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General Assembly

Sixty-third session

Official Records

53rd plenary meeting
Tuesday, 18 November 2008, 10 a.m.
New York

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

In the absence of the President, Mr. Wolfe (Jamaica), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Agenda item 48

Follow-up to and implementation of the outcome of the 2002 International Conference on Financing for Development and the preparation of the 2008 Review Conference

Report of the Second Committee (A/63/413)

The Acting President: If there is no proposal under rule 66 of the rules of procedure, may I take it that the General Assembly decides not to discuss the report of the Second Committee that is before the Assembly today?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: Statements will therefore be limited to explanations of vote. The positions of delegations regarding the recommendations of the Second Committee have been made clear in the Committee and are reflected in the relevant official records.

May I remind members that in accordance with General Assembly decision 34/401, a delegation should, as far as possible, explain its vote only once, that is, either in the Committee or in the plenary meeting, unless that delegation's vote in plenary meeting is different from its vote in the Committee. Also, explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Before we begin to take action on the recommendations contained in the report of the Second Committee, I should like to advise representatives that we are going to proceed to take a decision in the same manner as was done in the Committee.

The Assembly has before it five draft decisions recommended by the Second Committee in paragraph 29 of its report. The Assembly will now take action on the five draft decisions one by one. After all the decisions have been taken, representatives will again have an opportunity to explain their vote or position.

We turn first to draft decision I, entitled "Arrangements and organization of work of the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus (Doha, 29 November-2 December 2008)". The Second Committee adopted draft decision I. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

Draft decision I was adopted (decision 63/509).

The Acting President: Draft decision II is entitled "Provisional rules of procedure for the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus (Doha, 29 November-2 December 2008)". The Second Committee adopted draft decision II. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

Draft decision II was adopted (decision 63/510).

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

08-60760 (E)

The Acting President: Draft decision III is entitled "Provisional agenda for the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus (Doha, 29 November-2 December 2008)". The Second Committee adopted draft decision III. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

Draft decision III was adopted (decision 63/511).

The Acting President: Draft decision IV is entitled "Accreditation of intergovernmental organizations to the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus (Doha, 29 November-2 December 2008)". The Second Committee adopted draft decision IV. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

Draft decision IV was adopted (decision 63/512).

The Acting President: Draft decision V is entitled "Accreditation of non-governmental organizations to the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus (Doha, 29 November-2 December 2008)". The Second Committee adopted draft decision V. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

Draft decision V was adopted (decision 63/513).

The Acting President: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 48.

Agenda item 114 (*continued*)

Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations

(l) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union

Draft resolution (A/63/L.26)

The Acting President: Members will recall that the Assembly held its debate on agenda item 114 and its sub-items (a) to (u) at its 36th and 37th plenary meetings, on 3 November 2008.

I now give the floor to the representative of Namibia to introduce draft resolution A/63/L.26.

Mr. Mbuende (Namibia): It is an honour for Namibia, the country holding the presidency of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), to introduce to the Assembly draft resolution A/63/L.26 entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union".

The draft resolution highlights the important role world parliaments are playing in international affairs, as well as in the work of the United Nations. Special attention is given to the cooperation between the United Nations and the IPU for the promotion and protection of peace and security, conflict prevention, gender and human rights, good governance and promotion of democracy, and of social and economic development.

In order to bridge the implementation gap of various United Nations decisions and resolutions and to ensure greater democratization of the United Nations system, it is important to engage more closely with national parliaments and parliamentarians all over the world. Such engagement would provide a better understanding of parliamentarians on the importance of translating international commitments into national legislation and policies.

Namibia would like to appeal to those Member States that have not sponsored this important draft resolution to do so. We hope this draft resolution will be adopted by consensus.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/63/L.26. I wish to advise the General Assembly that the following are additional sponsors of the draft resolution: Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Costa Rica, Croatia, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Iceland, Indonesia, Ireland, Japan, Kuwait, Lithuania, Malta, Mexico, Monaco, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Panama, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, the Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation, Rwanda, San Marino, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Turkey, Ukraine and Yemen.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/63/L.26. May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt A/63/L.26?

Draft resolution A/63/L.26 was adopted (resolution 63/24).

The Acting President: I give the floor to the representative of Pakistan.

Mr. Haroon (Pakistan): My delegation had wished to raise a point in connection with draft resolution A/63/L.26; unfortunately, Sir, you did not see me ask for the floor in time.

In operative paragraph 4 of the draft resolution — and this is a minor addition from the developing countries' point of view — we would have requested the insertion of the phrase "capacity-building, development", after the words "democratic governance".

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (1) of agenda item 114?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: Before proceeding to the next agenda item, I would like to appeal to those Member States intending to submit draft resolutions on the remaining sub-items to do so as soon as possible.

Agenda item 102

Notification by the Secretary-General under Article 12, Paragraph 2 of the Charter of the United Nations

Note by the Secretary-General (A/63/300)

The Acting President: As members are aware, in accordance with the provisions of Article 12, paragraph 2, of the Charter of the United Nations, and with the consent of the Security Council, the Secretary-General is mandated to notify the General Assembly of matters relative to the maintenance of international peace and security that are being dealt with by the Security Council and of matters with which the Council has ceased to deal.

In this connection, the General Assembly has before it a note by the Secretary-General issued as document A/63/300.

May I take it that the Assembly takes note of that document?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 102?

It was so decided.

Agenda items 9 and 111

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

The Acting President: I shall now read out the following on behalf of the President of the General Assembly:

"As members know, this summer the historic renovation of the United Nations building got under way under the Capital Master Plan. Asbestos, poor lighting, faulty ventilation, leaky roofs, inadequate security and dated decor characterize the building.

"Just like the building, the institutions are also in desperate need of an overhaul — that is the real master plan. Today, we don hard hats and gleaming new shovels — I am ready to break ground. We are all ready to break ground. We are ready to assume our responsibilities and make the most out of our historic opportunity to democratize the Security Council.

"At the 2005 World Summit, our leaders voiced support for, and I quote:

> 'early reform of the Security Council — an essential element of our overall effort to reform the United Nations — in order to make it more broadly representative, efficient and transparent and thus to further enhance its effectiveness and the legitimacy and implementation of its decisions.' (*resolution 60/1, para. 153*)

"Our leaders thus already spelled out what the objective of Security Council reform is. What they did not do, of course, was to define 'early reform'. However, it would seem safe to say that they did not mean to see another World Summit pass us by with the status quo intact. That is why we must move swiftly to bring out the hammer and nails and rebuild the horseshoe table. The twenty-first century does not require a horseshoe table, but a circle-shaped one, with room for extra seats. We must come full circle, realizing our founders' vision of a Council with the legitimacy to act on behalf of all Member States, in accordance with Article 24 of the Charter.

"Thanks to the moral courage and diplomatic skills of many great men and women, many of them here in the room, we are in an excellent position to make change happen.

"In the final days of the sixty-second session, members decided to take a decisive step towards Security Council reform by launching intergovernmental negotiations during the sixty-third session. Making the most out of that achievement would be a centrepiece of any subsequent General Assembly presidency. However, it places a special responsibility on a transformational presidency like mine — a presidency built around the imperative of a more democratic United Nations, where every country counts. Members can count on me and also count on Ambassador Tanin, whose appointment as Vice-Chairman of the Open-Ended Working Group and as Chairman of the upcoming intergovernmental negotiations was universally applauded. Members can count on us to work our hearts out.

"Each and every one of us stands to gain. Peace and security cannot be maintained by a Security Council that is out of date and out of touch. Let our reform effort therefore not run out of time. A better Council cannot wait until tomorrow, if we want to have a better tomorrow.

"So here we are today, poised for progress. The platform for progress is decision 62/557. This decision is the ground beneath our feet and, as I have stressed both informally and formally, I intend to implement it both in letter and in spirit. That is why I guarantee the Open-Ended Working Group the opportunity to contribute to the upcoming intergovernmental negotiations in a positive way and help pave the way towards them. That effort is already well underway, with meetings both last week and yesterday. To maximize the chances of success, I will shortly present a work plan for the Working Group. Above all, the plan will be characterized by ambition: ambition not to waste a single minute; ambition to, if possible, finish early, before the 1 February deadline.

"Whatever happens in the Working Group, the intergovernmental negotiations will start at the very latest on 28 February 2009. However, it is my firm belief that we must work as hard as possible to be able to start as early as possible.

"For this entire enterprise to prosper, one principle in particular should in my view be respected: we should not reinvent the wheel. Over the years, members, many of them personally, have been quite successful at paving the way towards the intergovernmental negotiations, culminating in decision 62/557. Standing on the shoulders of giants, we can deliver on its promise. I look forward to hearing the remarks of members, particularly on the plans to contribute to that endeavour, as I am sure members will to the best of their abilities.

"However, as long as the Council remains unreformed, we need to make an extra effort to hold it to account. Today, the General Assembly has that opportunity and I have encouraged Member States beforehand to use this debate especially to take advantage of that opportunity. Before us is the report of the Security Council. It is a factual account of the Council's work during the period just past: 219 formal meetings, 58 resolutions and 50 presidential statements. The report is full of such facts and figures on the Council's efforts to fulfil its mandate of maintaining international peace and security.

"At the end of last year's debate, President Kerim made the following observation:

> '... some serious concerns were expressed regarding the report itself, in particular the lack of comprehensive evaluation of the various deliberations of the Council. … [M]any participants in the debate stressed the importance that the report should in future be more analytical and substantive.' (*A/62/PV.51, p. 14*)

"It is my sincere hope that we will not let that hold us back in our debate today, either in our dialogue with the Council or in our evaluation of its work. If the report indeed lacks evaluation and analysis, then the Assembly should make its own. Nothing less is expected from a General Assembly that wants to hold its own within the United Nations — an Assembly that truly engages the Council at the same time as it engages in self-renewal.

> "Next to Security Council reform, this renaissance of the General Assembly constitutes another crucial component of that real master plan I mentioned at the outset of my statement: overhaul not only of the United Nations physical structure, but of its institutions as well; not of the exterior, but of the interior. Internal change is far more difficult to bring about than external change. The difference is like that between an open-heart operation and a facelift: the open-heart operation involves opening the chest. In other words, we face enormous resistance, but we can also expect much greater rewards: a world body with a new lease on life."

I now give the floor to the President of the Security Council, His Excellency Mr. Jorge Urbina, to introduce the report of the Security Council.

Mr. Urbina (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of all members of the Security Council, I would like to congratulate Father Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann on his election as President of the sixty-third session of the General Assembly. It is our sincere hope that, under his leadership and with his experience, we will be able to increase and enhance the cooperation between the Security Council and the General Assembly.

In my capacity as President of the Security Council for the month of November, it is my honour to introduce the annual report of the Council to the General Assembly, contained in document A/63/2. Before turning to the report, I should like, on behalf of the Council, to thank the delegation of Viet Nam for its efforts in the preparation and completion of this report. In particular, we recognize its initiative to convene an informal meeting with the Council's entire membership to discuss the best way to prepare the report, with a view to making it more analytical, balanced and substantive.

Over the past few years, the complexity and multidimensional character of the international situation have created an ever-increasing demand for United Nations activities in the areas of conflict prevention, mediation and resolution, as well as peacekeeping and peacebuilding activities. Against this backdrop, the Security Council has faced increasingly complex responsibilities in fulfilling its mandate of maintaining international peace and security.

In order to better reflect the fact that the role and activity of the Council have been extended in difficult circumstances, the quality of the annual report being submitted today to the General Assembly should be even more reliable in all aspects. We believe that the gradual improvements can not only improve the perception and contribution of States Members of the United Nations in general and other relevant parties interested in what the Council does, but that they can also enhance its authority and efficiency as it carries out its mandates.

I am particularly pleased to inform the Assembly that the Council is paying particular attention to requests from the membership regarding its working methods. There is still room for making improvements here, and we must do so in order to further the cause of transparency, access to the Council and accountability. However, on occasion it is sometimes easier to reach agreements than to explain how such agreements were actually reached. It would therefore be wise to consider in depth how much more we can and should expect from the report of the Security Council in terms of its analytic capability.

The report covers the Council's work during the period from 1 August 2007 to 31 July 2008. During this period, the Council adopted 58 resolutions and 50 presidential statements. It held 219 formal meetings, of which 191 were public. In addition, there were 18 meetings with troop-contributing countries. The Council also held 177 private consultations.

The introductory part of the report that we have prepared provides insights into the way in which the Council addressed a wide array of issues during the course of another year of intensive work, reflecting both the Council's achievements and situations and circumstances in which it was unable to take action. In every case, we have endeavoured to reflect the general views expressed by Council members.

With regard to developments in conflicts and disputes in Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East and the Balkans, the introduction elaborates on the regular briefings by the Secretariat, interventions by countries and parties concerned, the Council's communications with troop-contributing countries, and follow-up deliberations and actions of the Council to respond to situations under review.

A large part of the introduction is devoted to general issues, ranging from terrorism, the non-

proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the protection of civilians in armed conflict, children and armed conflict, and women and peace and security to the work of subsidiary organs of the Council, such as the sanctions Committees, the Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions and the Working Group of the Whole on United Nations Peacekeeping Operations. Coordination and cooperation with the other principal organs of the United Nations, as well as the evolving role of regional and subregional organizations, have also been highlighted as appropriate.

The body of the report is essentially a compilation of the documents considered or issued by the Council. These documents include a detailed account of the meetings held by the Council, the outcomes of those meetings when there were outcomes, and the documentation that served as a basis for meetings. It also details the list of issues that were brought to the attention of the Council but that were not discussed at meetings of the Council during the period covered in the report.

I would like to point out that the format of the report now before the General Assembly corresponds to the provisions included in the note by the President of the Security Council dated 19 July 2006 (S/2006/507), in order to ensure that the report prove more useful.

In conclusion, on behalf of all Security Council members, I thank the General Assembly for this opportunity to inform its members of the activities of the Council over the past year. I would also to thank, on behalf of the Council, the Secretary-General and Secretariat staff for their work, their invaluable support for the development of the Council's activities, and their professionalism in the discharge of their responsibilities enabling the Council to fulfil its mandate.

I would now like to make some comments in my capacity as the Permanent Representative of Costa Rica.

In the recent chronicles of the Assembly's history, I think that there are no precedents for a delegation as President-in-office of the Council speaking subsequently to make a comment on the annual report of the General Assembly in a national capacity.

We believe that, in so doing, we are doing something new in the context of our search to improve the working methods of the Council. We wish to innovate in a way that can turn what has always been a routine exercise into something more substantive. We trust that, in this way, we can make a contribution to the analysis of the work of the Council in the period under review.

For Costa Rica, a permanent member of this General Assembly, the introduction of the annual report of the Security Council to the Assembly should not be a mere exercise of rhetoric, nor should it become a mere statement of facts. A true consideration of the report requires an analytical and critical approach to the work of the Council in the period under review, in observation of its mandate and its organic relationship to the Assembly in accordance with the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations.

We believe that, despite the endeavours made and the desire to include in the introduction to the report both the achievements and the situations and circumstances in which the Council was unable to act, we agree with the assessment made by the Council itself to the effect that the report and its quality should improve even further. We wish to follow the good practice implemented by Viet Nam to hold consultations on the annual report with members in general, and we refer in particular to the meeting held to provide information on the preparation of the report as its presidency came to an end. We urge the States that will be entrusted with that task in the future to continue the improvement introduced by the delegation of Viet Nam.

We must acknowledge that the report just submitted by the Council continues to be limited and, in our judgement, descriptive in its approach. It does not lift the veil of opacity shrouding Council action in the majority of cases.

I should like to stress that it is important and appropriate that the report assess the Security Council's compliance or non-compliance with its Charter mandates. Specifically, I should like to highlight the Council's repeated non-compliance with a mandate as essential as that set out in Article 26, as we will have the opportunity to see during tomorrow's Council debate. Of all the Charter's Articles, including the 32 directly related to the Council, Article 26 has

had a special characteristic over the years: it has been a dead letter.

Although the Security Council must address situations representing threats to international peace and security, it has remained silent by failing to exercise its obligatory powers under Article 26 in the area of arms control and reduction. This repeated non-compliance over many years is related to a mandate that goes to the very heart of the Organization and represents, we believe, a shirking of duty. The present annual report, like previous ones, makes no reference whatsoever to the fact that the Council is unwilling or unable to carry out a mandate that is currently in force and is still not being fulfilled under Article 26 of the Charter.

Whereas Article 26 is not being implemented by the Council, Article 25 is not being complied with by various States that refuse to accept the obligations arising from Council decisions. It would appear that in a number of cases, given the Council's difficulties in ensuring compliance with its resolutions, we are witnessing the modification — and thus the undermining — of Article 25, whereby all States agreed to accept and implement Council decisions. That is particularly worrisome, because it involves obligations arising from resolutions adopted under Chapter VII. Therefore, since compliance with Article 25 is directly related to the Council's effectiveness, this is an issue that should be analysed in depth in the annual report.

Another Charter mandate, while of a more procedural nature, is related to the submission of special reports in accordance with Articles 15 and 24 — articles that also appear to have fallen into disuse. In this Organization, where reports on the most diverse subjects proliferate, we have been unable to systematize the submission of special reports on issues on the Council's agenda that thus merit such treatment. We believe that, in cases such as those involving the imposition of sanctions or other coercive measures or the adoption of measures for general implementation under Chapter VII — or even cases in which the Council cannot achieve the necessary consensus or where the threat of the veto exists — it is appropriate to submit special reports. In our view, during the period under review, cases such as Kosovo, Zimbabwe or the Oil-for-Food Programme, inter alia, would have merited the submission of special reports to the Assembly.

Costa Rica has been keen to seek correct implementation of the provisions set out in Articles 31 and 32 regarding participation by members of the General Assembly in Security Council debates when their interests are being affected or when they are parties to a dispute being considered by the Council. In that connection, we have insisted on speaking after the States that are participating pursuant to Articles 31 and 32, rather than before, as is the custom. We do not see the logic in taking a position and then listening to all the information and the positions that those most directly affected consider it necessary to share with the Council.

Although the report of the Council fails to assess the implementation of Articles 31 and 32, we congratulate the delegation of Belgium on having compiled information that has enabled us to see apparent improvement in that area. According to those data, during the second half of 2006, Council members spoke before invited States in 48.3 per cent of the meetings held. That percentage increased to 73 in 2007 and then fell to 26.5 in the first half of 2008. We hope that, with the assistance of all Council members, this volatile figure can be maintained at the latter lower number or further reduced.

In that connection, we also consider it appropriate to assess the implementation of rule 48 of the Security Council's provisional rules of procedure, which provides that "unless it decides otherwise, the Security Council shall meet in public". Once again, we are basing our position on information compiled by the Belgian delegation, which indicates that, while the Council met in private consultations 44 per cent of the time during the second half of 2006, that percentage increased slightly to 45.5 in 2007 and then fell to 41.4 in the first half of 2008. Although we recognize that not all Council deliberations can be held in public, we believe that private consultations should be the exception, not the rule.

Costa Rica sought to broaden the implementation of rule 48 on the basis of the principle of publicizing our Council presidency's programme of work. We express our appreciation for the support received through the implementation of that measure by various elected members, in particular Panama and South Africa. We hope that, through the implementation of this principle on publicity, those subsequently in the presidency of the Council will seek to consolidate the precedent.

I wish to refer briefly to the matter of Iraq. We would like to explain our position to the Assembly with regard to the oil-for-food programme, given that the majority of the Assembly is opposed to it and that it has not been clearly reflected in the report. Costa Rica is not opposed to closing the programme, but we think that the established rules should be followed in processing the pending letters of credit for payment, that is, documentation should be presented attesting that the services or products were really received by Iraq.

We are not willing to repeat the mistakes of the past made by the Committee established pursuant to Security Council resolution 661 (1990). Costa Rica has interrupted the no-objection procedure, through which an attempt was made to end the programme without the relevant documentation being required. We find such a blind conclusion of the programme inadmissible, particularly if we take into account the failures mentioned in the Volcker report with regard to the changes in prices and services. It is also inadmissible in the light of the fact that many of the companies that still have payments pending were expressly questioned in that report.

Given these doubts, Costa Rica has decided to maintain the hold. In August, we distributed a note asking the Council to coordinate with the Secretary-General in order to ensure that the conclusion of the oil-for-food programme would be carried out with all due prudence in order to avoid new criticism being levelled against the United Nations. That has been the sole motive guiding our actions. Shortly afterwards, we sent a second note to the Secretary-General requesting information on the companies and people with outstanding invoices to compare these lists with the annexes of the Volcker report. We are still waiting for a reply to that request.

Lastly, as an elected member of the Security Council, we would like to shoulder the commitment to bring to the Council's attention those improvements and suggestions that the Assembly recommends on the basis of its consideration of the annual report of the Council. I wish to express my thanks for the support that we have received and to reiterate our willingness to provide the Assembly with information we have on the Council's business.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Bagudu Hirse, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of Nigeria.

Mr. Hirse (Nigeria): On behalf of the delegation of Nigeria, I have the honour to express our gratitude to Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann for scheduling this General Assembly debate on the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters, pursuant to the decision of our leaders in September 2005.

It has always been the view of Nigeria that the reform of the United Nations would not be complete without a fundamental reform of and increase in the size and the composition of the Security Council to reflect the current global realities, thereby enabling the Council to gain in stature and credibility and ensuring that its decisions attract the wider support of the international community.

Africa's position on Security Council reform has been well articulated in the decisions taken by African heads of State and Government at the fifth and sixth ordinary sessions of the Assembly of the African Union, held respectively in Sirte, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, in July 2005 and in Khartoum in January 2006. We strongly feel that it would be a great disservice to the United Nations if Member States continued to prevaricate on this vital matter.

While Nigeria respects the viewpoints of those Member States that insist on the need for consensus before a decision is taken on the framework and modalities of the reform, we equally recognize that, in the greater national interests of our respective peoples, the search for consensus should not inhibit the taking of important and crucial decisions. It is essential, therefore, that in the interest of our Organization and its future we exert every effort to ensure a speedy and successful conclusion of the reform process.

This may well entail some element of flexibility, but flexibility informed by a shared view that Council reform in all its aspects is long overdue. If we proceed along this path, Nigeria is confident that we will, in the immediate future, achieve that goal and thereby not only rekindle the hopes and confidence of mankind in the United Nations, but also prove wrong the Organization's few vocal critics, who wrongly argue that Member States individually and collectively cannot rise to the challenges of true multilateralism. Let us therefore send forth from this hallowed Hall a clear message of our common resolve not to let slip yet another opportunity to address this matter once and for all.

There are also those who believe that States Members of this Organization should be content with merely tinkering with the working methods of the Security Council and that this would better serve the interests of the broader membership. Although the full implications of such a position for overall United Nations reform have been the subject of discussions in informal consultations in the past, Nigeria considers it necessary to restate that this approach would hardly address the fundamental issue of inequity that the Council, as currently constituted, represents.

Nigeria strongly believes that, in the pursuit of the objective of reforming the Security Council, Africa's legitimate aspirations should be addressed, as Africa is the only region without representation in the permanent membership category of the Security Council, even though 60 per cent of the issues addressed by the Council relate to the continent. We therefore identify with those Member States whose initiatives boldly and substantially take into account Africa's primary interests and concerns on Security Council reform. Nigeria also believes that the permanent membership of the Council should reflect cultural and geographical diversity.

Lastly, Nigeria is encouraged by the unanimous adoption of decision 62/557, in which the General Assembly mandated that intergovernmental negotiations should commence in the informal plenary of the Assembly not later than 28 February 2009. Our understanding of this decision is that the Open-ended Working Group should come to an end in order to allow intergovernmental negotiations to commence. We are of the view that the decision to be reached at the end of the negotiations should be democratic in nature, respecting consensus as an ideal but, if necessary, involve a majority decision. This is in keeping with both the rules of procedure of the General Assembly and democratic principles. The Assembly cannot delay this matter any further.

Mr. Hackett (Barbados): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the 14 States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) that are also members of the United Nations on agenda item 9, "Report of the Security Council", and item 111, "Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters".

At the outset, I would like to thank Ambassador Jorge Urbina, Permanent Representative of Costa Rica and current President of the Security Council, for his detailed presentation of the report of the Council (A/63/2). CARICOM commends the members of the Council for the work that they have undertaken during the reporting period.

The work of the Council over the past year covered virtually all regions of the world, although the principal focus continued to be on Africa. CARICOM would like to thank the members of the Council for their efforts in seeking to bring peace and stability to the various conflict situations around the world. We welcome the attention that the Council has paid to the situation in Haiti and the support provided to the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). The extension of MINUSTAH's mandate will provide further opportunity for the international community to continue to support the Haitian political leadership and the Haitian people in rebuilding the country and progressing towards sustainable development.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session, His Excellency Srgjan Kerim, for the preparation of the report of the Open-ended Working Group on Security Council reform that we have before us today. CARICOM continues to believe that Security Council reform needs to be one of the priority issues that should be addressed by the current session of the General Assembly.

The 2005 World Summit Outcome Document reflected the resolve of world leaders to reform several areas of the United Nations architecture, including the Security Council. Member States said then that there must be a constant process of review, reform and renewal of the Organization so that it can remain relevant to the continuously changing international climate. This led to the creation of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council, the revitalization of the Economic and Social Council and a number of management initiatives in the administration area. It is of great disappointment to CARICOM, however, that reform of the Security Council, the main organ of the United Nations that is primarily responsible for achieving global peace and security, continues to elude us; for world leaders also said at that 2005 Summit that early reform of the Security Council is "an essential element of our overall

effort to reform the United Nations in order to make it more broadly representative, efficient and transparent" (*resolution 60/1, para. 153*).

Despite a nearly four-fold increase in the membership of the United Nations, the size and composition of the Security Council have remained almost unchanged since its creation, albeit for a change in size in the membership of the non-permanent members in 1965. Thus, 60 years after the founding of the United Nations, the composition of the Security Council no longer reflects current political realities.

We commend the efforts of the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session, and the members of his task force, for the work undertaken over the past year on the issue of Security Council reform. Those efforts were focused on identifying concrete elements of negotiables that could form the basis for intergovernmental negotiations. The task force undertook extensive consultations, with a view to identifying these elements, and reflected them in their report. We believe that the consultations to date have provided useful references and relevant ideas that can be the basis for intergovernmental negotiations; and with the mandate from the 2005 United Nations Summit, and more recently General Assembly decision 62/557 of 15 September 2008, we believe that intergovernmental negotiations should begin without much further delay.

Indeed, the issues of modalities and framework for the intergovernmental process have already been settled, in our view, as outlined in decision 62/557. The framework for the intergovernmental negotiations is the informal plenary of the United Nations General Assembly, with all of the attendant rules and procedures of the Assembly, and the modalities are all the positions and proposals advanced by Member States. CARICOM countries stand ready to participate fully in these negotiations, with a view to achieving a successful outcome by the end of this session.

In this regard, CARICOM member States reiterate their belief that a reformed Security Council should have an increase in membership in both the permanent and non-permanent categories. We further believe that additional permanent members should come from both the developed and developing worlds, and that arrangements for the increase in the number of non-permanent members should allow for greater representation from small and island States. The use of the veto should be limited to actions taken under Chapter VII of the Charter, with a move towards its eventual abolition. We also believe that a review mechanism after a reasonable period of time will be essential.

Comprehensive reform of the Security Council is fundamentally grounded in the reform of the working methods of the Council. Thus, CARICOM sees the need for greater transparency and openness in the working methods of the Council. More specifically, we suggest that there be more frequent open debates of the Security Council to allow for greater inclusiveness and participation of non-member States, for such open debates provide, we believe, national and regional perspectives that can assist the Council in addressing effectively the crises and issues with which it is seized. We also believe that more comprehensive Council briefings to non-members should be held in order to keep all delegations fully informed of the activities of the Council.

We are heartened that there is greater acceptance of the view that the Security Council should be accountable to the General Assembly. In this regard, we again request that the reports of the Council to the General Assembly, such as the one presented today, should be more substantive and analytical, thus providing a basis for a more interactive and meaningful debate by the Assembly on the work of the Council.

Achieving success in these intergovernmental negotiations will require strong commitment on the part of all Member States. CARICOM believes that consultations carried out over the past 15 years, particularly including the last two, provide the critical elements that can serve as the basis for these intergovernmental negotiations. Thus, it should be possible to start intergovernmental negotiations quite soon. Together we should seek to create a reformed organ with an expanded membership that better reflects contemporary world realities, an organ that possesses a set of working methods which are formalized, clear and transparent and which provide for greater accessibility to its work by non-members. This we believe will make the Council more broadly representative, thereby increasing its legitimacy, and will make it a more effective body which is responsive to the views and needs of all Member States and has an enhanced capacity to act when faced with threats to peace and security.

Mr. Soborun (Mauritius): Once again, I have the honour to speak on behalf of the African Group and to commend the President of the General Assembly for convening today's meeting to discuss the report of the Security Council, under agenda item 9, and to consider the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and other related matters, under agenda item 111. Allow me also at the very outset to thank His Excellency Mr. Jorge Urbina, Permanent Representative of Costa Rica and President of the Security Council for the month of November, for the presentation of the report of the Security Council (A/63/2). Furthermore, the African Group associates itself with the statement to be made by the representative of Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The African Group appreciates the efforts of the Security Council in peacekeeping, peacebuilding and the maintenance of peace and security in conflict situations, particularly in Africa. However, once again it is noted that the report of the Council is more a statement of events in chronological order than an analytical report which could provide an opportunity for Member States to assess the strengths and failures of the Council in conflict situations. Moreover, the Group certainly shares the growing concern about the gradual encroachment by the Security Council on the powers and the mandate of the General Assembly. In this context, it is necessary that resolutions 51/193, 58/126 and 59/313, which aim at facilitating the Security Council's accountability to the General Assembly, are implemented without any further delay. Furthermore, the Council's rules of procedure, which still remain provisional after six decades, urgently need to be formalized. In addition, closer coordination among the Presidents of the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council can only augur well for the Organization.

The global crises we are facing at present, such as the energy crisis, food crisis, financial crisis and climate change, make it all the more necessary to effect the expeditious and meaningful reform of the Security Council in a comprehensive manner which takes into account representativity and the geopolitical realities of the twenty-first century. The African position, spelled out in the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration on the comprehensive reform of the Security Council, has been stated several times in this body. It is not our intention this morning to repeat it again.

Suffice it, however, to recall that the African common position, as spelled out in the Ezulwini Consensus, calls for no less than two permanent seats, with all the prerogatives and privileges of permanent membership, including the right of veto, and also five non-permanent seats for Africa. Even though Africa is opposed in principle to the veto, it is of the view that, so long as the veto exists and as a matter of common justice, it should be made available to all new permanent members of the Security Council.

This African position is intended to assert unequivocally the legitimate claim of Africa and to ensure that Africa is fully represented in all decision-making organs of the United Nations, and in the Security Council in particular.

The African Group welcomes the decision of the President of the General Assembly to commence in the informal plenary of the General Assembly the intergovernmental negotiations, in accordance with Assembly decision 62/577. We extend our fullest support to His Excellency Father Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann in this endeavour and also to His Excellency Mr. Zahir Tanin, Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, as Chair of the intergovernmental negotiations on behalf of the President of the General Assembly. I would like to once again bring to the attention of the General Assembly that, in paragraph 3 of the decision of the African Union contained in document Assembly/AU/Dec.184 (X), the 53 African heads of State and Government directed

> "the African Permanent Representatives to the United Nations to participate in the forthcoming intergovernmental negotiations on the basis of the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration and to report to the Assembly accordingly, should they require further guidance".

That decision is almost a year old now. The next African Union summit is scheduled for January 2009. We hope that at that time the African Permanent Representatives will have something worthy to report on the reform of the Security Council, in particular on the commencement of the intergovernmental negotiations, to their heads of State and Government.

The African Group looks forward to starting at meaningful and constructive intergovernmental

negotiations in compliance with the unanimous General Assembly decision 62/577, as soon as possible, but in no case later than 28 February 2009.

Mrs. Núñez Mordoche (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to address the General Assembly on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). First of all, we thank His Excellency Ambassador Jorge Urbina, Permanent Representative of Costa Rica and President of the Security Council for the month of November, for the presentation of the report of the Security Council (A/63/2).

The Non-Aligned Movement takes note of the efforts undertaken to improve the quality of this year's annual report and to submit it on time to the General Assembly. At the same time, the Movement reiterates that much more should be done with regard to the content of the report. We call on the Security Council to submit to the General Assembly comprehensive and analytical annual reports which evaluate the work of the Council, including cases on which the Council has failed to take decisions, as well as the views expressed by its members during the consideration of the agenda items before it.

We welcome as a positive step the holding of an informal meeting with United Nations Member States by the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, which held the presidency of the Security Council in July this year, as part of the process of preparing the annual report. We call for more regular interactions in the future between the country holding the July presidency of the Council and the wider membership of the United Nations, in order to help enhance the quality of the reports. We also call on the Security Council to submit special reports for the consideration of the General Assembly, pursuant to Article 15, paragraph 1, and Article 24, paragraph 3, of the Charter of the United Nations. The Presidents of the Security Council should ensure that their monthly assessments are comprehensive and analytical and that they are issued in timely fashion. The General Assembly could propose parameters for drawing up such assessments.

The Non-Aligned Movement reiterates its concern over the increasing and continuing encroachment by the Security Council on issues that clearly fall within the functions and powers of other principal organs of the United Nations and their subsidiary bodies. The Council must fully observe all Charter provisions as well as all General Assembly resolutions that clarify its relationship with the Assembly and the other principal organs. Close cooperation and coordination among all principal organs is indispensable in order to enable the United Nations to remain relevant and capable of meeting the existing, new and emerging threats and challenges.

We call on the Presidents of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council to meet regularly to discuss and coordinate among themselves issues related to the agendas and programmes of work of the respective principal organs that they represent. NAM also calls on the Security Council to take fully into account the recommendations of the General Assembly on matters relating to international peace and security, consistent with Article 11, paragraph 2, of the Charter.

The Movement remains concerned at the lack of progress in the General Assembly discussions on the reform of the Security Council. The discussions have shown that while there has been a convergence of views on a number of issues, major differences still exist on many others.

The Movement looks forward to the full implementation of decision 62/557, adopted by the General Assembly on 15 September 2008. The Movement expresses its full support for the Assembly President in this process, as well as for His Excellency Mr. Zahir Tanin, Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, in his work as Vice-Chair of the Open-ended Working Group and as chair of the intergovernmental negotiations on behalf of the President of the General Assembly.

NAM reiterates the fact that the reform of the Security Council should not be confined to the question of equitable representation on and an increase in the membership of the Security Council. It should also address substantive issues relating to the Council's agenda, working methods and decision-making processes.

In recent years, the Security Council has been too quick to threaten or authorize enforcement action in some cases while being silent and inactive in others. Furthermore, the Council has increasingly resorted to Chapter VII of the Charter as an umbrella for addressing issues that do not necessarily pose an immediate threat to international peace and security. Instead of excessive and hasty use of Chapter VII, efforts should be made to fully utilize the provisions of

Chapters VI and VIII for the peaceful settlement of disputes. Chapter VII should be invoked, as intended, as a measure of last resort. Unfortunately, in some cases provisions of Articles 41 and 42 have been too quickly resorted to when the other options have not been fully exhausted.

Sanctions imposed by the Security Council remain an issue of serious concern to the non-aligned countries. In accordance with the United Nations Charter, the option of imposing sanctions should be considered only after all means for peaceful settlement of disputes under Chapter VI of the Charter have been exhausted and the short-term and long-term effects of such sanctions have been analysed in detail. The objectives of sanctions should be clearly defined and the period of their imposition should be specified. Sanctions should be based on tenable legal grounds and should be lifted as soon as the objectives are achieved.

The Non-Aligned Movement considers that some improvements have been made in the Council's working methods. But they are clearly not enough and leave much room for improvement. The Council's open debate on its working methods, held on 27 August 2008, was a step in the right direction, almost 15 years after the last such debate on the issue. We sincerely hope that it will be the first step towards the regular and comprehensive consideration of that important issue within the Council, taking fully into account the views of countries not members of the Council.

Transparency, openness and consistency are key elements that the Security Council should observe in all of its activities, approaches and procedures. Regrettably, the Council has neglected those important factors on numerous occasions. The Council must comply with the provisions of Article 31 of the Charter, which allow any State not a Council member to participate in discussions on matters affecting it. Rule 48 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure should be duly observed. Closed meetings and informal consultations should be kept to a minimum and held on an exceptional basis, as they were meant to be.

It is the position of NAM that the objectives of Security Council reform, which should be addressed in a comprehensive, transparent and balanced manner, include the following. The Council's agenda should reflect the needs and interests of both developing and developed countries equally, in an objective, rational, non-selective and non-arbitrary manner. The enlargement of the Council must lead to a more democratic, more representative, more responsible and more effective Council. The Council's rules of procedure, which have remained provisional for more than 60 years, should be made official in order to improve its transparency and accountability. The decision-making process of the Council should be democratized, including by limiting and curtailing the use of the veto with a view to its eventual elimination.

The countries of the Non-Aligned Movement requests the Security Council to take the following immediate actions to improve its working methods. It should increase the number of public meetings, in accordance with Articles 31 and 32 of the Charter, and ensure that those meetings provide real opportunities to take into account the views and contributions of the entire membership of the United Nations, particularly of countries not members of the Council whose affairs the Council is discussing. The State concerned should be more closely involved in the Council's discussions of matters affecting it, in accordance with Article 31 of the Charter. The Council should ensure that the views of Member States, obtained through open, thematic debates, are reflected in relevant resolutions and presidential statements that the Council adopts after such debates, instead of the current practice of adopting resolutions and presidential statements without reference to such discussions.

The Council should allow briefings by the special envoys or representatives of the Secretary-General and of the United Nations Secretariat to be held in public meetings, except in exceptional circumstances. It should further strengthen its relationship with the Secretariat and troop-contributing countries, including through a sustained, regular and timely interaction. The Council should establish its subsidiary organs in accordance with the letter and spirit of the Charter and should ensure that those organs function in a manner that provides adequate and timely information on their activities to the general United Nations membership. In that context, it should guarantee that countries not members of the Council have access to subsidiary organs, including the right to participate in their discussions, as appropriate.

I would like to conclude by extending our best wishes for the success of the incoming members of the Security Council: Austria, Japan, Mexico, Turkey and Uganda. The willingness of the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement to engage constructively in

consultations and negotiations towards democratizing the Security Council as an effective organ in maintaining international peace and security can always be counted on.

Mr. Delacroix (France) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I should like to thank the Permanent Representative of Costa Rica, as President of the Security Council, for his comprehensive introduction of the Council's annual report to the General Assembly (A/63/2). My delegation would also like to thank the delegation of Viet Nam for its excellent work in preparing the report. We would like to emphasize the quality of the report, which we believe meets legitimate and well-known expectations.

Equally, I would like to set out France's position with regard to Security Council reform. The President of our General Assembly has made it one of the priorities of his mandate. The support of my delegation can be counted on to ensure that together we achieve bold reform of the Security Council, the central institution for United Nations actions in the area of peace and security.

First, naturally, France remains committed to continued improvement of the Security Council's working methods through enhanced transparency of the Council's work and better interaction with non-member States, without, of course, questioning its autonomy. France is also fully committed to reforming the composition of the Security Council and its commitment on that point remains unswerving. As the President of the French Republic said before the General Assembly on 23 September:

> "The world of the twenty-first century cannot be governed with the institutions of the twentieth century ... Let today's major Powers and the Powers of tomorrow unite to shoulder together the responsibilities their influence gives them in world affairs.
>
> "To all those who are hesitant, I wish to say that enlarging the Security Council and the G-8 is not just a matter of fairness, it is also a question of effectiveness. We can no longer wait to turn the G-8 into the G14 …
>
> "Let us act to make our international institutions more representative, because if they are more representative they will be stronger, more effective and more respected." (*A/63/PV.5, p. 13*)

How do we proceed after so many years of discussions? First, we must bear in mind that the necessary expansion of the Security Council must be aimed at strengthening its authority and effectiveness. That is why we are in favour of an expansion of the Council in its two categories of membership, with Germany, Brazil, India and Japan as new permanent members and permanent representation for Africa.

During the many debates on the topic, a great majority of delegations have expressed clear support for an expansion of the Security Council in its two categories of membership — permanent and non-permanent. That point is important and must not be forgotten.

The second important point is that we must acknowledge that, to date, none of the proposals for final reform has gained the approval of two thirds of the Member States of the General Assembly, a legal requirement well known to all. That is why the idea of interim reform to overcome the current impediments is finding growing support. As is known, France and the United Kingdom have expressed their readiness to consider an interim solution that, without prejudice to the end result, would enable us to move forward.

Specifically, we are open to considering an interim solution that could provide for a new category of seats with a longer mandate than that of the current elected members, which would be renewable. At the end of the initial phase, it could be decided to make those seats permanent. That option should duly be taken into account as part of the intergovernmental negotiations, in accordance with paragraph (e) of decision 62/577 of 15 September.

In general, my delegation believes that we should promptly and fully consider the specific options within the framework of the upcoming intergovernmental negotiations. We believe that the decision adopted by the General Assembly on 15 September is clear and important.

We should honour the agreement reached on that occasion by consensus by the Member States. Its implementation will stand as a test of the credibility and democracy of our Assembly, which we all value. Together, we have taken the decision to set out the framework for our work, the plenary of the General Assembly, to specify the deadline for opening intergovernmental negotiations no later than

28 February 2009, and to define the basis for the negotiations in line with the work conducted thus far.

France will participate in discussions within the framework of the Open-ended Working Group, which has a legitimate place within our joint efforts. At the same time, it is understood that the Working Group cannot stand as a precondition and cannot impose preconditions on the opening of intergovernmental negotiations, and that conditions may not be imposed, which would run counter to the General Assembly decision of 15 September.

Only in a climate of trust can we progress jointly and, in that spirit, we support the action of the President of our Assembly. Moreover, we welcome the mandate that he has entrusted to us and we wish him every success. We count on his full involvement to provide the necessary drive for our work. Security Council reform is more necessary than ever. Thus, together we must actively continue our efforts by avoiding any step that would lead to procrastination or division within the General Assembly on fundamental reform of the United Nations. Thus, everyone must assume their responsibilities. Let us not forget that reform of the Security Council requires the political commitment of the Member States at the highest level. I have just reiterated our own commitment, and I cherish the hope that it will be shared by the greatest number of Members possible so as to achieve effective reform.

Ms. Blum (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to express our gratitude to the Ambassador of Costa Rica for introducing the report of the Security Council to the General Assembly (A/63/2) covering the period of August 2007 to July 2008. My delegation also wishes to associate itself with the statement made by the Ambassador of Cuba on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

Following up that work requires the ongoing attention of the Member States. Therefore, it is appropriate that the Council retain and further the practice of organizing briefing sessions so that non-member countries may be aware of the work of the Council and its subsidiary bodies. More frequent presentations of special reports by the Security Council would contribute to that goal.

With regard to the content of the report presented on this occasion, we would like to highlight the work of the delegation of Viet Nam, as President of the Council in July 2008, in drawing up the introduction to the document, which outlines the Council's work. We also welcome the initiative of that delegation to inform non-Council member States on the process of preparing the annual report to the General Assembly. We urge that this becomes a regular practice.

Colombia underscores how important it is that the report of the Security Council to the General Assembly not be a mere sequence of facts, but include elements of qualitative and analytical information, such as the criteria used by the Council in taking decisions. My delegation observes with interest the increase in interaction between countries presiding the Security Council and other member States. The briefing sessions at the beginning of every month, in addition to providing indispensable information for keeping abreast of the issues included in the monthly programme of work of the Council, provide an opportunity to establish a dialogue and express concerns to the country in the presidency.

We are at a moment of great importance in the history of our Organization. After several years of debate, next February, pursuant to decision 62/557 adopted by this Assembly, we will launch a process of intergovernmental negotiations to reform the Security Council. We have reached this point thanks to the constant work of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council and that of the Presidents of the General Assembly who have chaired that Group. We must take this opportunity to pursue progress, building on what has already been achieved. The reform process has become imperative in order to correct the inequities and inefficiencies affecting the workings of the Council.

We must strive for a comprehensive reform to make the Council a more democratic, representative, transparent, efficient and accountable organ. In its current configuration, the Council does not respond to today's realities. Thus, the reform should take into account not only an increase in the membership and composition of the Council, but also an improvement in its working methods.

Colombia believes that only the category of non-permanent members should see an increase in numbers. Such a reform would be in accordance with the purpose of effectively turning the Council into a

more democratic, representative and transparent organ. Retaining permanent membership and the related privileges that it confers on a few countries would be to the detriment of the participation of small and medium-sized States in the Council. It would also undermine their ability to influence the decisions and actions of the Council. It is not consistent to preach democratization of the Council while extending privileges to a few States.

Colombia supports a balanced and fair reform of the Council. We envision a Council that is more equitable in terms of geographical representation, and in which all States, large, medium or small, and particularly those whose interests and hopes have been underrepresented, enjoy the same chances of becoming members of that organ.

My delegation believes that it is of paramount importance to continue improving the methods of work of the Council. Any progress in that area must be aimed at greater transparency and more participation by member States in the activities and decisions of the Council. The Council should hold more frequent open meetings, thus allowing greater access to non-member States, particularly at meetings dealing with issues that affect such States directly. A clear and predictable decision-making process is also essential to ensuring the transparency and legitimacy of the actions of the Security Council.

Colombia believes that the Council should be able to avail itself of more democratic decision-making mechanisms. My country reiterates its historic opposition to the veto and believes that any reform of the Council would be incomplete without a thorough examination of options to curtail its use with a view to eventually abolishing it. In that regard, an initial option would be restricting its use to situations pertaining to Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter. Another possibility would be to establish a mechanism to reduce or neutralize the use of the veto or to increase the threshold required for it to take effect.

The coming weeks will be of great importance for the success of the intergovernmental process to start in February 2009. In this context, we welcome the decision taken yesterday to retain the functions of the Open-ended Working Group. This is consistent with the letter and the spirit of decision 62/557.

If such processes are to be successful, they must be open and inclusive. If our aim is to democratize the Council, we must also employ democratic mechanisms in the reform process. In that spirit, the Open-ended Working Group must undertake a detailed analysis, including the goals of the reform, its guiding principles and the terms or procedures to be applied. It must also include an agreement on the rules for negotiations, guaranteeing open, transparent and participatory discussions. At the conclusion of the work undertaken by the Working Group during this preparatory phase, we believe that it would be important for the General Assembly to adopt a document to serve as a guideline for our work.

Lastly, Colombia will continue to promote a reform of the Security Council that achieves a Council that responds to the interests and hopes of the various countries and regions of the world in an equitable fashion. Members can rest assured of our continued participation and support in achieving this goal.

Mr. Abdelaziz (Egypt): Allow me to start by expressing my delegation's gratitude for the President's initiative to include the reform of the Security Council among the six main priorities of his presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-third session and within his initiative for the democratization of the United Nations, in particular the Security Council. I would like to also express my deep appreciation to Mr. Srgjan Kerim, President of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session, for his concerted efforts in pushing forward this important issue, which constitutes an integral part of the comprehensive reform of the United Nations.

Allow me to also extend our sincere thanks to the representatives of Bangladesh, Chile, Djibouti and Portugal for their tremendous efforts in their capacity as the vice-chairpersons 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 during the previous session of the General Assembly.

As my delegation stated during our work in the Open-ended Working Group and our consecutive discussions of this agenda item in the General Assembly, United Nations reform will not be complete without achieving Security Council reform in both the enlargement of its membership and the reform of its working methods. Such a reform should be aimed at rapidly addressing the serious historical injustices

committed against Africa, due to the lack of its representation in the permanent membership category of the Security Council, and the negative impact of the continuation of this situation on the ability of the Council to deal effectively with many of the conflict situations in the African continent.

In this regard, I would like to associate my remarks with the remarks made by the Permanent Representative of Mauritius, Chair of the African Group for the month of November, stressing the African common position, as outlined in the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration, calling for no less than two permanent seats, with all the prerogatives and privileges of permanent membership, including the right to veto, and for two additional non-permanent seats.

There is no doubt that General Assembly decision 62/557, adopted without a vote on 15 September 2008 upon the recommendation of the Open-ended Working Group, constituted a breakthrough that was eagerly awaited by Africa and many other stakeholders — the agreement to start the intergovernmental negotiations on this important issue during the sixty-third session of the General Assembly. In order to ensure the success of those intergovernmental negotiations, all of us must abide by the letter and spirit of the delicate agreement reached in the decision through difficult negotiations on all procedural and substantive aspects of dealing with the issue during the current session.

Speaking of procedural aspects, and specifically of the timelines indicated in the decision, I am confident that we all still remember those long discussions on how to establish the correct balance between the competence of the Open-ended Working Group vis-à-vis the competence of the General Assembly in dealing with the intergovernmental negotiations with a view to ensuring their success. The agreement on a timeline, as reflected in paragraphs (c) and (d) of the decision, did not come about in a vacuum. It came as a result of consultations on an initial proposal to start intergovernmental negotiations not later than the end of December 2008, which was amended to start those negotiations not later than the end of April 2009, until we settled on the current formulation of starting the negotiations not later than 28 February 2009. This indicates that timing in itself was an essential and integral factor in achieving this important result.

The sequence of the paragraphs was another factor. Paragraph (c) was initially proposed as paragraph (f), the second to last paragraph of the draft decision, and was intentionally moved through negotiations to become (c), just before paragraph (d), which deals with the intergovernmental negotiations, in clear sequencing that reflects the procedural precedence of the work of the Open-ended Working Group in preparation for the intergovernmental negotiations.

From a substantive point of view, this agreement on a specific timeline was closely linked to another agreement on the substantive side, as reflected in paragraph (c) of the decision, stating that the Open-ended Working Group would continue to address the framework and modalities in order to — and I stress this — prepare and facilitate the intergovernmental negotiations, and that the Chairman of the Open-ended Working Group would present the results of these consultations to an informal plenary meeting of the General Assembly no later than 1 February 2009.

So we all agreed that the work of the Open-ended Working Group on the framework and modalities is essential to preparing and facilitating our intergovernmental negotiations. Therefore, we do not see the need to enter again into a procedural debate on whether intergovernmental negotiations could start in parallel with the work of the Open-ended Working Group or not. Such a debate would only cast doubts on the spirit of good faith and mutual respect that we agreed to adopt as a basis for our work in paragraph (d) of the decision and in the United Nations work at large. To the contrary, we should allow the Open-ended Working Group all the time it needs to consider the many issues related to the framework and modalities and to present its Chairman’s report before the end of January 2009.

Therefore, we congratulate the President of the General Assembly for his wise decision to cancel the proposed meeting of the informal plenary of the General Assembly on this issue and to allow full opportunity to the Open-ended Working Group to undertake its responsibilities properly.

Turning to the conduct of the intergovernmental negotiations, the provisions of paragraph (d) are very clear. They are:

> “to commence intergovernmental negotiations in informal plenary of the General Assembly during

the sixty-third session … based on proposals by Member States".

I would emphasize that last part: "based on proposals by Member States". We all agreed that the intergovernmental negotiations cannot start unless a proposal is submitted by a Member State — or a group of Member States, if they so wish — in clear exercise of national ownership and full governmental responsibility for the proposals, which should reflect an exclusively governmental point of view, thus making the negotiations truly intergovernmental. This clearly excludes the possibility of a group of representatives presenting any proposals in their personal capacity, as has happened in the past, or of the President of the General Assembly or any of his facilitators or vice-presidents presenting a proposal, in full recognition of the need to preserve their neutrality and impartiality and to prevent the utilization of their high offices to advance the positions of one stakeholder or another.

From Egypt's point of view, there are many issues that require consideration in the Open-ended Working Group in order to ensure success in the intergovernmental negotiations. Those include the conditions required to reach a solution that can garner the widest possible political acceptance by Member States, as required in paragraph (d) of the decision, duly taking into account that the language used in that paragraph is only a part of a wider agreement reflected in paragraph 4 of the section entitled "Notions on the way forward" of the report of the Open-ended Working Group on its work during the sixty-first session (A/61/47(Supp)). That report was approved in its entirety without a vote, so there was agreement and consensus on that part of the report.

We also considered the relation between this provision and the rules of procedure of the General Assembly that could allow the adoption of a resolution on an issue of such seriousness and importance as the reform of the Security Council by only a two-thirds majority, thus excluding an important third of the membership of the Organization. One third of the membership could well exceed the membership of a complete regional group, such as the African Group or even the European continent.

Other issues that require consideration in the Open-ended Working Group is how to manage the negotiations in the informal plenary meeting, when to move from the informal plenary meeting to the formal plenary meeting, and what the rules are that would govern such a move.

Furthermore, the Open-ended Working Group should consider the role it will play in full implementation of paragraph (f) of the decision to help achieve general agreement among Member States in the consideration of all issues relevant to the question in a manner that could help the intergovernmental negotiations achieve their objectives. Those objectives include ensuring that the results of our work will meet the acceptance that would ensure easy ratification of the required amendments to the Charter.

Improving the working methods of the Security Council is also a matter of paramount importance. We have to continue working on implementing what was agreed upon in the World Summit Outcome to make the Council more efficient, transparent and accountable and to further enhance its effectiveness and the legitimacy and implementation of its decisions.

Africa accords the subject of improving the working methods of the Security Council as much importance as the enlargement of the Council and is certain that both pillars of the reform of the Council are indispensable to achieving the reform of the Security Council. This was reflected in the decision on the topic adopted by the African Union Summit in Sharm el-Sheikh in July 2008, when African leaders mandated a Committee of Ten to address all reform issues of the United Nations system and present a progress report to the next summit, to be held in Addis Ababa in February 2009.

There has undoubtedly been some improvement in the working methods of the Council, but these improvements are still not enough. Reform of the Security Council's working methods is inevitable and should be based on the need to achieve real balance in power between members of the Council, particularly between the permanent and non-permanent members. The time has also come for agreement on permanent rules of procedure to replace the current provisional rules of procedure that have been in force for more than 60 years.

We fully associate ourselves with the statement by the representative of Cuba, who spoke on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). In particular, he stated that the starting point in reforming the methods of the Council is that the Council should observe the

institutional balance laid down in the Charter between the principal organs and should refrain from exceeding the mandates entrusted to it under the Charter. In this regard, the Council should cease encroaching on the competence of other principal organs of the Organization, particularly the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council.

Moreover, Egypt reiterates its support for the initiative of the Small Five Group aimed at improving the working methods of the Security Council. This initiative constitutes an appropriate base for further efforts seeking to improve the working methods of the Council, particularly by restricting the use of the right of veto in cases of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity, until we reach the stage in which this veto right can be finally abolished. However, until the veto is eliminated, we reiterate that it should be granted to all permanent members joining the Security Council within an expansion plan.

Earlier proposals for improving the working methods of the Security Council were submitted by the Non-Aligned Movement when Egypt was a member of the Security Council in 1996 and 1997. Moreover, the NAM Summit in Havana mandated the Permanent Representatives of the NAM countries in New York to work on a General Assembly draft resolution giving the Assembly the right to interfere in cases where the Security Council fails to take action despite a threat to peace and security owing to a lack of unanimity among its permanent membership. This comes in conjunction with the mandate given to the African Permanent Representatives by the African leaders at the Sharm el-Sheikh Summit concerning the process of Security Council reform, and that is why Africa insists on having the veto right as one of the main elements of the reform of the Security Council.

In this regard, I stress that improvement in the working methods of the Security Council should not only be considered by the Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions, but also by the general membership of the Organization.

As we consider the report of the Security Council to the General Assembly, I would like to thank the Permanent Representative of Costa Rica for having presented the report. Last year, Egypt, like many other delegations, regretted that the annual report of the Security Council lacked analytical depth and had limited value added for the membership at large. Examining this year's report, we note that it contains merely a comprehensive overview of the Council's meetings, activities and decisions. The enumeration of the meetings and documentation in the report reflects the major role undertaken by the Council in various fields, namely, peacekeeping, peacebuilding, maintaining international peace and security, and so forth. However, we continue to believe that the report could better reflect the Council's challenges, assessments and rationale during the reporting period.

In our view, the report should be more explanatory as regards the positions taken on the various issues being dealt with in the Council, including the reasons behind the failure or inability of the Council to take decisive action in some situations, particularly those related to the maintenance of international peace and security, and the reasons behind the different reactions on the part of the Council, whether they be resolutions, presidential statements, press releases or reports, as well as the criteria followed and the arguments used by the Council to select its reaction in each case.

In conclusion, I am confident that, under the able guidance of the General Assembly President and Vice-President Tanin, we will reach an agreement on the reform and expansion of the Security Council, built on strengthening the principles of justice and equality in rights and obligations, which would enable the Security Council to become a platform for democracy and transparency in dealing with the cases of Member States.

Mr. Natalegawa (Indonesia): We welcome the convening of this joint debate on the two related important issues.

The annual Security Council report (A/63/2), which was introduced by His Excellency Ambassador Jorge Urbina, Permanent Representative of Costa Rica, in his capacity as President of the Security Council for the month of November, is an important component of the work of the Council. We thank Ambassador Urbina for his presentation of the report.

My delegation also commends the delegation of Viet Nam, which held the presidency of the Council during the month of July, on the consultations conducted with Member States during the preparation of the report, and we hope that this will continue to remain the practice in the future.

The report is intended to fulfil the obligations stipulated under Article 24, paragraph 3, and Article 15, paragraph 1, of the Charter and forms part of the Council's commitment to promoting transparency and accountability.

The report illustrates a diverse agenda for the Council. During the period under review, the Council adopted 58 resolutions and 50 presidential statements. This prolific work is commendable.

We recognize, however, the continued need for a more comprehensive and analytical report. Such a report could facilitate a better and more in-depth understanding of the context, dynamics and nature of the issues that fall under the purview of the Security Council. It would also be useful for United Nations Members for the report also to include the status of the implementation of the Security Council's decisions.

The urgent need for reform of the Security Council is beyond doubt. The Assembly's Open-ended Working Group has been the primary vehicle for promoting that objective. Various permutations of Security Council reform have been identified and debated. Not least, the modalities for the discussion of such reform have been endlessly deliberated. So much so that there is very little that is new when it comes to reform proposals. However, today, we stand at a potentially crucial juncture.

By next February, an intergovernmental negotiation in an informal General Assembly plenary is set to begin, 45 years since the last reform of the Council in 1963. In sharp contrast, the family of nations is today marked by greater diversity and pluralism. This and the attendant forces of globalization mean that the Security Council is today grappling with issues far more complex than ever before — issues that test a common understanding of what constitutes a threat to international peace and security — issues that demand a Security Council speaking with a single voice — and issues that are so entwined and multifaceted that they require innovative solutions other than the tried and tested, including the application of "soft power".

In addressing such challenges, Indonesia is convinced of the efficacy of the democratic response. At the national level, such a response has placed Indonesia in a better position to deal with the myriad challenges it faces as a nation. At the global level, a democratic response, in the form of a reformed Security Council, offers the promise of a Council able to act truly on behalf of a United Nations, with legitimacy and effectiveness.

No single country can work alone and it is increasingly evident that even the most powerful ones find that comprehensive solutions require that they work closely with other nations. There is, thus, a need for substantive change in the composition of the Council. This would entail additional members, either both permanent and non-permanent, or limited only to additional non-permanent members.

What is most important is that the Security Council must be made more representative of the contemporary world, its geographic regions and the rich diversity of its constituencies.

The arguments for a democratic reform of the Security Council are compelling. All of us within this Hall subscribe to the importance of Security Council reform, yet, as the years of the reform process attest, it is one thing to agree on the need for reform, and another to agree on the nature of the reform. The list of proposals is extensive and varied, each with its own strong proponents pushing for acceptance, even if they push United Nations unity to a breaking point, not least of which are proposals which, rather conveniently, appear to fit the aspirations of their advocates to Council membership.

Indonesia believes that to yield tangible results, we must strive to emphasize the collective interests of Member States, rather than engage in an endless mutually cancelling pursuit of individual national interests. After years of debate within the Open-ended Working Group, it may be timely to accentuate consensus, where once there was division — to build bridges. We must seek the common elements in the various proposals that have been offered and recognize areas where there may be convergence of views. We should appreciate parties which have exercised restraint in promoting their own national aspirations, choosing instead to emphasize the collective interest in reform of the Security Council.

A perfect solution may be beyond us. However, it is essential that we strive for the widest political acceptance possible. Without a real sense of ownership and representation by Member States, the reform of this eminent organ will hardly achieve its stated objectives.

My delegation is committed to reform of the Security Council. It wishes to position itself as part of the solution to the reform process and not to the contrary. Agreement must first be obtained on a reformed Security Council and how a reformed Council would be constituted. The States that are to serve on such a reformed Council — that is for a later decision, democratically decided.

Mr. Hoang Chi Trung (Viet Nam): First of all, on behalf of the Vietnamese delegation, let me express our deepest thanks to His Excellency Ambassador Jorge Urbina, the Permanent Representative of Costa Rica and President of the Security Council for November, for presenting to the General Assembly the report on the Council's activities (A/63/2).

My delegation wishes to align itself with the statement made by the representative of Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement on two important agenda items, relating to the report of the Security Council and the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters.

It is a fact that the workload of the Security Council is increasing every year. This means that international peace and security remain challenged and much is required of the Council to discharge its responsibilities. From a body that formerly met only a few times a month, the Council has become a body that holds hundreds of meetings a year.

During the period from August 2007 to July 2008, the Council held 219 formal meetings and 177 consultations of the whole. On the ground, in addition to 17 operating missions mandated by the Security Council, the deployment of other peacekeeping operations, particularly in Africa, is increasing in order, to strengthen local peacebuilding efforts.

While conflicts and deadly violence continue to take place in Iraq, Afghanistan, the occupied Palestinian territories and other regions, not to mention the outbreak of new ones in the Balkans and the Caucasus, United Nations-led peacemaking efforts, including preventive diplomacy and conflict prevention, have to some extent yielded encouraging tangible outcomes, helping to strengthen peace and stability in many countries in various regions of the world.

Against this backdrop, we take note of the efforts made by the Security Council as well as the Secretariat to fulfil their work, especially in facilitating the implementation of the measures stated in the 19 July 2006 note of the President of the Council (S/2006/507). As an advocate of the reforms which would increase the efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and interaction of the United Nations system, including the Security Council, we are encouraged by the positive developments to this end, particularly a growing trend towards transparency with an unprecedentedly large number of open meetings held by the Council and, more than ever before, an active participation by non-member States in the Council's work.

In this regard, Viet Nam welcomes the open debate the Security Council held on 27 August 2008 to examine how to improve its working methods, as well as to review efforts to intensify the Council's consultations with the broader United Nations membership in its work, including the drafting of its annual report to the General Assembly.

We are fully convinced that more should be done to make the Council further accountable for its actions, as expected by the large membership of the United Nations. As the key part of the renewal of the United Nations system, the reform of the Council should be further expedited, both in terms of its representation and working methods.

We would like to reiterate our position that a modern Security Council must be more representative and democratic with an enlargement in both permanent and non-permanent categories of membership. At the same time, a greater focus should be placed on improving the Council's agenda, working methods and decision-making process. We wish to underline the view of the Non-Aligned Movement that transparency, openness and consistency are key elements that the Council should observe.

To this end, we are in favour of creating more opportunities for United Nations members to express their views and proposals on issues of which the Council is seized. Frequent consultations with concerned parties would also do much to help ensure the greatest support for the Council.

However, transparency must not be exercised at the expense of overlapping the work of the Council with that of other bodies such as the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the United Nations

Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and other agencies. This would weaken needed efforts at coordination. To improve its efficiency, besides pursuing measures to streamline its work, the Council should avoid involvement in issues which do not fall within the purview of its mandate as stipulated by the Charter of the United Nations and should devote more effort to facilitating dialogue and mediation rather than abusing sanctions by invoking Chapter VII of the Charter.

It is high time for Member States to begin genuine negotiations on the reform of the Security Council. In support of decision 62/557, adopted by the General Assembly on 15 September, my delegation welcomes the determination of the Assembly President to push ahead the process of Security Council reform at the current session. We are convinced that under the President's wise leadership, the United Nations will reap fruitful outcomes on the path ahead. We also extend our support to His Excellency Mr. Zahir Tanin, Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, as Chair of the intergovernmental negotiations. We are looking forward to working closely with other members of the United Nations in this process.

Finally, I should like to take this opportunity to express our most profound gratitude for the support of Member States that we enjoyed in carrying out our duties as President of the Security Council during the month of July, in particular in the drafting of the current report of the Council.

Mr. Takasu (Japan): At the outset, I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly, for convening today's plenary meeting to discuss the report of the Security Council and Security Council reform. I would also like to extend my appreciation to Ambassador Jorge Urbina of Costa Rica for introducing the report in his capacity as President of the Council for November.

I should like to start with Security Council reform. In order to enhance the functioning, effectiveness and credibility of the Council, we must urgently reform its composition to reflect today's world, not the world of yesterday, and to address effectively the needs of the twenty-first century. To achieve that goal, it is essential that those countries which bear major responsibility in the implementation of the decisions of the Security Council for international peace and security should occupy permanent seats on the Council. I would like to stress that the Security Council must be reformed through the expansion of both the permanent and non-permanent categories. Only through such reform will the Council become more representative, effective and credible.

The genuine desire of Member States to realize meaningful reform of the Security Council was manifested in the unanimous adoption of decision 62/557 by the General Assembly on 15 September. I welcome this important and historic decision to advance the reform process from the stage of consultations that had continued for 15 years in the Open-ended Working Group to the stage of intergovernmental negotiations at the informal plenary of the General Assembly. That decision has clearly determined the course of action on how the negotiations will be launched and organized. In line with this decision, we should proceed speedily to intergovernmental negotiations. Japan will work actively and constructively towards achieving meaningful reform at the earliest possible date. This will garner the widest possible political acceptance.

The functioning of the Security Council should also be improved by enhancing its transparency and accountability.

The quality of the Security Council's report this year is vitally important. Its work during the reporting period was occupied predominantly by issues in Africa. The introduction of the report provides us with a comprehensive overview of the Council's work. The report contains descriptions of Council meetings with the core message of each briefing and the reaction of its members. With more detailed information in the introduction, we appreciate the effort which has been made to present a fair reflection of the Council's work and to strike a balance between analysis and information. The report is also candid about what the Council was not able to achieve. It is important that it effectively address emerging risks and threats to international peace and security and speak in one voice in such situations.

One of the new developments during the reporting period is the interaction between the Council and the Peacebuilding Commission. As the Commission began its substantive work, its relationship with the Council has evolved and practices have been established, such as regular communication between the President of the Council and the Chair of

the Peacebuilding Commission, with the participation of the chairs of the country-specific configurations in the relevant Council meetings. Japan welcomes the further development of such practices and of the relationship with the Peacebuilding Commission into a more concrete and substantial collaboration to support the work of the Council.

Another noteworthy effort was the organization of the informal meeting on the draft report of the Council before the report was finalized. It was particularly useful for the Member States to reflect on matters of interest in the process of the preparation of the report of the Security Council. I understand that this was the first time this kind of consultation with the wider membership took place in the past decade. We are very grateful to Ambassador Minh of Viet Nam for proactively addressing the concerns expressed earlier by Member States in the annual debate of the General Assembly. For further progress, I would like to suggest that the overview part of the introduction elaborate briefly on the changing trends and significant events in the work of the Council, any improvement in the working methods and discussions on cross-cutting operational and strategic issues in the Council.

Improving the working methods of the Council continues to be a primary concern for both the Council and the General Assembly. The adoption of the note by the President, contained in document S/2006/507, which my delegation had played a role in preparing, helped to make Council members aware of the responsibility that membership entails. We saw some improvements in this regard. The types of meeting formats have been clarified and the number of public meetings has been substantially increased, in particular those with the participation of the countries directly concerned. Other efforts have also contributed to increased accessibility of timely information for non-Council members.

The reports of the Secretary-General have become more concise and we have noted efforts to clearly indicate observations, recommendations and long-term strategies, as appropriate. For the purpose of substantive discussion in the Security Council, the timely distribution of the report is critically important.

While these improvements are welcome, some of the recommendations contained in the note have not yet been sufficiently implemented. The open debate of the Council on 28 August illustrated the achievements and shortfalls over the years. We hope the Council will undertake follow-up efforts to further improve its working methods.

In conclusion, Japan, which is soon to become a member of the Council, will make every effort to enhance the accountability and transparency of the Security Council, as well as to advance the process of Security Council reform.

Mr. Wolff (United States of America): On behalf of the United States, I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for helping the Assembly engage in a constructive dialogue on this important issue. I would also like to thank the President of the Security Council, Ambassador Jorge Urbina of Costa Rica, for his remarks as President, introducing the annual report of the Council. This report, which was capably drafted by the Vietnamese delegation, to whom we convey our gratitude, provides Member States with a transparent and comprehensive review of the Council's intensive work.

As called for in decision 62/557, we look forward to continuing discussions in the Open-ended Working Group between now and the end of January so that all Member States can prepare the path forward for the launch of intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council expansion no later than 28 February 2009.

The United States is open to a modest expansion of the Security Council. Only an expansion of relatively small size will preserve the Council's ability to respond quickly, effectively and credibly to threats to international peace and security. That ability is essential for the Council to discharge its primary responsibility under the Charter for the maintenance of international peace and security, and it must guide our discussions on any Council expansion.

The United States believes that qualified candidates for Security Council permanent membership must have demonstrated their ability to act as responsible stakeholders in addressing global, not just local or regional, challenges to peace and security. They must maintain strong commitments to democracy, human rights and non-proliferation and provide substantial peacekeeping or financial contributions to the United Nations. As we have stated in the past, we believe Japan is qualified for permanent membership on those grounds, and we are willing to consider other nations as well.

Although the Charter is clear on the two-thirds requirement for amendment of the Charter, we continue to believe that it is politically wise and important to achieve the broadest possible support for Council expansion to ensure that no significant portion of the membership is alienated by the result and that it constitutes an improvement over the status quo. For that reason, we are pleased that decision 62/557 includes the political goal of a solution that can garner the widest possible political acceptance by Member States. Achieving the widest possible political acceptance will greatly ease the ratification process by Member States, including by all of the permanent members of the Council.

The United States strongly believes that any reform of the Security Council must be undertaken in a manner consistent with the provisions of the Charter and as part of a comprehensive effort to enhance the effectiveness of the entire United Nations system, including areas that are clearly in much greater need of reform than the Security Council. A comprehensive package must include reforms in other areas, such as General Assembly financing and decision-making. We have yet to see significant movement on those issues, and we urge that an accelerated parallel process be started that can accompany our efforts related to the Security Council.

We look forward to hearing the views of other Member States and hope that we can all work together in a collaborative and collegial spirit to move forward to achieving our shared goal of United Nations reform.

Mr. Haroon (Pakistan): Pakistan welcomes the practice of holding this joint debate on two interrelated and important items on the Assembly's agenda. To begin, Sir, let me, through you, congratulate President d'Escoto Brockmann on assuming the Chair and thank him for all his efforts in bringing this matter before the membership of the Assembly. Let me also thank Ambassador Urbina of Costa Rica for presenting the Council's annual report, and Ambassador Le Luong Minh of Viet Nam for consulting the general membership in July on the draft report. Our appreciation also goes to Belgium and the S-5 countries for the initiative to hold an open debate on working methods in the Security Council in August.

With responsibility comes accountability. This debate is, first and foremost, a reaffirmation of accountability of the Security Council to the general membership of the United Nations. The purpose of this accountability is an objective assessment of the Council's performance in carrying out its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, a responsibility conferred on it by the Member States sitting here and on whose behalf the Council acts.

Not only the Security Council, but also other organs of the United Nations are required to submit reports to the General Assembly for its consideration. These Charter provisions are but tools for accountability. But they must not be a once-a-year phenomenon. In the case of the Security Council, the Charter also envisaged special reports to the General Assembly, which, of course, we have not had the privilege of receiving.

Since the Security Council is in continuous session, the exercise of accountability, we believe, is also continuous. This is the reality with which the Council needs to come to terms. Business as usual will continue to erode the Council's credibility and legitimacy. That is also the crux of the effort to reform the Council.

Despite its shortcomings, the Council is doing important work in promoting peace and stability in various parts of the world, and Pakistan has made a tangible contribution to those efforts for the maintenance of international peace and security. The Council needs to do more to prevent conflict in the first place. It needs to devise and implement comprehensive strategies and should work more closely with other United Nations bodies, including, specifically, this Assembly and the Peacebuilding Commission.

It is, however, the Council's poor record in the handling of inter-State conflicts that is the object of most criticism and the reason for the loss of credibility. The Council does not deal directly with some of the major conflicts and threats to international peace, security and harmony. Some major issues remain unsolved due to non-implementation of Security Council resolutions, such as the Palestinian and the Jammu and Kashmir issues. In the conflicts in the Middle East, the Council's role has been sidelined and viewed mostly as ineffective and partisan. If the Council were to do its job, it would have no time to even think of encroaching on mandates and responsibilities of other United Nations organs.

Improvement in the Council's working methods and more transparent and democratic decision-making are long-standing legitimate demands of the entire membership of the United Nations. Charter provisions, such as those in Articles 11, 15, 24, 31 and 32, and rule 48 of the provisional rules of procedure, are not being implemented.

Determination of the Council's agenda depends to a large extent on the positions and priorities of the permanent members and major powers. There is inaction and delay in the Council, even in the face of the most obvious acts of aggression and breaches of peace. On the other hand, sometimes there is proaction, even interference, in the internal affairs of sovereign States. The Council remains a closed club, controlled and orchestrated by the few.

Most of the problems of the Council that we seek to redress through reform are related to the permanent members. I ask delegates here today, will not increasing the number of individual permanent members render the Council more ineffective, as the interests of a greater number of permanent members would then need to be reconciled? I ask whether we can address these problems by enlarging the coterie of the few or by strengthening the democratic representation, the role and the influence of the general membership in the Security Council. Logically, the latter is the right and the only feasible approach. The majority of the membership should support this approach, even though some have been made to believe otherwise and have been asked to state their case in the name of Council reform. We believe the views of two specific groups are inimical and opposed to genuine reform as envisaged by the Member States.

The first group is that of the permanent members of the Council who do not want genuine reform and who believe in the status quo. In particular, they do not want to reform the use of the veto, which over six decades has been used for their interests.

The second group is comprised of a handful of countries whose goal in the reform exercise is to promote — and rightly so, as far as they are concerned — their self-interest. These aspirants to special status and individual privilege in fact want to become permanent members at any cost. Interestingly, they are also in the forefront in criticizing the permanent members, whose power and influence they claim to challenge. Paradoxically, however, they crave to join the same club. It is obvious that the compromises and bargains involved in this grand game will achieve anything but reform for the Security Council. Indeed, it may be inferred that the ambition of this group is in reality to block any substantial reform of the Council.

But others have moved on and caused their positions to evolve. Expansion in non-permanent seats, as we all know, is an option supported by all Member States and groups. That reform is among the few elements on which there is agreement, as noted by the Task Force. The non-permanent seats provide the maximum and the most equitable opportunities for all Member States for representation on the Council. Many Member States have also shown interest and flexibility in exploring new ideas, including intermediate options involving re-election and longer terms than the regular two-year terms.

However, an approach which is truly reflective of new realities and which carries strong potential in the context of Security Council reform is regional representation. The Arab States for example call for a permanent Arab representation in any future expansion of the Council. The Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) has demanded that any reform of the Council must ensure adequate representation of its member States.

Then we have the African position on regional representation. While the Group of Four (G-4) countries have self-selected themselves, I congratulate the African Union in its responsible act for the selection of Africa's representatives in the Council. The members of the G-4 say that they support the African position, but why then are they not willing to accept the same for their own regions? There, the members of the G-4 are asking for permanent seats to be allocated to the regions but not for the regions. Simply put, they want to have seats in the name of the regions but then occupy those seats themselves.

No wonder that while Africa is united on its principled position, the approach of the G-4 has created serious rifts and divisions in Asia, the Group of Western European and other States and the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States. The Eastern European Group, on the other hand, so far without any aspirant for permanent membership, is comfortably placed with its demand for an additional non-permanent seat, which will be available for all the countries of that region. I

congratulate the members of that Group as well, for their excellent choice of approach.

We have expressed on earlier occasions our understanding for the principled African position, which is shared by the Arabs and Eastern Europeans. We believe that this model of regional representation, if applied to all other regions, could garner the reciprocal support of those regions, and thus promote a feasible compromise for all.

The challenge is how to reconcile the various positions. We have always believed that only a negotiated solution can muster the widest possible consensus required to bring about actual reform of the Security Council. That approach would accommodate the interests and positions of all Member States and groups, and it would result in a strengthened and more effective United Nations.

That is why we insist on a step-by-step approach in accordance with decision 62/557, adopted in September. To ensure success, we need to lay down the parameters and ground rules for transparent, open and effective intergovernmental negotiations. That is a necessity and a must. Let me emphasize that that is why the Uniting for Consensus group and others have proposed that in accordance with decision 62/557, the Open-ended Working Group should carry out its work to address the framework and modalities in order to prepare and facilitate the intergovernmental negotiations to be held subsequently. We look forward to engaging with all Member States to successfully complete this important phase in the coming weeks. Having participated in the last few meetings held by the previous President of the General Assembly, I would say to the representative of the United Kingdom today that all members of the Uniting for Consensus group, which has been working for consensus in the General Assembly, are well aware that we decided to go through the process of reaching consensus only because it was in the interest of the membership at large, and because it would be beneficial for the organization of work to first seek to establish modalities that would be likely to bear fruit when intergovernmental relationships were discussed.

Once the negotiations start in February, we will participate constructively and will make substantive proposals on all aspects of reform, including working methods and expansion of membership. Our proposals will be consistent with the objectives of a more democratic, equitably representative, transparent, effective and accountable Council. They will conform to the principles of the sovereign equality of States and equitable geographical distribution. And that is the key point. They will be reflective of the diversity and pluralism of the contemporary international community. We seek a comprehensive reform — not a quick fix, which some want.

Through negotiations, we shall work for a model that is responsive to the substantial increase in the number of developing countries in the United Nations membership since the last expansion of the Council in the 1960s. The model that we support would contain some of the following very important features.

First, the model would provide for allocation of seats to correspond specifically with the legitimate interest of the vast majority of small and medium-sized States in serving as Council members. Secondly, it would prioritize regional interests over individual interests. Thirdly, it would accommodate the positions of all Member States and regional and other groupings, including in particular Africa, Eastern Europe and the OIC/Arab States. Fourthly, the model will seek to build consensus within and among regions in order to achieve a stronger and more effective Security Council. Fifthly, it can have no place, however, for outdated concepts of permanency, individual privilege and special status. On the contrary, it will enhance accountability and accord primacy to principles over power.

This approach represents the only way to restore the authority, credibility and legitimacy of the Security Council, which are objectives we must all live up to in this process of Security Council reform. It is an approach that will protect and project and embrace the future for all of our family of Member States, not through the double-speak of diplomacy and never-never land, but through the realization of where their future lies.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.