT was launched in May 2013 as a new initiative to improve the working methods of the Security Council. The name is an acronym that stands for Accountability, Coherence and Transparency, which represent our common conviction that those qualities are needed in all of the Security Council's activities. Another important element to mention is that ACT takes no position on the reform, composition or enlargement of the Council and will remain outside that process. We seek improvement of the Council's work in its current status.

The annual report of the Security Council to the General Assembly is the highest expression of the relationship between those two principal organs of the United Nations. In that regard, we value very much this opportunity to interact with the President of the Security Council, whom we thank for the introduction of the report (see A/68/PV.46).

This is a key moment with respect to the interaction between the General Assembly and the Security Council — an important point of reflection on what lies behind us, but also maybe on what lies ahead. We therefore welcome this opportunity to further consider the report under agenda item 29, in accordance with the decision taken in early November.

As during most of the debates in previous years, the introduction of the annual report of the Security Council has been scheduled jointly with another important debate, that concerning the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters. Both items are, no doubt, very important, as the debate on 7 and 8 November has shown (see A/68/PV.46-A/68/PV.49). However, we believe that both items deserve the Assembly's full attention.

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Moreover, it is crucial that Member States be able to examine the content of the annual report in depth before commenting on it. This year, the Security Council adopted the document on 30 October, only a week before the scheduled debate. I think we should give more time to the Member States between the adoption of the report and the general debate in the General Assembly to analyse the contents of the report and digest them.

In recent years, the preparation of the annual report by the Security Council has been the object of some improvements, which are reflected in, for instance, note S/2010/507, which we appreciate. We welcome also note S/2012/922, adopted last December, which included important measures regarding the procedures for the preparation and adoption of the report. Although there is always room for improvement, we call first and foremost for the full implementation of the measures already agreed by the Council in these presidential notes.

ACT is convinced that the whole reporting process, from its inception to its introduction in the General Assembly, could benefit from increased interactivity with the wider membership through a more transparent and participatory exercise, more responsive to relevant concerns and overall interest of the general membership in having access to substantive and analytical information concerning the Council's work. ACT has several concrete suggestions in that regard. I shall start with the preparation phase of the annual report.

There are the monthly assessments, which are fundamental tools that contribute to the quality of the report, in particular when drafting its introduction; hence the importance for each Council presidency to ensure a more substantive and analytical assessment. In that context, I would like to make three points.

First, monthly assessments can indeed serve to express informed and critical views on the Council's work and provide more analytical material, to reflect on the results achieved, as well as on its shortcomings. According to note S/2012/922, those assessments should be issued soon after the end of presidencies in order to enhance their utility to the broader membership.

Secondly, monthly assessments are also, together with wrap-up sessions and end-of-presidency informal briefings, very useful tools to enhance transparency. Wrap-ups and informal briefings can also help presidencies in preparing their monthly assessments. Thirdly, on that point, monthly assessments should also be compiled to form an integral part of the annual report — not only by way of a document reference number — thus providing a useful narrative of the month-by-month evolution of the Council's work.

ACT welcomes the information on the work of the Council's subsidiary bodies, including, for example, the Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions, and on progress made with regard to the Council's working methods. However, further efforts should be made towards more analytical and substantive information regarding the work of all of those bodies. Chairpersons of subsidiary bodies could play an important role in that regard by preparing annual assessments on the work of those bodies, drawing on the example of monthly assessments already produced by the presidencies. Those assessments could also be added to the annual report.

Moreover, efforts should be made to enable an exchange of views and engagement with the general membership during the preparation phase. Some presidencies have done that in the past. In line with note S/2012/922, we encourage other presidencies in charge of preparing the draft introduction to the report to organize interactive exchanges of view with the wider membership through, for instance, Arria Formula or other formats. Such a practice — which unfortunately has not been regularly followed — would contribute to greater involvement of the broader membership in Security Council matters and to the overall transparency of the Council's work.

Concerning the adoption of the report, ACT encourages Council members to use the public-meeting format when the annual report is adopted to comment on the work of the Council for the period covered by the report. That is nothing new; it has already been foreseen in note S/2010/507 but, to our disappointment, the proposal has never been implemented. Implementing that measure would not only contribute to enhancing the Council's transparency, but would also provide useful inputs to the subsequent debate in the General Assembly when the annual report is discussed.

Finally, regarding today's debate and in line with my earlier comments, ACT suggests that in future, the agenda items "Report of the Security Council" and "Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters" be debated separately, as they represent, in our view, two separate matters. Moreover, we hope that

sufficient time will be afforded between the adoption of the report and the debate in the General Assembly, as I noted in my introduction.

This debate provides an opportunity for the wider membership to comment to the President of the Security Council on the annual report and to suggest concrete measures for improvement. We hope that the Council and its members will not only hear what we are saying here, but will also listen to what we are saying and start improving the methodology in future.

ACT, for its part, will constructively contribute to enhancing the transparency, accountability and coherence of the Security Council — the very essence of what we are discussuing here today.

Mr. Mukerji (India): I thank the President for organizing this meeting on the report of the Security Council for the period 1 August 2012 to 31 July 2013 (A/68/2).

At the outset, I would like to thank Ambassador Samantha Power and the United States delegation for their efforts in preparing the introduction to the report. We also thank Ambassador Liu Jieyi and the Chinese delegation for introducing the report (see A/68/PV.46). In November 2012, as President of the Security Council, India had the honour of introducing the report (see A/67/PV.38).

We note that the annual report of the Security Council is an important means for facilitating interaction between the most representative organ of the United Nations — the Assembly — and its most empowered one, namely, the Council. The Charter of the United Nations itself bestows on the report a profound gravitas, as is evident from the fact that there exists a separate provision mandating such a report, rather than clubbing it with the provision for reports from other United Nations bodies.

The membership of the General Assembly has repeatedly requested that this report be more analytical and incisive, rather than being a mere narration of events. The report before us, however, continues to be a statistical compilation of events and a listing of meetings and outcome documents. That leaves us with no other option but to recognize that the real solution — not only for a more credible, legitimate and representative Security Council, but even for a far more thorough report — lies in the comprehensive reform of the Council, including expansion in both the permanent and non-permanent categories and improvement in its working methods.

Much of the Council's efforts and activities during the year centred around Africa, including the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali and Somalia. The period covered by the report saw the Council endorsing the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region, signed in Addis Ababa on 24 February. The Council also authorized the deployment of an intervention brigade for the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) to carry out robust activities to take on armed groups, as described on page 17 of the report. As a major troop-contributing country and one with a substantial presence in MONUSCO, I would like to underscore the need for an objective assessment of the implications of such robust mandates for the impartial nature of United Nations peacekeeping.

It is important to remember that impartiality and neutrality are key principles for ensuring the acceptability of United Nations peacekeepers and their safety and security. In the long term, robust mandates could lead to further threats to the maintenance of international peace and security. The implication of having intervention and traditional peacekeeping units under one command, with no differentiation in physical appearance, is that that could invite attacks on United Nations peacekeepers.

A related issue is how to deter threats to United Nations peacekeepers from non-Government forces or militias. We note that the Council has asked for the apprehension of those responsible for killing United Nations peacekeepers, but not much has happened to ensure that so far, either in the Democratic Republic of the Congo or in South Sudan. We would ask the Council to refer to pages 17 and 34 of its report in that context. We call on the Council to take visible steps to prosecute and bring to justice those who attack United Nations peacekeepers, within a determined time frame. The Council has to use its authority to effectively deter non-Government forces or militias, which threaten both United Nations peacekeepers and, more importantly, the civilians whom the peacekeepers are protecting.

Robust mandates may also pose issues related to the legal immunity from prosecution of United Nations peacekeepers. It is imperative to ensure their immunity

from prosecution in order to ensure that they discharge their duty smoothly, especially at a time when peacekeepers are oriented, before deployment, on the various dimensions of international humanitarian law applicable to United Nations peacekeeping operations.

In operations where peacekeepers are deployed without a robust mandate, such as the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force, the threats to United Nations personnel mentioned on page 49 of the report must be taken seriously. All Member States must be cognizant of their responsibility under the Charter of the United Nations to protect and uphold the integrity of United Nations peacekeeping operations. They must investigate and prosecute those who blatantly threaten United Nations personnel, especially if the sanctity of the Security Council is to be maintained.

I am happy that yesterday, Member States adopted a resolution on Afghanistan in the General Assembly, which we sponsored (resolution 68/11). India expressed its full support for an Afghan-led, Afghan-owned and Afghan-managed process of peace and reconciliation.

On the issue of counter-terrorism, we recall that the Security Council has endorsed a zero-tolerance policy for terrorism. That implies that no cause or grievance whatsoever, including so-called root causes, can be used to justify terrorism. India strongly supports all efforts that strengthen international and regional cooperation in the fight against terrorism, especially within the purview of the United Nations. In that context, the challenges facing the international community continue to grow, as set out on pages 65 and 66 of the report of the Security Council before us.

I cannot conclude without bringing up an issue that has an umbilical relationship to the agenda item of today's debate, that is, the reform of the Security Council. I would like to highlight in particular two key issues in that regard for members' consideration. First, the process of bringing about Security Council reform cannot be seen as an exercise that continues ad infinitum. A results-based timeline is imperative. Those representatives who request that an artificial timeline not be imposed may be advised to desist from inflicting artificial delays on the process.

The debate convened by the President on 7 and 8 November included three important statistics, which should be borne in mind as the way forward is planned. First, of the nearly 90 countries whose representatives took the floor, 58 individual countries asked for an expansion of both membership categories. Secondly, 26 individual Member States explicitly asked for concrete outcomes by 2015. Thirdly, 23 individual delegations supported commencing the intergovernmental negotiations on the basis of text-based negotiations, as a result of the President's initiative. If we were to consider the numbers as represented by their groups, there would be twice as many countries.

I therefore urge the President to act on that collective call made by such a large number of States from this rostrum. He has the full support of the overwhelming majority of the Assembly to steer his own initiative towards its logical conclusion and to commence the intergovernmental negotiations immediately on the basis of a text.

Secondly, even as we embark on marking the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations and on crafting a post-2015 development agenda, it is important that we deliver on the most important unfinished mandate arising from 2005 World Summit, that is, the early reforms of the Security Council. Indeed, while all other mandates agreed at the World Summit have been fulfilled or continue as works in progress, that mandate alone remains a work without any progress as it is still stuck where it was in 2005. That is an unacceptable interpretation of the "early reforms" unanimously agreed to by all Members of the United Nations eight years ago.

Mr. Logar (Slovenia): Slovenia, as a member of the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency group, aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier by the Permanent Representative of Switzerland on behalf of the group.

I would like to reiterate my appreciation to the Permanent Representative of China for introducing the report of the Security Council (A/68/2) to the General Assembly on 7 November (see A/68/PV.46), and to the United States Mission for preparing this year's report.

We are fully aware of the highly complex topics and relations that the Security Council has tried to address and mitigate in the period concerned, and are grateful for the dedicated efforts of Member States. However, we regret that, on some occasions, the Council has not been able to deliver on time or even at all.

While respecting the responsibilities of the principal organs of the United Nations, we believe that there is a need for the Council also to regularly address

issues that have potential security implications, such as those connected with climate change or human security.

The work of the Security Council, as the body entrusted with the maintenance of international peace and security, should be based on transparent, accountable and coherent procedures, address the concerns of the entire international community and involve all States Members of the United Nations.

The number of decisions taken by the Council is increasing. We would very much like to encourage the Council to incorporate in each meeting and decision a concrete plan of implementation that could be reviewed on occasions such as today's meeting.

We should bear in mind that the decisions taken by the Council have an effect on all of us. The privilege of being a member of the Council also comes with the responsibility to do one's utmost for the preservation of international peace and security. However, all Member States nevertheless have a responsibility to support the Council and to hold it accountable for the consistent and effective implementation of its decisions.

We would like to see the more transparent preparation of a comprehensive report of the work of the Security Council. That report serves as a source of information with regard to the work of the Council and the major threats to international peace and security. As some countries pointed out in the debate on Security Council reform two weeks ago (see A/68/PV.47), the report does not always fully reflect the process that has led to the adoption of a certain resolution or decision. The Security Council should therefore enable the entire membership to acquire relevant information about its activities and to participate meaningfully in its work.

The improvement of some of the Council's working methods, the need for which has already been pointed out in previous debates, would also serve as a tool to assess the work of the Council. Informal briefings and wrap-up meetings at the end of each month should be accompanied by written monthly assessments, which should form an integral part of the final report. We would like to encourage presidencies to promptly prepare their monthly assessments since, to date, only six such assessments have been published this year.

We also believe that Member States should be involved in consultations and the drafting of decisions and the report itself in a more transparent manner. We believe it important that future reports also reflect the views and ideas put forward by States not members of the Council in open debates and other public meetings. Such debates, which allow interaction with the entire United Nations membership, have already become an important instrument for the increased transparency and coherence of the Council, and their minutes should therefore form part of the report.

Let me conclude by saying that Slovenia welcomes the debates on the Council's working methods and its reform that have taken place in the past few weeks. We will continue to contribute to the work of the Council and its main goal of maintaining international peace and security and to participate in the valuable dialogue among Member States.

Mr. Körösi (Hungary): I thank the President for convening this debate on the annual report of the Security Council (A/68/2).

Hungary, as a member of the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency group, aligns itself with the statement made earlier on the group's behalf by the representative of Switzerland.

In our national statement, I will focus on the issue of working methods and examine how interactions with the general United Nations membership and its views on related issues are reflected in the report.

Turning to the specific contents of the report, it is unfortunate that neither the issue of the working methods nor the views of the general membership seem to be adequately reflected. The narrative offers little information on the plenary debate; in fact, it mentions only one of the five debates held. Part VI, on the subsidiary bodies, provides scant information on the otherwise productive work of the Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions. We receive no insight into the proposals discussed, their follow-up or the future direction of work. That may contribute to the feeling of lack of transparency — and I fully agree with what was said by my Slovenian colleague a short while ago.

Another major concern lies in the fact that the views and proposals of the general membership on working methods receive no acknowledgment in the report or in the documents linked in the repeort. They are reflected neither in the account of the plenary debate nor in the discussion of the Informal Working Group. The notes on the five debates do not give justice to the richness of those interactions, as they only indicate that "members

of the Security Council had an exchange of views". The Council's follow-up on those proposals made by the general membership seems painfully lacking.

When taking a closer look at the issue of accountability in the Council's work for major international crimes, we find a similar inadequacy in the report. The open debates on questions such as the protection of civilians and on the relationship between the Council and the International Criminal Court offered the Council an abundance of proposals from the broader membership on how to better address the issue of accountability. The report reflects none of them.

On the Council's activities related to the Syrian conflict, the narrative fails to make any reference to the letter that was sent by 57 Member States in January, requesting the Council to refer the Syrian situation to the International Criminal Court. The letter is only listed under the documentation section as one of the many documents related to the Syrian conflict.

Some proposals of the five permanent members do not fare better either. There is no reference to the proposal of major relevance, made by France already in 2012, that the permanent members of the Council should voluntarily refrain from using their veto power in situations of mass atrocities. The proposal also received major support from the broader membership.

Hungary believes that any and every proposal that brings the Council closer to its ultimate raison d'être, namely, the fulfilment of its responsibilities, merits serious consideration, and therefore should be included in the Council's report. Those examples point to certain shortcomings that can be tackled only through changes in the working methods of the Council as well as in the structure and content of the report.

We call call on the Security Council to provide a better reflection of the contributions to its work by the broader membership, especially in cases where the Council itself requested such contributions. Inviting Member States to participate in open debates cannot generate any progress or make any real difference if the Council gives no substantial consideration to their views by following up on them transparently and reflecting them in its annual report. We sincerely hope that the next year's report will include more of those essential elements.

Mr. Donoghue (Ireland): I welcome the opportunity provided today to Member States to comment on the work of the Security Council during the period covered by the annual report (A/68/2). It is valuable to have a context such as this in which, leaving aside the separate issues relating to the reform and composition of the Security Council, we can take stock of the work done by the Council over a given period and offer some general comments and reflections. My remarks will touch also on the interaction between the Council and the wider membership and ways in which that can be further developed and strengthened.

My delegation aligns itself, at the outset, with the statement delivered by the representative of Switzerland on behalf of the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency group, which is, as members know, a cross-regional grouping of 22 Member States that was established earlier this year to press for greater Accountability, Coherence and Transparency in the work of the Security Council.

In the annual report we are considering today, there are encouraging indications of growing transparency. For example, in the period under review, a very high percentage of the Council's formal meetings — 174 out of 195 — were held in public. That is a welcome trend.

I am encouraged also by the Council's readiness to schedule, at regular intervals, thematic debates that are open to the membership as a whole. That recognizes the cross-cutting and interlinked nature of many of the challenges arising on the Council's agenda. It recognizes that the maintenance of peace and security in today's world is a complex and multidimensional responsibility and that the Council would benefit from dialogue and interaction across the Organization in shaping its response to those challenges.

One would wish, however, for greater interactivity in the exchanges. I would value revised arrangements for the thematic debates, which would be conducive to higher-level participation on the part of Council members and a better and more direct dialogue between members and non-members on the issues being discussed. It should be possible to look at the current arrangements and to see how they might be improved — for example, through an agreement by all participants that time limits for interventions would be strictly observed. With a view to developing interactivity, I trust also that the Council President will report to Council members on the points and observations made in today's debate and that this will serve as a basis for further improvement in our cooperation.

The annual report before us provides abundant material on the detailed handling of individual items on the Council's agenda. That is valuable and makes an important contribution to transparency. In our view, however, the value of the material would be enhanced by occasional reflections on the effectiveness or impact of specific actions taken by the Council. I mean that in the most positive sense.

In the report before the Assembly, there are several good examples of issues where decisive action by the Council produced important breakthroughs. In Mali, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Somalia, the Council acted swiftly and to good effect. Yet, although widely acknowledged, those achievements are not captured clearly in the report.

It should also be possible to give a fuller account of individual Council discussions, highlighting the operational conclusions reached while at the same time being a little more open than hitherto about the ebb and flow of the debate.

In general, my delegation sees value in introducing an element of evaluation in relation to key areas of the Council's work, both in the annual reports and in the monthly assessments. It would seem that, under the existing rules, some discretion is available to the Secretariat in that respect.

Some reflection on overall priority-setting during a given period, or on issues such as the balance in the Council's work between individual conflicts and cross-cutting thematic work or new trends in terms of challenges to peace and security, would also be of interest.

The work of the Council relating to the anticipation and prevention of conflict during the period under review could also be brought out with greater clarity.

We very much welcome the successive notes by the President of the Security Council that have been issued regarding measures to improve the working methods of the Council. For example, in the note contained in document S/2012/922, of 12 December 2012, the Council proposed interactive informal exchanges of views with the wider membership on the draft annual report, and the inclusion of more substantive information on the Council's work and on measures to improve its working methods. We very much welcome those proposals and hope that they will be acted upon speedily.

The Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions, chaired by Portugal in 2012 and by Argentina this year, deserves particular commendation for the role it is playing. Further to the note by the President contained in document S/2013/515, of 28 August 2013, we hope that all of the Council's subsidiary bodies will seek to enhance the transparency of their activities and the interactivity of their engagement with non-members of the Council.

Ireland also wishes to acknowledge the steady progress being made by the Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations, which was chaired by Morocco last year and by Pakistan this year. The Working Group, which deals with a critically important part of the Security Council's responsibilities, has addressed key questions such as inter-mission cooperation, the African Union Mission to Somalia, the safety and security of United Nations peacekeepers and the use of modern technology in peacekeeping. We welcome the note by the President of the Council contained in document S/2013/630, of 28 October 2013. When implemented in full, it will go a significant way towards enhancing the quality of the Council's interaction and consultation with troop and police contributors.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate my delegation's thanks for the opportunity afforded to comment on this annual report from the Security Council. We want to assist in the collective task of ensuring that the Council lives up fully to the vital leadership role conferred upon it. We welcome this opportunity to explore how the dialogue between the Council and the wider membership can be deepened and improved to the benefit of the Organization as a whole and the peoples it represents.

Mr. Patriota (Brazil): Let me start by thanking once more the Permanent Representative of China, Ambassador Liu Jieyi, for introducing the annual report of the Security Council (A/68/2) (see A/68/PV.46), and the United States delegation for drafting its introduction.

The annual report being discussed today is an attempt to provide a fairly comprehensive account of the Council's activities. As Brazil has underlined on previous occasions, we understand that a large number of countries are very interested in being better informed about the Council's deliberations. It is worth recalling that the Council acts on behalf of the entire membership, and its decisions, albeit taken in a room

with only 15 seats, are binding on all 193 Member States. In that sense, we believe that it is crucial to make that body more transparent and more accountable to the General Assembly, and thereby to the broader membership.

As mentioned at last month's open debate on the Security Council's working methods (see S/PV.7052), Brazil understands that the holding of public debates, wrap-up meetings, consultations with troop- and police-contributing countries, field missions and the outreach to country-specific configurations of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) are important attempts to promote inclusiveness and enhance the effectiveness of the Council's decisions. We welcome the intervention by the Permanent Representative of Switzerland on behalf of the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency group, which included positive suggestions on how to enhance transparency and working methods.

Allow me to make a few remarks on the work undertaken by the Council during the period covered by the report.

Brazil takes note with satisfaction of the recent developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We are also pleased to see that progress has been made to implement a regional strategy in the Great Lakes region. We commend the efforts undertaken by United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its Intervention Brigade. At the same time, we would like to emphasize that the recent successes in the fight against armed groups is a consequence not only of a more robust approach to peacekeeping, but mainly of a strong commitment of the Great Lakes countries and the international community to address the roots of instability in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in the region through a political process.

In Haiti, the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) continues to pursue its calibrated, gradual and sustainable consolidation plan, further reducing its military footprint as the capacity of the Haitian National Police increases. On the other hand, the lack of progress on the political front, with unjustifiable delays in the holding of pending senatorial and local elections, remains a matter of concern. It is crucial that programmes of institutional consolidation and development be allowed to take off for the stability that MINUSTAH helped create to be sustainable.

We have seen important steps and initiatives from the Haitian Government to revitalize the country's economy and provide support for the poor. Such willingness to mobilize investment and promote reconstruction, with a focus on those in need, has yet to find its counterpart on the political track. We commend MINUSTAH for its intensive work on facilitating the political process through the good offices of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, as well as for its sustained support on the humanitarian and security front. Brazil will remain engaged in supporting Haiti's development and democratic consolidation.

Let me refer briefly to the situation in Guinea-Bissau, where the active engagement of the Security Council also remains crucial. The Council's press statement of 11 September (SC/11118) recognized some important developments, such as the formation of a more inclusive transitional Government, while reiterating its call for the holding of free and credible elections as soon as possible, and for inclusive dialogue towards consensus on key reforms to be undertaken in the coming years. A new date for elections has been set; donors, specially those from the region, have been forthcoming; and key preparations for elections, such as voter registration, are to begin soon. Yet important challenges remain, and strong international commitment will be needed throughout the process. The Council will again have an opportunity to review some of the developments next week, when it will hear from the Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ramos-Horta. As President of the Guinea Bissau country-specific configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, I look forward to a productive discussion and stand ready to engage with the Council and with configuration members on a comprehensive assessment of the role of the PBC and its future activities.

The tragic situation in Syria and the Council's inability to devise a timely strategy on the basis of the Geneva communiqué of 12 June 2012 (S/2012/522, annex) should give us pause for reflection. That state of affairs is seen by many as an illustration of the Council's current dysfunctionality. The Council's delay of 15 months to endorse the communiqué, finally reached with the adoption of Security Council resolution 2118 (2013) in October, was particularly detrimental. Had that endorsement been achieved earlier and the political process envisaged therein been carried out, many lives could have been saved and the death toll in the conflict could have been significantly less appalling.

Now that progress has been achieved on the chemical-weapons front, we should remain more directly aware that the vast majority of the 120,000 casualties were caused by conventional weapons. In that regard, the proliferation of conventional weapons in Syria remains a source of insecurity and instability that will continue to threaten the region even in post-conflict scenarios. How many more months will the Council need to adopt a common position against the increasing militarization of the crisis? The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, established by the Human Rights Council, has eloquently pointed out that the flow of arms increases the chances that they will be used to commit serious violations of human rights.

Despite the fact that in the period covered by the report the Council held a significant number of meetings on the Middle East, including the question of Palestine, its deliberations have had little influence on the ground. The Council, as the body entrusted with the maintenance of international peace and security, should do more to resolve the issue. Its silence as unilateral actions threaten to jeopardize the peace negotiations and make the two-State solution more elusive is deeply troubling. Brazil expects that the Council will play a leading role on the issue, including by avoiding outsourcing the responsibility for the resolution of the question without even insisting on regular briefings on the matter. Regular briefings by the Quartet to the Council would be a good start.

Over the past years, the Security Council has adopted several resolutions to curb the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, their means of delivery, as well as parts, components and related material and technology. Sanctions regimes were established to deal with breaches, by specific countries, of obligations on those matters. The Council also took a decisive step through Security Council resolution 2118 (2013), which we praise, to ensure the elimination of the Syrian programme of chemical arms. However, an imbalance persists between the attention the Council dedicates to non-proliferation vis-à-vis its dedication to disarmament, especially with regard to nuclear weapons.

We acknowledge the importance of the measures taken by the Council to avoid the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. We would expect the Security Council, in parallel, to deal more decisively with the threat posed by the very existence of such weapons to international peace and security, thus recognizing that non-proliferation and disarmament are mutually reinforcing.

The compliance deficit is particularly serious in the field of nuclear disarmament. As long as a limited group of countries possess nuclear weapons and resist implementing their commitments in that regard, there is a greater risk that other States and non-State actors may try to acquire or develop such weapons. Nuclear disarmament is an effective measure against nuclear proliferation.

It is our understanding that the Council could play an important role in the promotion of our shared goal of a world free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

As a final note, Brazil would like to highlight the fact that a considerable number, some 90 delegations, representing the views of more than two thirds of the membership, took the floor during the debate held on 7 and 8 November on Security Council reform, the vast majority of which clearly called for and expansion of the Council in both categories. That should be understood as a clear and compelling message from the wider membership on the need for an urgent and comprehensive reform of that body — a reform that would bring the Council in line with today's geopolitical realities and make it truly capable of addressing the challenges of the twenty-first century.

Mr. Wittig (Germany): The annual report of the Security Council (A/68/2) under discussion today covers a period during which my country was a member of the Council. Looking back, I will briefly touch upon three issues.

The first is the long deadlock in the Council over Syria. Not only did the three double vetoes have a terrible consequence for the Syrian people; more broadly, the failure by the Council to adequately respond to the bloodshed also raises the question of whether the Security Council as we see it today still able to effectively address current and future challenges.

The Syria deadlock has also served to shine a spotlight on the role of the veto. In that context, we very much appreciate the proposal made by France by which permanent members would refrain from using the veto in situations of atrocity crimes. That proposal deserves further discussion.

Secondly, the annual report also shows that the issues on the agenda of the Security Council have become increasingly complex, ranging from traditional issues such as peacekeeping, to cases of conflict prevention and peacebuilding. The Council also deserves credit for its actions in that regard, including its close engagement in the transition process in Yemen.

The Council has also come to address cross-cutting issues such as children in armed conflict, and new threats such as that of climate change. We hope that the Council will continue on that track in order to remain relevant and put to rest the criticism of encroachment, which we believe is unwarranted.

Lastly, I shall say a few words on the Council members' day-to-day work and the decision-making processes. It is fair to say that the Council has come a long way in improving its working methods. We tried to contribute our share. But more needs to be done. Two issues stand out in my view. The first is that of penholdership for Security Council resolutions, which is de facto monopolized by the permanent members. But all members of the Council are fully eligible to fulfil that function, and we believe that non-permanent members should also be given a fair chance to demonstrate their valuable contributions to the work of the Council. Similarly, greater transparency is needed when it comes to the distribution of the chairmanships of Council subsidiary organs — a process again dominated by the permanent five. Both issues were among those addressed to some extent in the various presidential notes adopted in recent years. We urge the permanent members to ensure that their commitments made in those notes are also translated into practice.

Mr. Sareer (Maldives): My delegation welcomes the report of the Security Council (A/68/2) and the ever-increasing attempts at transparency in its preparation and drafting. The Maldives furthermore welcomes this debate on agenda item 29, in a manner that is independent of the larger question of the Security Council's reform, composition and expansion.

While the Maldives hopes that tomorrow's Security Council will have an expanded membership and be more relevant and responsive to global needs, our focus today is on the present-day Security Council. The authority of the members of today's Council is derived from the Charter of the United Nations and the general membership. Its resolutions are binding upon all Member States and the Council is accountable to us, creating a compact between members and non-members of the Council. It is our hope that a longstanding tradition of isolation will give way to accountability, that future work will be coherent and integrated and that a culture of secrecy will give way to transparency.

It is in that spirit that the Maldives associates itself with the statement delivered by the Permanent Representative of Switzerland in his capacity as coordinator of the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency group.

A business-as-usual approach is no longer viable in today's world, and while comprehensive and substantial change will take time, today's Council has a responsibility to be more responsive to the United Nations general membership.

The immediate responsibility to act lies with current and future members of the Council. Those nations must take measures to ensure transparency in their work and facilitate greater understanding. The Maldives commends the practice of monthly wrap-up meetings conducted by the Council President. We encourage analytical and substantive monthly briefings that ensure the evolution of the Council's work and promotes progress across the tenures of its presidency.

As with the rotation of the presidency, the work of the Council is not restricted to permanent members, but rather to all members of the Council. The allocation of work must be inclusive and conducted in such a way as to draw upon the expertise of all Council members, lest the Council's legitimacy be undermined further.

The principal purpose of the United Nations is the maintenance of peace and security across the globe. The centrality of that principle lies with the Security Council. Its legitimacy, and by extension that of the Organization, can be maintained only through the elimination of mass atrocity crimes. The Maldives calls again today for the elective renunciation of a member's right of veto in the case of mass atrocities. It is the solemn duty of every Member State to protect those within its sovereign territory. Should any of us fail in that duty, it is the burden of the United Nations to safeguard its Charter and fulfil the purpose of the Organization.

It is the responsibility of the general membership to hold Council members to account, and that can be done only by casting aside the veil of ignorance that surrounds the work of the Council. Its methodologies

should facilitate greater understanding, and therefore greater accountability. The collective will of the membership should stimulate clarity.

It is the Maldives' hope that, even without comprehensive reform for tomorrow, today's Council can rise to the challenges of our time, within the existing frameworks.

Mr. Mamabolo (South Africa): My delegation wishes to thank you, Madam President, for convening this important meeting to reflect on the Security Council. We would also like to thank the Permanent Representative of China for introducing the annual report (A/68/2) covering the period from 1 August 2012 to 31 July 2013. In the same vein, we also thank the delegation of the United States, under the leadership of Ambassador Samantha Power, for preparing this report on behalf of the Security Council. The report before us presents a factual account of the work of the Council, and my delegation would like to express our appreciation for the efforts made by the Council in undertaking its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

My delegation has seen some progress in the Security Council in terms of increasing its focus on improving its working methods. It is worth noting that briefings to the general membership of the United Nations by incoming and outgoing Presidents of the Council are becoming standard practice. Those briefings have kept non-Council members abreast of developments in the Security Council and provided insight into how the Council is approaching various agenda items. We therefore encourage other Council members who have been reluctant to provide such briefings at the end of the month to make an effort.

We are particularly pleased that the Security Council has lately been placing strategic focus on the relationship between itself and regional and subregional organizations. We are encouraged that the annual consultative meetings between the Security Council and the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council have become more structured and effective. My delegation is further encouraged by the ongoing partnership and cooperation between the AU and the United Nations, as witnessed in the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur, the former African-led International Support Mission in Mali, the African Union Mission in Somalia and the Force Intervention Brigade of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. These practical examples are, of course, highly commendable efforts.

While my delegation appreciates those efforts, the current report is more chronological and descriptive and less analytical. An analytical report would be more beneficial, as it would provide better insight into the challenges that the Council is faced with in deliberating on various situations on its agenda, as reflected in its ability to resolve certain conflicts.

The elected members of the Council are confronted by numerous constraints resulting from the dominance of a particular select group. We remain concerned that the resolutions or decisions of the Council are often consulted upon by a particular select group and presented as final to elected members. While we support broad consultations by the Council, its decisions should be open to debate among all its members.

The situation of Palestine and the Western Sahara are but two clear examples of how narrow national interests can constrain the Council in the maintenance of international peace and security. In the case of the Western Sahara, we have witnessed how, through selective small groups, some that are not even members of the Council have greater influence over the text of resolutions than Council members themselves. The subsequent weakening of the text of the relevant annual resolution has resulted in the Security Council not being able to implement its own decisions.

In conclusion, discussing the current report of the Security Council must not divert attention away from the genuine reform of the Security Council. The negotiations on reform of the Security Council have gone on too long, and their importance cannot be overemphasized.

Mr. Djokpe (Benin) (*spoke in French*): Ambassador Jean-Francis Régis Zinsou has asked me to make this statement on his behalf.

I would like to join those who have spoken before me in sincerely thanking the President of the General Assembly for having worked to convene this plenary meeting on the Security Council report to the General Assembly (A/68/2) and on the intergovernmental negotiations on the question of Security Council reform, in particular the question of equitable representation within that body and the increase in the number of its

members in both categories. I would like to congratulate the facilitator, Ambassador Zahir Tanin, Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, for the impressive work he has carried out despite the many obstacles he has faced. I welcome the well-deserved renewal of his mandate and take this opportunity to assure him of my delegation's full cooperation.

Benin aligns itself with the statements made by the representatives of Saint Kitts and Nevis on behalf of the L.69 group and of Sierra Leone on behalf of the African Group. I am pleased to make the following comments in my national capacity.

My delegation has examined with great interest the report of the Security Council on the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters, and we welcome its contents. I would like to congratulate in particular the President of the Security Council for November, Ambassador Liu Jieyi of China, for his outstanding introduction of the report.

We can never emphasize enough the fact that the reform of the United Nations, in particular that of the Security Council, is an absolute necessity in the light of the new realities of our planet's geopolitical configurations. As far as Africa in particular is concerned, this reform is necessary on several counts, given the many injustices that the continent has experienced and clearly continues to experience. Such reform will be justice served for the entire continent, which has for so long been plundered and that wishes to take an active part in deliberations on the major issues and problems of the day, which, to a large extent, of course, concern it. What is at stake here is no more and no less than a correction of the historical injustice done to Africa, which is the only continent that is not represented in the Council's permanent member category.

The expansion of the Council to enable, inter alia, the allocation of two permanent seats and at least two non-permanent seats to Africa would be far from a mistake; indeed, it is the minimum required. Such an expansion will allow the effectiveness of the Council's work in Africa to be enhanced. As highlighted by the President of the Council during his introduction of the Security Council report for the period from August 2012 and July 2013 (see A/68/PV.46), over 60 per cent of the Council's agenda concerns Africa. Half of the peacekeeping operations of the United Nations are currently deployed on the continent.

Benin wishes to reaffirm its adherence to the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration, which seek at least two permanent seats on the Council — with all the attendant prerogatives and privileges, including the right of veto, if that right continues to exist — and two non-permanent seats.

My delegation believes that after more than 20 years, the time has come to move forward with a concrete text in order to put an end to the continuing dead-end dialogue. It is time to begin creating a genuine text for negotiations that would enable us to better evaluate the various options in order to agree on how to move ahead. In that regard, my delegation welcomes the President's initiative in setting up an advisory group to help him to determine options for advancing the issue. We would like to see the group up and running as soon as possible in order to improve the compilation of the various proposals and produce a database conducive to leaving behind vague propositions and making progress. In my delegation's view, that structure would allow the intergovernmental negotiation process, in a framework of multilateral negotiations, to achieve the progress we all expect.

Benin remains solidly behind all initiatives aimed at accelerating action to reach a comprehensive, coherent reform of the Council, which can only help to improve global governance, as the 2005 World Summit demanded.

The Acting President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 29.

The meeting rose at 11 a.m.