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President: Mr. Opertti . . . . . (Uruguay)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 11 (*continued*)

Report of the Security Council (A/53/2)

Mr. Sharma (India): Towards the turn of the century, a famous lawyer known for the length of his arguments was once told by a judge, "I have listened very carefully to your presentation, and I must say, I am none the wiser", to which the lawyer replied, "None the wiser, possibly, my lord, but certainly better informed." The Security Council's annual reports to the General Assembly seem to be drafted in the same spirit, except that by looking at a compilation of Council documents which we have seen individually as they were issued over the year, we are not even better informed.

Article 24 of the Charter, which conferred on the Security Council primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security on behalf of the full membership of the United Nations, also stipulated that the Council should submit annual and, when necessary, special reports to the General Assembly for its consideration. The intent of the Charter is quite clear. The Council has been delegated responsibilities, and it is expected that it should give a full accounting of its work to the membership from which it receives its powers. That has never happened, but it is more than ever necessary that the letter and spirit of the Charter should be respected in the Council's reports. Two years ago, at the initiative of members of the Non-Aligned Movement, the General Assembly at its fifty-first session adopted resolution 51/193, which encouraged the Security Council to provide a substantive, analytical and material account of its work. It included an indicative list of what the general membership would wish to see included in the Council's reports.

Unfortunately, the Council continues to fall short of the wishes of the General Assembly. What we still have in its report is merely a listing of what the Council has done or said on a number of issues. What the general membership would have expected, in addition to the measures indicated in resolution 51/193, is a report that provided, for example, an objective assessment of the extent to which the Council's activity or decisions had been helpful regarding the issues before the Council, and the Council's assessment of its own work.

In the absence of such an evaluation, we must perforce comment on the various sections in the report only on the basis of the limited information that it provides. We note that over the last year the Council has tried to broaden its horizons. On the one hand, a whole new doctrine is being built up of the wider implications of security in the post-millennial world. Economic deprivations, trade disputes, environmental degradation and large-scale human rights violations, to name only a few, are all seen as threats in a seamless weave of global security. And, it is argued, the Security Council should have a role in all of these. Others argue that, in the field of disarmament, the Council must monitor compliance with multilateral treaties. A third argument is that the Council must have a role in any international system of

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criminal justice. Though there is no intergovernmental agreement on these concepts, they have stretched the canvas of Security Council action well beyond anything envisaged for it in the Charter. This year, for instance, the Council held a meeting to consider issues related to humanitarian assistance, not a traditional concern of the Security Council, and not an area in which the collective experience of the permanent members would have provided any great insights.

However, it is apparent from the report that, despite claims and arguments that the concept of security is now much wider than it was 50 years ago, the Council still mostly addresses problems that are properly within its mandate as defined in the Charter. It is understood that security has a wider dimension, but it does not follow from this that the Security Council's role should be widened to permit it a say in questions of economic or social security. We would expect the Security Council to continue to restrict itself only to international peace and security, as defined and understood in the Charter.

It is also interesting that, despite the lip service that is paid to the wider concept of security, the budget of the United Nations still does not reflect this. Over the last few bienniums, when the United Nations budget has been held to zero real growth, it was reasonable to expect that, if economic and social issues were given higher priority, more resources would have been channelled towards them. However, the percentage of the budget earmarked for the Security Council has been preserved with the utmost care, not because it was addressing the wider issues of security, but because it continues to retain a privileged position even in the allocation of scarce resources. All the more reason, therefore, why the general membership should ask if the Security Council is giving it value for money.

It would be difficult to agree that it is. On three issues where the Council has stretched its mandate, the report says very little. As regards Iraq, the international community agrees that mandatory resolutions adopted by the Security Council must be implemented. However, the expansion of the role of the Council in running what is described as the oil-for-food programme is quite without precedent. Without any expertise in the matter, or indeed a mandate, the Security Council is in effect deciding what the needs of Iraq are; the wishes and economic priorities of the Government are almost secondary. This is an extraordinary development, very little debated.

The Council has had several meetings on Africa. This in itself may have been helpful in drawing attention to problems long neglected. But what has the Council achieved? It has set up six working groups, but there is very little to indicate that these have, or will, produce anything substantive.

The two ad hoc Tribunals which the Council has set up were, in our consistent view, not within its powers to establish. Nevertheless, they exist, though it makes us uncomfortable that two judicial bodies should be set up and be described as subsidiary organs of the Security Council.

However, what is even more regrettable are two offshoots of this decision.First, in a letter written by the judges of the International Court of Justice to the Secretary-General, the Court notes that it has an annual budget of approximately $11 million, while the 1997 budget of the International Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia stands at $70 million. The International Court of Justice has expressed its regret that it and the ad hoc Tribunals do not receive comparable treatment. This is grossly anomalous and needs correction. A Charter body should not suffer in comparison with those set up, through decisions of dubious legality, by the Security Council.

The other unfortunate offshoot, though of course not reflected in the report of the Council, was the pressure brought to bear to ensure that the Statute of the International Criminal Court gave a continuing role to the Security Council. In setting up the ad hoc Tribunals, which under the Charter it had no power to do, the Security Council argued that the maintenance of international peace and security in the former Yugoslavia and in Rwanda made it essential to set them up. In the negotiations on the Statute of the International Criminal Court, it was argued that the maintenance of international peace and security might sometimes make it necessary for the Court not to act, if the Security Council so decided. These arguments contradict each other; neither is tenable as a basis to give the Security Council a role in the administration of international law.

I will turn now to chapter 24 of the report. This chapter is one of those under part I of the report, entitled "Questions considered by the Security Council under its responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security". It is interesting that under this section the Council should again have had to have a separate chapter on "The responsibility of the Security Council in the maintenance of international peace and security". This, of course, was the rubric and the excuse under which the

Council took upon itself the right to pronounce itself on the nuclear tests in South Asia. Is one to believe that in addressing the issues listed in the other 23 chapters in this section the Council was not acting to maintain international peace and security?

When the Council took up its consideration of this issue, I sent a letter to the President of the Council, on the instructions of my Government, asking for clarifications on why the Council thought it necessary to meet on our nuclear tests. This letter is listed among those that the Council received, but my Government still has not received the courtesy of any response, let alone a satisfactory response, from the Council. The questions I raised about the draft resolution in my letter remain just as valid about the version adopted. They are fundamental questions, which must concern the wider membership, about the way the Council functions, and I shall recall some of them.

If the Security Council assumes a role in disarmament, can it continue to ignore the overwhelming demand for elimination of nuclear weapons, which has been repeatedly endorsed by the General Assembly? Will the Council henceforth engage itself in matters relating to nuclear disarmament?

If indeed the Charter of the United Nations envisaged any role for the Security Council on non-proliferation issues, which is doubtful, why did it not act on the proliferation of tens of thousands of nuclear weapons since the United Nations was established? Is the Security Council's concern on matters of proliferation limited to horizontal proliferation alone? Is the continued retention of nuclear weapons by the nuclear-weapon States not considered a proliferation risk that threatens international peace and security?

If nuclear tests are a threat to non-proliferation and disarmament, or if the imputation is that tests raise tensions, why did the Council not take cognizance of the more than 2,000 tests carried out over the last 50 years, including as recently as 1996?

On what basis can the Council call on a country which has undertaken no legal commitment to do so to stop nuclear weapon development programmes, when this process continues in other countries without the Council taking any notice?

Can the Council call on a country not to develop ballistic missiles when it has made no such call on others, including those who have several thousand of these weapons in their arsenals and continue to produce and develop them? The United Nations has not even considered the negotiation of a treaty to ban the development or production of ballistic missiles.

On what basis did the Council limit its concern on nuclear weapons to an arbitrarily defined geographical subregion, when nuclear weapons by definition have a global reach and impact, and when the security concerns of India extend well beyond that subregion? Non-proliferation is a global issue and cannot be segmented according to political preferences.

The Security Council acts on behalf of the full membership of the United Nations. Neither of the treaties mentioned in the draft resolution — the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) — enjoys universal adherence among the United Nations membership. Since several Member States of the United Nations are not States parties to these treaties, on whose behalf did the Security Council "reaffirm" its commitment to these Treaties?

Can the Security Council urge any Member State of the United Nations to become a party to any treaty without delay and without conditions? This is tantamount to coercion and a clear violation of the fundamental principle that a State must freely consent to be bound by a treaty, a right protected by the law of treaties.

On what basis can the Secretary-General report to the Council on the steps taken by the countries addressed by this resolution, when most of its provisions are *ultra vires* or at variance with international law and infringe on the sovereign prerogatives of Member States?

Under Article 31 of the Charter,

> "Any Member of the United Nations which is not a member of the Security Council may participate, without vote, in the discussion of any question brought before the Security Council whenever the latter considers that the interests of that Member are specially affected."

The Council disregarded this Charter provision by not giving India an opportunity to participate in the discussions on its draft on the nuclear tests in South Asia. The general membership of the United Nations will note this as one more instance of the Council acting in a manner that was neither open nor transparent, a problem

that has been repeatedly highlighted in the discussions in the Open-Ended Working Group of the General Assembly on Security Council reform.

It is this lack of transparency that gives rise to the belief that the Council often acts not on behalf of the general membership, as it must under the terms of the Charter, but to preserve privilege. The Non-Aligned Movement has consistently spoken on these reform aspects relating to the Council's activities. We also recall that in December 1997 the non-permanent members of the Council submitted a position paper which reflected a sense of dissatisfaction with the Council's methods of operation and made suggestions for reform. We have to correct the situation in which the Council is perceived as oscillating between hasty action, leaving the developing world dissatisfied, or no action, making the developing world feel that the Council is being indifferent because the interest of the permanent members is not engaged.

In addition, while the Security Council assumes new powers and functions of dubious legality, we also see disturbing attempts to bypass it or to ignore its role in the maintenance of international peace and security when this suits powerful interests. Some States, including some permanent members, have questioned the need for the authorization by the Council of peace enforcement by regional arrangements, so clearly stipulated in Article 53 of the Charter; in the course of two recent crises, regarding Iraq and Kosovo, it has been argued that a resolution of the Council authorizing military action was not required. In Afghanistan, despite the repeated appeals of its legitimate Government, the Council has done nothing to check foreign intervention, which has sought to overthrow the Government by armed force. These are developments that undermine the authority of the Council even further.

The report makes pro forma references to the situation in the Middle East, one of the issues where the Council has marginalized itself. Several times in the recent past, including this year, special sessions of the General Assembly have been called to discuss this issue, which is on the agenda of the Security Council, but on which the Council has been less than involved. These decisions of the general membership reflect a deep dissatisfaction with the current functioning of the Council. This situation should not be allowed to drag on.

The Council's annual report was not intended to confirm the need for reform, but that is what it does. It is clear that the Council needs to be made more transparent and more representative of the general membership; the one objective will probably depend on the other. We hope that this report will provide one more spur for the process of expansion and reform of the Security Council, which India, along with others, proposed five years ago, and which was carried by consensus in the General Assembly.

Ms. Ramiro Lopez (Philippines): I would like to thank the Security Council for its report and the President of the Council for presenting the report to us today.

The report of the Security Council is not only a stark and compelling historical record of the critical global events during the period it covers; the report is also a faithful record of the action and response of the Security Council to these events. But perhaps just as significantly, the report is also a cogent and real link between the Security Council and those of us who sit in this Assembly.

In this regard, I welcome the sincere efforts of the Council to enhance the analytical nature of the report, something that many United Nations Member States have been asking for over the years. This effort has somewhat increased the content of the report, but this is an increase that is well justified. I must also mention at this point that the efforts of the Council throughout the year to make its proceedings and the proceedings of its Committees more transparent are welcome developments which we should continue to encourage.

However, we would like to see more substantive information appear in the report, as called for in resolution 51/193, on the work of the Council's subsidiary bodies, such as the Sanctions Committee — particularly information on the consultations of the whole undertaken prior to action by the Council on substantive issues within its mandate.

Even as we, as an Organization, continue to debate the issue of reforming the United Nations — a debate that threatens to outlast us all — we must take every opportunity to enhance our work, which can be achieved through the positive interaction of the Assembly and the Council. This positive interaction would revitalize the Assembly's role in the maintenance of international peace and security. For, while the Security Council is structured and primarily geared towards addressing actual threats to peace, the Assembly is quite suited to preventing conflict and creating the conditions for peace and progress and, indeed, many of us believe, has a central role to play in the area of peace.

With this precisely in mind, we mandated that the President of the Assembly should, based on his assessment of the debate on this report, hold informal consultations to discuss any action that should be taken by the Assembly based on this report. An indispensable requirement for such consultations, and in fact for the meaningful consideration of any action by the Assembly, is the submission of a report that is more substantive and analytical.

We look forward to these consultations, confident that each and every member of this Assembly, and this Assembly as a collective body, have much to contribute in our common quest for peace.

Ms. Wensley (Australia): Australia attaches considerable importance to this agenda item. As the organ of the United Nations with primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, the Security Council plays a key role which directly affects the interests of all Member States. Its report to the General Assembly is one very important means — but, I emphasize, only one — available to the Council to keep the wider membership informed of the decisions it has taken which impact on those interests.

Comment on the report provides all Member States with the opportunity to reflect upon the relationship between the General Assembly and the Security Council and on how that relationship can be strengthened. It also enables us to recognize and to reaffirm the central role the Council plays.

The report before us is, in Australia's view, a useful reference document which summarizes the extensive work carried out by the Security Council over the last year. Reading it, there is no denying the vital contribution the Council has made to the maintenance of peace and security and there is no denying that it will continue to play a pivotal role.

I take this opportunity to place on record the appreciation of the Australian Government to all the members of the Council, permanent and non-permanent, for the contributions they have made. To the newly elected non-permanent members which will assume their seats next year, I reiterate Australia's congratulations on their election and pledge our full support for the task ahead of them, including, I would suggest, responding in both intellectual and practical ways to the issues being raised in the debate on this report — a debate which, I must say, my delegation is finding very interesting and useful. I hope, to use Ambassador Sharma's introductory language, that if we, the General Assembly members, are better informed by the report, then they, the members of the Security Council, may be the wiser for this discussion.

Life as a non-member of the Security Council can at times be very frustrating. Day to day, we know that consultations are taking place amongst the members of the Council on issues crucial to global peace and security. Sometimes we have a very direct and material interest in the issues under discussion; at other times, our own direct security concerns may be less engaged, but our broader interests as members of the community of nations are nonetheless affected.

Invariably, the consultations amongst Council members take place behind closed doors. Resolutions and statements are negotiated and decisions taken informally without reference to the wider membership and are often cloaked in a shroud of secrecy. There are, sometimes, good reasons for this. The issues are often such that both confidentiality and speed of decision-making are crucial. But at the same time, the process generates frustrations and tensions for non-members, who are not only excluded from the decision-making process, but also often denied access to timely and comprehensive information about how those decisions are reached.

These are, of course, not new concerns. As we have just been reminded by the representative of the Philippines, they have long been the subject of discussion. The call for greater transparency and openness in the work of the Security Council can be traced back many years.

Some important progress has been made in this time. The annual report of the Council has undergone numerous changes in format, most recently this year. We welcome these changes, which we believe make the report a more useful reference document and a more useful analytical tool.

More important are reforms that have been introduced to keep the wider membership informed of issues before the Council as they happen. In these days of instant telecommunications and blanket media coverage of any significant international event, the need for information about the activities of the Council becomes more imperative. Contrary to the normal laws of supply and demand, the more we hear, the more we need to know. Watching an event unfold on CNN does not satisfy our Governments' appetite for information; it simply sharpens it.

Surely, the Members of this Organization that are not members of the Security Council deserve better access to information about the Council's activities than the media. We must have information that is both more timely and more comprehensive. We must be able to brief our Governments on these activities, because they must make informed and timely policy decisions and they, too, face pressures from the media.

The briefings given to non-members by the President of the Council following informal meetings are a most important innovation. While my delegation has at times felt uncomfortable waiting for media conferences to conclude before we and other non-members are briefed — and the symbolism of this is obvious— we are nonetheless appreciative of the effort that is being made to keep us informed. To this end, I would like to thank those Council members that have made a particular effort to give full and detailed briefings during their tenure of the presidency.

We believe strongly that these briefings must continue, not as an optional or discretionary activity of the presidency, but as a central part of the rights and responsibilities that members assume when they take their seats in the Council. It is equally important that all members remain accessible to non-members and respond promptly to requests for information. This holds for both permanent and non-permanent members, although it could perhaps be argued that the responsibility of the five permanent members is even greater, as they are the keepers of the Council's institutional memory. For its part, Australia will increasingly look at how members discharge or propose to discharge their responsibility towards non-members in determining our support for candidatures for non-permanent seats.

Other improvements have been made in the Council's working methods to assist openness and transparency. The monthly assessments that are offered by each outgoing President, which are included as an annex to this year's report, are interesting, but could be circulated much more usefully at the end of each month. The Council's decision in April this year to circulate the tentative forecast and schedule of work is another welcome decision.

It is interesting to note that many of these improvements had their genesis in the discussions in the Open-ended Working Group on Security Council reform, and we are pleased that the Council has adopted them. The Working Group's report, which will be taken up in a later plenary meeting under another agenda item, offers a number of further suggestions for improving the transparency and openness of the Council. They warrant very careful consideration.

The General Assembly has an important role to play in reminding the Security Council of its responsibility to keep the wider United Nations membership informed of its activities. Transparency is an important principle, as we have heard over and over again in today's debate, but the issue is more than simply one of principle. Keeping non-members informed is crucial to maintaining their support. Over time, any erosion of support will inevitably have an impact on the standing of the Council and the credibility of its decisions. This in turn, I suggest, would have wider repercussions in terms of the overall credibility and influence of the United Nations itself.

I reiterate that the report of the Security Council that we are dealing with today is a good document. It is a valuable step in the direction of greater transparency and openness in the work of the Council, but it is only one small step. We look forward to many more as part of the process of reform, which remains a fundamental preoccupation of my Government.

Mr. Fowler (Canada) (*interpretation from French*): As this is the first time that I have taken the floor under your presidency, Sir, allow me to express my pleasure at seeing you presiding over our deliberations. I am certain that under your expert guidance the work of the General Assembly this year will be profitable and productive.

The debate on the report of the Security Council is one of the most important items on the agenda of the General Assembly because, under the terms of the Charter of the United Nations, the relationship between the Security Council and the General Assembly is unique. Nowhere else in the Charter do the Member States entrust a select few of their number with the responsibility for decision-making in what is arguably the most vital area of our collective activity: the maintenance of international peace and security. In no other area do all the States members of the General Assembly agree to carry out the decisions made by those few.

The relationship between the States Members of the United Nations and the Security Council took shape in the wake of the global conflicts that characterized the first half of this century, and we can congratulate ourselves that the Council's work on behalf of all of the Member States has been one of the main bulwarks against confrontation on a global scale. The Council has managed, with varying degrees of success, to contain

several of the all too numerous threats to international peace and security, which, although less extensive and more limited, have characterized the second half of the twentieth century. However, the Security Council is in danger of being unable to meet the new challenges to peace and security in the coming millennium. As we are well aware, these challenges relate more to conflicts within States than to conflicts between States, conflicts that increasingly target civilian populations.

The danger stems from two negative and closely related trends: first, the inability of the Security Council to achieve swift consensus on missions seeking to resolve some of the world's most worrying problems; and secondly, the Draconian reduction in resources for peacekeeping, both human and financial — resources that are an indispensable condition for an effective Council. Both trends are serious threats to the Council's relevance and both are reversible, given the requisite will and commitment.

(*spoke in English*)

Three trends appear to us to emerge from the report of the Security Council for the period from 16 June 1997 to 15 June 1998 which we believe are likely to have the greatest influence on the Security Council's future effectiveness. The first is what may be the beginning of a move from the closed, secretive, behind the scenes deliberations and decision-making of the Council in favour of a more open and transparent process. Still more can be done to ensure that Member States not currently members of the Council remain well seized of the Council's activities, and that Member States involved in and affected by matters before the Council are able to exercise their Charter rights, especially under Articles 31 and 32.

Evidence of such an evolution can be found in the presidential assessments and summaries annexed as part of the report, as well as the detailed briefings provided by successive Security Council presidencies immediately following the Council's deliberations. It is Canada's hope that this practice will continue and become enshrined as a part of a President's duty. Another indication of this happy trend is the willingness of some Council Presidents to hold open debates on issues on which Member States not currently members of the Council wish to speak. In this regard, I note with regret that while the views of non-Council members are sometimes heard immediately prior to the Council taking a formal decision, this is not the same as the Council actually considering the views of Member States before taking such a decision.

The Open-ended Working Group on Security Council reform has made some progress in nearing general agreement on the working methods of the Security Council, particularly considering the need for transparency of the Council's work as well as its decision-making process, including, of course, work on the curtailment of the veto. The advances made in these discussions are somewhat encouraging. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said of the Working Group's efforts to find general agreement on the thorny matter of expansion.

A second and positive trend is the somewhat greater willingness of the Council to engage in broader thematic debates that expand the Security Council's capacity to deal with modern challenges to peace and security. I refer particularly to debates such as those concerning landmines, child soldiers, the protection of humanitarian assistance workers and the Secretary-General's report on the situation in Africa. In regard to the last of these, I wish to express Canada's admiration for the successful follow-up process in the form of the ad hoc Working Group of the Security Council established pursuant to resolution 1170 (1998) and its six thematic subgroups.

These debates are helping the Council to examine and re-examine traditional interpretations of its mandate in order to address emerging threats which are likely to have an impact on our collective security in the next century. The addition of peace-building to the Council's range of responses is also welcome, as it stands to come to grips with the root causes of conflict and should help to allow consideration by the Council of broad threats to human security. Considerations of peace-building will, however, further exacerbate the continuing resource crisis with which the Council is so hobbled.

The third trend is not a positive one. I refer to the erosion of the credibility of the Council. The most worrisome example of this trend is the decision by the heads of State or Government of the Organization of African Unity, at their summit meeting this June in Burkina Faso, no longer to be bound by Security Council-imposed sanctions — in this case, those levied against Libya. This action is a troubling precedent which is, of course, contrary to the clear Charter obligations of all Member States of the United Nations to carry out the decisions of the Security Council. It is clear, however, that leadership requires "followership" and that the Council can only lead with the continuing consent of the membership — a consent which must be continually won and nurtured.

Canada believes that such questioning is reversible. The Security Council must become more willing to become involved, and more consistent in both how and when it becomes involved, in issues that pose a threat to international peace and security. It must also, however, become more sensitive to the collateral humanitarian impact of sanctions. Further, the Council belongs to all of us. It cannot be allowed to focus on solving the problems of one region while remaining indifferent to those of others.

Another step that would aid in arresting the erosion of the Council's authority is to narrow the distinction between elected and permanent members of the Council. Such a move could only raise the credibility of the Council and thus result in greater effectiveness in the implementation of Security Council decisions.

We believe that the General Assembly must continue to pay close attention to the work of the Security Council to ensure that in the coming century the Council, which makes peace and security decisions on our behalf, evolves in the direction of more responsibility, more accountability and less impenetrability.

Mr. Konishi (Japan): As a member of the Security Council, my delegation wishes to associate itself with the statement made by Ambassador Greenstock this morning in his capacity as President of the Security Council for this month. We are fully supportive of all his assessments and would simply like to add a few supplementary comments.

My delegation welcomes the consideration of this important matter in the General Assembly, as it will provide an opportunity to reflect upon and carefully assess the developments pertaining to international peace and security which have taken place during the period from 16 June 1997 to 15 June 1998. But even more importantly, it will provide us with the opportunity to consider the question of the Security Council's relationship with, and responsibility to, the wider membership of the United Nations.

Allow me to take this opportunity to welcome the numerous positive developments reflected in the format of this year's report. There are, in the view of my delegation, two major examples of improved transparency in the work of the Council which have been pursued during the period under consideration. One is the inclusion in the addendum to the report of monthly assessments made by former Presidents, which offer an analytical perspective. Another is the diligent conduct of daily briefings by the presidency. They are attended by an increasingly large number of non-Council Member States interested in acquiring timely information on deliberations in the informal consultations of the Council.

As the President of the Security Council in April of this year, Japan, too, strove to improve transparency in the work of the Council in both these aspects. These efforts are reflected in the report on pages 347 to 351. We are pleased to see that the report faithfully incorporated improvements according to the blueprint provided in the note by the President of the Security Council (S/1997/451) issued on 12 June 1997. My delegation is hopeful that these improvements will further strengthen the Council's accountability to the wider membership.

It goes without saying that improving transparency in the work of the Council is one of the many important elements in the greater task of enhancing the credibility and effectiveness of the Council and the United Nations as a whole. In the view of my delegation, however, the improved transparency of the Council will have its true impact felt only when the composition of the Council itself reflects the realities of the changing world. My delegation would like to reaffirm its commitment to all these efforts to further enhance the credibility of the Council, and the United Nations as a whole, so that it can better deal with the challenges that lie ahead.

Mr. Čalovski (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia): The delegation of the Republic of Macedonia would like to congratulate the President of the Security Council, the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom, on his introduction of the report of the Security Council to the General Assembly for the period 16 June 1997 to 15 June 1998. We consider the Security Council's report in conjunction with the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization.

We are pleased with the informative and useful presentation by the Council President and with the format and the content of this year's report. It is correct to say that it represents an improvement in comparison with last year's report. It is clear that this year's discussion in the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council has influenced the Council to report to the General Assembly more fully and comprehensively. In the light of our stated position in favour of having a more relevant General Assembly and more relevant

Security Council, we expect that next year's report will reflect further improvement.

The Republic of Macedonia is mentioned in the report several times. I would like to take this opportunity to state that cooperation between the Republic of Macedonia and the Security Council has been satisfactory indeed. My delegation has maintained excellent relations with all members of the Security Council, both elected and permanent. I would like to thank them for the cooperation they have extended and for their support of the preventive measures that have helped the maintenance of peace and security in our region.

During the reporting period, the Security Council several times deliberated on the question of the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force (UNPREDEP), which is stationed in my country, on our western and northern borders with Albania and with the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Twice, the Security Council decided to extend the mandate of the Force. The success story of this one and only preventive United Nations mission is now common knowledge in the Organization. It represents an important contribution by the United Nations and by the Republic of Macedonia to the stability of the region. Given developments in Albania and in Kosovo and Metohija, the importance of the mission of UNPREDEP now and in the immediate future has increased. The Republic of Macedonia will continue to give its full support to the mission, and I am sure that the Security Council's support will not be lacking.

The Security Council has become the centre of the political activities of the United Nations. It is the busiest organ of the Organization. Owing to its ability to act under Chapter VII of the Charter, the Security Council is the most powerful political body in the sphere of international relations. Owing to the veto power of its permanent members, the Security Council is the only undemocratic body of our Organization. So there is no doubt as to why reform of the Security Council is, politically, the most delicate undertaking of United Nations reform. For some time in the future the present situation will not change. However, it is correct to state that the Security Council has endeavoured to improve its working methods and to become more transparent. That can be seen from the present report. It is true that closed consultations and the decisions taken at closed consultation meetings are the subject of concern for many delegations. On the other hand, it is not correct to say that non-members of the Council cannot find out what is going on in the closed consultations room or bring their views to the attention of the members of the Council. As far as my delegation is concerned, I am pleased to state that all members of the Council have been cooperative. We therefore have no complaints to make. We would like to express satisfaction at the cooperation extended to us.

This is not the time to speak about the role of the Security Council or about the role of the General Assembly. We will have the chance to do that under other relevant agenda items. Nevertheless, I would like to use this opportunity to stress that there is an unquestionable need to strengthen the role and the relevance of the General Assembly in order to stop its diminishing influence in international political affairs. My delegation is in favour of a relevant Security Council and of a relevant General Assembly. Close cooperation between those United Nations organs is of paramount importance. If both can act in a timely manner, with the full force of the Charter and with the backing of Member States, the international community and, in particular, non-governmental organizations, the United Nations will definitely become the most relevant Organization for the maintenance of international peace and security and for the strengthening of international cooperation.

Mr. Ka (Senegal) (*interpretation from French*): In conformity with Article 24 (3) of the Charter, the Security Council has submitted its fifty-third report for consideration by the General Assembly. Let me at the outset pay deserved tribute to the members of the Security Council for the quality, depth, and exhaustively analytical and balanced character of the report, which enables us clearly to see their commitment and their devotion in the service of international peace and security: the primary responsibility of the Security Council.

In reading the report, we note that a number of points arise. The world situation continues to be dominated by numerous localized tensions and wars which pose a serious threat to the peace and stability of many regions in spite of the unrelenting efforts of the international community, and more particularly of the Security Council, to find lasting political solutions. Here I would mention the lack of progress in the Middle East peace process, the ongoing civil war in Afghanistan, the escalating violence in Kosovo, the standoff in the Cyprus peace process and the many conflicts in Africa. All these situations, which threaten international peace and security, are of grave concern to the entire international community.

The Security Council, the guarantor of international peace and security, is well aware of this, and during the period under review devoted a great deal of time and energy to limiting these dangers. In this context, I want to highlight and to welcome the discrete but vigorous action taken by the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, to achieve the peaceful settlement of a number of serious crises.

We especially welcome the Secretary-General's courageous initiatives and diplomatic breakthroughs at the beginning of the year during the tensions in the Persian Gulf. My delegation believes that since some of these initiatives are undertaken with the backing of the Security Council, it would also be important to continue to support the credibility of the United Nations and the authority of its Secretary-General so that other actions he undertakes with States to strengthen peace are respected by all.

The report of the Security Council gives top priority to the crises convulsing Africa, the continent that is currently experiencing the largest number of internal conflicts on the Council's agenda. I am referring here to Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic, Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Western Sahara and Sierra Leone. This unenviable situation led the Security Council to examine conditions for a concerted international effort to promote peace and stability in Africa during a special meeting at the ministerial level on 25 September 1997.

At that meeting, the members of the Council asked the Secretary-General to submit a report on the sources of conflict in Africa and ways to prevent and ultimately eliminate them, as well as to formulate recommendations on the establishment of durable peace and economic development. In that valuable report, which was favourably received by our entire community of nations, the Secretary-General, having rightly pointed out the intrinsic relationship between peace and development, outlined the criteria, means and mechanisms that should be set up to ensure and safeguard peace, a sine qua non condition for sustainable development in Africa.

The report of the Secretary-General gave rise to a vast upsurge of solidarity throughout the world. We should nevertheless remain vigilant and prudent for, as Mr. Kofi Annan himself has said,

> "it is in deeds rather than in declarations that the international community's commitment to Africa will be measured". *(A/52/871, para. 106)*

These very sensible words remind us of the numerous disappointed expectations and the frustrations experienced by Africa at crucial moments in its history.

The drama of Rwanda, Somalia and the Congo (Brazzaville) yesterday and of the Democratic Republic of the Congo today are all real examples, experienced by Africans, not of a lack of interest on the part of the United Nations and the international community in the crises of that continent, but of situations in which the hesitation and, often, the inaction of the Council gave rise to much frustration on the part of certain Member States.

With regard to the specific area of prevention, it should be pointed out that much still remains to be done at the level of the United Nations system. When a situation shows signs of becoming an acute crisis and calls out for urgent measures to be taken or for a rapid deployment of United Nations forces, it would be advisable for United Nations organs, and particularly the Security Council, to react immediately to safeguard international peace and security.

We are increasingly noticing the development of a feeling that, because of its internal contradictions, the Security Council takes too long to react to critical situations in Africa. At the same time, a trend is emerging based on the firm conviction that in the face of the Council's inertia Africa should try to look to itself to resolve its problems at either the regional or subregional levels.

My delegation is of the opinion that regional and subregional initiatives and efforts for the prevention and settlement of conflicts must be encouraged whenever possible, but within the context of full cooperation between regional organizations and the international community, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

The crises in Africa concern not only Africa, but the entire international community. It is therefore in the interest of peace and security that the Security Council should increasingly help Africans in order to ensure that, in the face of these painful crises in Africa, States give greater emphasis to a culture of preventing conflicts rather than a policy of reacting to situations and crises that have already led to much loss of human lives.

It is also appropriate to welcome the initiative taken last January by the Government of Japan in organizing at Tokyo a conference on preventive strategies. That

conference focused essentially on efforts that should be undertaken by the international community to strengthen the preventive warning capacities of States and international organizations in order to respond to the different stages in the evolution of conflicts by specifically targeting the real causes of conflicts and their exacerbation, the factors that lead to outbreaks of violence and those that are likely to contribute to the preservation of peace after conflicts.

A necessary revision of the Security Council's modus operandi should be undertaken in order to ensure that this trend towards inertia does not have grievous consequences on the credibility and legitimacy of the Council. It must be stressed in this regard that there is already a large measure of consensus on such essential points as the Council's meetings and the participation of non-members, its programme of work and the informational meetings convened by the President for countries that are not members of the Council. In this connection, the members of the Council have already grasped the full extent of the reform that must be undertaken to achieve a marked improvement in the Council's methods; and important measures in that direction have already been proposed.

What remains to be done is to translate this impetus into reality and to institutionalize it to endow the Council with greater transparency and legitimacy. In so doing we shall be helping that important decision-making body at the heart of our system to ensure that its decisions are better understood and generally better supported by the Member States of the Organization.

Mr. Fulci (Italy): First of all, allow me to congratulate the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom, Ambassador Sir Jeremy Greenstock, the current President of the Security Council, for his clear, comprehensive and thoughtful presentation of the Council's annual report to the General Assembly. I also wish to extend my compliments to the Secretariat for its excellent work in preparing the document.

Italy has constantly stressed, and wishes to underline once again, the importance of the General Assembly's discussion of the Security Council's report. This report is an essential tool for ensuring effective coordination and interaction between the Council and the General Assembly, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the United Nations Charter, particularly its Article 15. Moreover, this year's report, which covers the period from 16 June 1997 to 15 June 1998, deserves even greater attention, since for the first time it was prepared taking into account the measures approved by the Council in June 1997 to improve its format and its content. While we consider these measures still insufficient, the new format of the report must be considered as an achievement in the context of the strong desire and efforts for greater transparency in the work of the Council and for greater participation by non-members. It also represents a step in the direction of allowing a more meaningful debate on the Council's report, an objective which, in our view, the United Nations membership should continue to pursue constantly and with sincere determination.

Among the changes and additions that appear in this year's report, one would note first of all the inclusion for each subject of background information on the decisions and resolutions of the Council as well as presidential statements for the one-year period preceding the period covered; the description, in chronological order, of the Council's consideration of the matter in question and of actions it took on that item, including descriptions of decisions, resolutions and presidential statements; and the insertion of factual data, including dates of formal meetings and informal consultations on which a subject was discussed. All these elements help provide a clearer and more concise picture of the events relevant to the various items. We especially appreciate the fact that for each of them the report contains a brief description of the subject matter of the informal consultations of the whole.

We would like also to praise the inclusion in the report of a separate part — part V — on the work of the subsidiary organs of the Security Council, such as the sanctions committees, the two ad hoc Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and for Rwanda, the Governing Council of the United Nations Compensation Commission and the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM). The activities of the sanctions committees, the United Nations Compensation Commission and UNSCOM were previously described in the introduction to the report, whereas the Council's action on questions related to the Yugoslav Tribunal was indicated under one of the items concerning the situation in the former Yugoslavia. In its new format, the report not only provides more detailed information about the work of the sanctions committees, but also includes a summary of the activities of the two ad hoc Tribunals. These are indeed positive developments, as they enhance the analytical and comprehensive character of the report — something which, I recall, had been called for repeatedly.

Sections V and VI of the appendices contain the text of all resolutions adopted by the Security Council and all statements made and/or issued by the President of the

Security Council during the period in question. Once again, we are pleased with this change, which results in a more rational presentation of the text of the Council's decisions and presidential statements.

Undoubtedly, the most innovative measure reflected in this year's report is the inclusion, as an addendum, of the monthly assessment of the work of the Council by representatives who have completed their functions as President of the Council. Although these assessments are prepared under the sole responsibility of each former President of the Council and are not to be considered as representing the views of the Council, they complement the report in a very useful manner, especially where they contain indications on priorities given and new trends that have emerged in the work of the Council.

We are confident that the practice of the monthly presidential assessments will constantly evolve towards a less factual and more conceptual analysis of the Council's activity. We would also like to encourage the future Presidents of the Council to follow the very good example set by Ambassador Berrocal Soto of Costa Rica during his December 1997 presidency and submit the monthly assessment for publication and distribution as a separate document of the General Assembly and of the Security Council. Such a measure would do a great deal to increase the transparency of the work of the Council.

As I have already stated, there are areas in which the format and content of the report are still, in our opinion, insufficient to enhance the interaction between the Council and the General Assembly. I refer in particular to the need for substantive indications of the process leading to the Council's decisions. We believe that the report should give a brief account not only of the dates and subject matter of the various informal consultations, but also of discussions on crisis areas, regional tensions, humanitarian emergencies and other issues crucial to international peace and to local and global stability. I think that we are entitled to know who said what. This is really very important for us to know when they come to us and ask to be re-elected and given a new mandate. I am speaking of the elected members, of course.

We continue to believe that the full transparency of the work of the Council is no less important than the effective performance of the Council's mandate. What we need is a true balance between these two principles, in accordance with the letter and the spirit of Article 24 of the United Nations Charter, which states that the Members of the Organization

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

We are also of the view that other aspects of the report could be improved, for example by providing more analytical information on meetings with troop-contributing countries, as well as by highlighting the extent to which General Assembly resolutions on issues falling within the scope of both the Assembly and the Security Council are taken into account by the Council in its decision-making. Furthermore, we believe that the Security Council should fully implement the provision contained in Article 24 (3) of the Charter concerning the submission of special reports by the Council to the General Assembly. For these purposes, General Assembly resolution 51/193, adopted in December 1997, remains a good basis for analysis and discussion.

As our colleague Ambassador Greenstock pointed out, during the period covered by the report the Council has continued its intense activity in the maintenance of international peace and security and related humanitarian aspects.

The number of meetings held and of decisions taken remains high, and this, in my view, is the most convincing evidence of the commitment of the members of the Council — both permanent and elected — to performing their mandate. There is a need to further ensure that this mandate is carried out with full transparency so as to enhance, and not to undermine in any way, the fundamental role of the General Assembly as the major pillar of the United Nations. What is necessary, in our opinion, is to increase the public meetings and to reduce the secret ones.

Our New Zealand colleague, Ambassador Michael Powles, referred this morning to an eminent journalist, Mr. Abe Rosenthal, the former executive editor of *The New York Times*, who recently recalled

> "The culture of secrecy is so imbedded in the work of the Council that the victims, the public and the press take it for granted. They assume it was always that way.
>
> "No, it was not ... For more than 20 years after the UN was created in 1945, almost all Council meetings were open."

And the journalist added:

> "Except for the selection of the Secretary-General, the Council met in its own chamber, TV and reporters present, every word recorded ...
>
> "Most important of all, people of any country could see what their diplomatic representatives and Government were doing to help the world or hurt it." (*"The Secret Council", The New York Times, 6 March 1998*)

On this and other aspects, some progress has been made in the right direction, yet much remains to be done. In particular, many of us were unpleasantly surprised when comparing this year's statement by the five permanent members after their meeting with the Secretary-General with their 1997 statement on the same issue. Last year they spoke of the need to increase the "transparency and efficiency" of the Council. This year, a reference is made only to "efficiency"; in other words, "transparency" has been dropped. May I take the liberty of reminding the delegations of the five permanent members that transparency is not a concept they can freely dispose of. On the contrary, it is a concept strictly linked to the accountability that all members of the Security Council alike, permanent and elected, should have vis-à-vis this Assembly.

I did not come here today prepared to discuss in detail the issue of Security Council reform, and in particular the Council's enlargement. I had instead expected — and I expect — to tackle this important issue under the agenda item allocated to it, that is, item 59. However, since some speakers this morning raised the question, I feel obliged to refer to it.

The rumour is being circulated in some quarters that my country, Italy — specifically, my delegation — is trying to obstruct the reform process. This is a slanderous rumour. Nothing could be further from the truth. Italy is deeply committed and has been committed from the very beginning to the reform of the Council, and in particular to its expansion. At the very beginning of the exercise Italy tabled a very specific proposal that received the support or interest of more than 80 countries. Here in this very room, 80 countries spoke in favour of or commented in favourable terms about this Italian proposal. Later on Italy declared itself ready to also accept the fall-back position of the Non-Aligned Movement — that is to say, an increase for the time being in elective seats only — a proposal that already enjoys the support of 113 countries. And in this year's general debate, at the Assembly's 11th meeting, Italian Foreign Minister Dini went even further. The Italian Government, he said, would be willing to support any reasonable formula — I repeat, any reasonable formula — provided that it does not prejudice the eventual establishment of a common European seat on the Council, distance Italy from the other principal industrial countries or increase the number of countries that are "more equal" than others, transforming the majority of Member States from protagonists into mere spectators of these few countries' decisions. How can anyone, how can anyone in good faith call this obstructionism?

What we are opposing, and we are opposing it, I must admit, with great determination — and we are certainly not alone in this — are attempts by one side to pass the reform with a vote of less than the two thirds of the United Nations Member States provided for in Article 108 of the Charter. What we are opposed to is any elitist, selective and undemocratic solution which would be to the advantage of very few and to the detriment of a great many Members of our Organization.

Mr. Monteiro (Portugal): On 31 December, Portugal will conclude its current mandate as a member of the Security Council. This mandate, conferred by the General Assembly through elections, is an honour and responsibility that we have accepted with utter seriousness and have tried to exercise fully and effectively.

The task which the Security Council is entrusted with is one of the primary purposes set out in the United Nations Charter: the maintenance of international peace and security. To this end, Portugal and the other members of the Council are mandated to act on behalf of all the Members of the United Nations. This task is not an easy one; I agree with the Permanent Representative of Swaziland, who described it as almost needing divine inspiration. But it is one which the members of the Council, including Portugal, undertake to perform on behalf of all those Member States that have seats in this General Assembly.

Acting on behalf of the United Nations Members implies, in our view, that the Council is also accountable to them. This does not in any way weaken the authority of the Council. On the contrary, it reinforces it, by providing a clearer picture of its activities and a better understanding of its responsibilities. This is why Portugal and others have struggled to help bring about a more transparent Council, with full participation by Member States. The consideration of the report of the Security

Council by the General Assembly today is the very expression of that accountability.

Furthermore, the report is important because it preserves for posterity the memory of that principal organ of the United Nations. Hence the need to be informative, accurate and comprehensive in the report.

As was underlined by the President of the Council, Ambassador Greenstock, in his important address this morning, this report is indeed more informative than those of previous years and permits a better understanding of the work of the Security Council. Also more reader-friendly, the report includes assessments by the various Presidents of the Council of the activities carried out during their respective presidencies, providing interesting and further insights into the work carried out by the Council.

After my first presidency, in April 1997, I wrote an assessment of the work of the Security Council during that month — the first such assessment to be written — which was made available to all Member States at the time. This paved the way for the establishment of the Council's current practice.

While focusing on the past, this report does at the same time, in our view, reveal a new trend for the future — a future in which participation is not merely a theoretical stipulation but also a concrete reality.

Members of the Council have understood the importance of following this trend. They have suggested various measures for improving the methods of work of the Council and increasing the participation of the general membership in its work. In an annex to the assessment of the Permanent Representative of Costa Rica, readers will be able to see a letter that was sent last December by 10 members of the Council — the 10 elected Members — containing their suggestions as a result of the experience they garnered in the Security Council. Five of these Members were at the end of their terms, while the other five were halfway through theirs. This was an important initiative that generated a useful discussion on the methods of work among Council members, as well as in the working group on documentation and procedures.

Following that initiative, we hope that very soon a certain number of measures will be ready for consideration by the Council, and this may allow for improved participation in the Council's work by Member States — especially those States that contribute to peacekeeping operations — and pave the way for the Council to enhance the transparency of its work through an increased number of public meetings.

The efforts towards transparency must be pursued consistently and continuously. I am confident that this work will carry on. Others will follow in our footsteps and continue to strive for these goals. I am encouraged by the strong will expressed in this direction by all of the new, incoming members of the Council, recently elected for 1999-2000, over the need persistently to enhance the transparency of the Council, increase the participation of Member States in its work and improve the relationship between the Council and the General Assembly. I recall, particularly, the words of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Canada, The Honourable Lloyd Axworthy, who, during the recent general debate, called for a more open and transparent Security Council and for the full exercise of the rights of participation of Member States in its work, as conferred by the Charter, He wisely said,

> "Far from constraining the Council's efficiency, this will improve the decisions it takes and render its actions more effective." (*A/53/PV.15*)

The question of increasing the membership of the Security Council is currently at a stalemate. It is, therefore, important to press for a change in the methods of the work of the Council. This course of action might even facilitate at a later stage the consideration of the question of equitable representation of the general membership in the Council, in a manner more adapted to the current international situation. No doubt the Security Council would thus increase its legitimacy.

In our view, the work carried out within the framework of the General Assembly by the Open-ended Working Group will continue to represent a decisive contribution to that end. The important goals that we want to achieve require the efforts of both the Council and the General Assembly.

The challenges raised by the various conflicts and disputes in the world today continue to call for a strong Security Council. Its authority and efficiency must therefore be preserved. We should discourage confrontation or division among United Nations organs or between these organs and regional organizations. We should encourage respect for the specific powers with which they have been invested and promote the coordination of efforts, among them efforts towards achieving our common goals. Very recently, following a public debate on Africa, the Council demonstrated its

openness towards this objective and, through its resolution 1197 (1998), established a comprehensive framework of cooperation with regional organizations in Africa. We are confident this will serve as a model for other parts of the world and other regional organizations.

Within the United Nations, different organs complement one another in performing their functions. This notion of complementarity, a cornerstone of the structure created by the Charter, requires not only transparency of the organs but also the full exercise of initiative on their part. As we have said before, the Security Council has to do more to improve the transparency of its methods of work and the participation of Member States. As a key player, the General Assembly should also have a more dynamic role in this regard and should continue to take the necessary steps towards the same goal.

The Secretary-General, through his initiatives and his action in the process he is conducting to reform the Organization, has shown us how to move forward, giving form to the very notion of complementarity of the organs within the United Nations. Let us follow his example and the impetus he has created and continue to try from within the General Assembly, in a convergent action, to improve the relationship with the Security Council and to ensure an enhanced flow of information and greater participation by the general membership in the work of that organ.

The Security Council's work is quite demanding. The Council must act promptly with regard to events around the world. There is an increased expectation on the part of the international community with regard to the response by the Council to various conflicts or disputes. Members of the Council feel this pressure. They know they must act quickly but effectively in each of the situations with which they are faced every day in the Council. As reflected in the annual report, the Council is spending more and more time on its work in comparison with previous years. This situation raises particular difficulties for smaller States with Missions that cannot easily bear the heavy burden that the work in the Council represents. This is an important challenge for these States, which must turn the difficulties in their work into incentives for an effective term on the Council.

We know that in the exercise of the functions of the Council, there is sometimes a tendency to rely on the work of the permanent members. I would like to stress, however, that there is a fundamental role to be played by the elected members within the Council, and in particular by smaller States. Often, it is these smaller States that are in a better position to understand the situations of conflict and dispute, either because they are geographically closer to the States involved or because they have similar economic, social and political conditions. Their contributions are therefore very important in assessing and evaluating solutions to enable the Council to take better decisions.

This does not undermine the roles of either the permanent members or of other large States in the work of the Council. In fact, the power of the Council lies in the ability of its members to complement each other, through their diverse perspectives, and to merge in making a coherent decision. The binding nature of the decisions of the Security Council, as determined by the Charter, only highlights this importance.

Let me underline some other issues to which we have dedicated a considerable part of our efforts during Portugal's mandate in the Council.

The General Assembly, through the adoption of its resolution on An Agenda for Peace, made an important contribution to the subject of sanctions, developing new ideas on sanctions regimes and suggesting practical measures to improve their implementation. It was a challenge to which the Council has yet to respond.

Portugal remains committed to engaging the Council in a profound reflection over this issue, which is today a matter of concern to the international community, as clearly reflected in the General Assembly resolution, bearing in mind the increasing number of sanctions regimes and their impact on international relations.

As Chairman of the Security Council Committee established by resolution 661 (1990) concerning the situation between Iraq and Kuwait, and following the implementation of the most comprehensive humanitarian operation ever undertaken by the United Nations, I am very aware of the difficulties involved in the implementation of sanctions, their efficiency and their side effects. The Committee has undertaken every effort in order to improve the implementation of the humanitarian operation, and the results have been undeniably positive. The cooperation of the Iraqi Government with the Secretary-General and his initiatives in adapting the structures of the Secretariat have been crucial to the success of the operation, which aims at alleviating the suffering of the Iraqi people as a result of eight years of the most severe sanctions ever imposed by the United Nations, which have, unfortunately, yet to achieve their desired objectives.

The Council should reflect profoundly on this. Despite the size of the humanitarian programme, it is not sufficient to resolve all the problems of the Iraqi people; after all, it was not conceived to do so. In its implementation, however, all interested parties have been learning from their daily experience in this operation, which started almost two years ago.

Other chairpersons of sanctions committees have their own experience in implementing different sanctions regimes. The experience gathered so far should not be wasted. It should be kept for the benefit of the Council and future members. With this purpose in mind, we are engaged with members of the Council in a discussion on new measures to help future improvements in the implementation of sanctions, as well as to prevent their having a negative humanitarian impact by a better targeting of their effects. This subject should be the topic of discussion by the entire membership and a public debate should be prompted on the issue. We believe that the Council would benefit from this — from receiving different views and suggestions that would be presented.

Portugal considers that a public debate of thematic aspects particularly relevant to the work of the Council is an important part of its activities. Early on in our mandate, I proposed an open debate on post-conflict peace-building, which I considered would be useful for the Council to identify crucial issues relevant to its own decisions. I am happy to see that thematic debates have become an important part of the programme of the Council. We are also encouraged by the interest expressed by Member States in participating in these public meetings of the Council.

This also holds true for the open debates that the Council has held on specific issues with the participation of representatives of United Nations agencies and the Secretariat. We welcome the greater participation in the work of the Council of high-level representatives of the Secretariat and United Nations agencies, such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Children's Fund and the High Commissioner for Human Rights. To overcome the challenges that the Council is faced with today, we need their input and their invaluable experience. That is why we have always supported their participation in meetings of the Council.

Among these, I recall the meetings on children in armed conflict, which were held during the June presidency of Portugal this year, and more recently on the protection for humanitarian assistance to refugees and others in conflict situations, in which the contributions of interested parties were very important to the action subsequently undertaken by the Council.

The Security Council should listen more to the other actors on the international scene, who, outside the United Nations or the intergovernmental framework, have deep knowledge of international issues, follow closely the problems associated with the resurgence of conflicts and undertake many actions to help prevent them. I wish to refer here to non-governmental organizations, as representing civil society, which have been kept apart from the work of the Council. Their activities have proved to be crucial in the process of pacification of international conflicts, in which, facing considerable risks, they continue to assist people in need.

In fact, the Council, in its decisions, has appealed frequently to non-governmental organizations, acknowledging thereby the importance of their action in the prevention of conflicts and in the peace-building efforts of the United Nations. The importance of these organizations in preventing illicit arms trafficking by helping Security Council sanctions committees to monitor violations of arms embargoes was also recognized recently by the Council in its resolution 1196 (1998).

The Secretary-General, for his part, in a conference last month, underlined the important role played by non-governmental organizations in raising public awareness, tweaking the world's conscience and shaping policy. Calling for a partnership, he has demonstrated how cooperation is increasing between the United Nations and non-governmental organizations, with mutual benefits in several areas. This implies, naturally, more responsibility on the part of non-governmental organizations, which, in the words of the Secretary-General, have to protect themselves against the abuse of the idea of non-governmental organizations and protect their invaluable franchise.

We do not see why the Council should keep itself closed to the important source of information and assistance that these organizations represent. It should, in fact, listen carefully to them, and encourage and protect their action to prevent and resolve international conflicts. We are therefore encouraged by positive signs within the Council in this regard.

The Security Council maintains a close and day-to-day relationship with the press. The nature of the matters considered by the Council requires the prompt

dissemination of information all over the world. The press amplifies the decisions taken by the Council. The relationship between them is thus of the utmost importance to the efficiency of those decisions. The Council should make all the necessary efforts to preserve that relationship and to prevent the effects of partial or imperfect information. The gap between what appears in the newspapers with regard to the work of the Council and the information that its President is mandated to convey to the press is, unfortunately, increasing. This permits different interpretations of the will of the Council. The way is therefore open to the manipulation of information, which, in our view, should be firmly prevented.

As to Member States, the information is mainly conveyed through briefings by the presidency of the Council. We believe that those briefings are the best way to ensure the objectivity and impartiality of the information on the work of the Council. We have tried, during our presidencies, to hold these briefings regularly and immediately upon the conclusion of the consultations of the whole, recognizing the importance for Member States of prompt information on the different subjects under consideration by the Council. These briefings should be further encouraged and improved, as they constitute appropriate channels of information to Member States outside the Council and prevent information from being unduly influenced by national interests.

The experience of Portugal in the Council has been highly gratifying, even if we feel a certain amount of frustration at all that we would have liked to do, but for which we have run out of time. We admire the tireless work carried out by all its members, my colleagues in the Council, and the Secretariat in its daily activities, which is of vital importance to the international community. We know better now how difficult it is to have the burden of taking decisions that affect so many countries, regions and people.

The ideas I have just put forward do not represent a criticism of the Council. Rather, they should be envisaged as constructive inputs. We will leave the Council with an even greater respect for its role and its action, which is fundamental for the preservation of peace and international security.

Once outside the Council, we will continue to strive for an even better Security Council, one that is more representative and transparent, without losing sight of the need to preserve its efficiency. We will not see it as a distant body. The renovation of the Council is also a way of bringing it closer to the general membership of the United Nations. On the other hand, we are confident that within the Council, efforts will continue to be made to pursue these goals. Its members are fully aware that that is not only the expectation but also the will of the international community. And it is the international community, after all, that the Security Council represents.

Mr. Nejad Hosseinian (Islamic Republic of Iran): I would like to associate myself with previous speakers in expressing appreciation to the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom, Ambassador Greenstock, who, as the current President of the Security Council, introduced the annual report of the Security Council to the General Assembly.

My delegation has carefully reviewed the report contained in document A/53/2, covering the period from 16 June 1997 to 15 June 1998. We welcome the improvements that have been introduced into the present report, in particular the provision of some information about the consultations of the whole and the attachment of the monthly assessments of the former Presidents of the Council.

According to the report, during the period covered the Security Council made enormous efforts to deal with issues related to the maintenance of international peace and security in several parts of the world, some of which were more successful than others.

During the period covered, the Security Council considered the Afghanistan crisis under its responsibility to maintain international peace and security, and issued three presidential statements on the subject. The Council rejected the notion that the Afghanistan crisis had a military solution and called for the prompt cessation of hostilities and the resumption of inter-Afghan negotiations to establish a broad-based Government with a view to reaching a lasting and peaceful settlement of the crisis.

But as a matter of deep concern, the Taliban movement, in a clear case of contempt for the will of the international community, intensified its military operations in the northern part of that country, committed heinous crimes against humanity, pursued a policy of systematic ethnic and religious persecution and, in a flagrant violation of international law, stormed our Consulate-General in Mazar-i-Sharif and murdered Iranian diplomats in cold blood, which raised worldwide outrage and condemnation. We welcome the timely reaction of the Council to the recent developments in Afghanistan, which

of course go beyond the period covered by the present report. Nevertheless, we firmly believe that the situation in Afghanistan requires the continued attention of the Council in discharging its main responsibility under the United Nations Charter.

In Tajikistan, peace and tranquillity, however fragile, prevail. They have been achieved through the efforts of the United Nations, the support of a number of regional States and, indeed, the strong determination and good faith of the Government of Tajikistan and of the opposition. While there is fear that peace and stability in Tajikistan will be disturbed by the Taliban, our earnest hope is that the commitment to the General Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and National Accord in Tajikistan and its Protocols will lead that country to prosperity and irreversible peace and stability.

During the period covered, the Council dealt with several issues in Africa. The number and the intensity of armed conflicts on the continent which are considered to have threatened peace and security continue to be a source of grave concern for the international community.

The inclusion of an item entitled “The situation in Africa” in the Council’s agenda and the convening of two meetings at the ministerial level were a sign that the Council needs to do more about the situation in Africa. The report of the Secretary-General, dated 13 April 1998, on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa and the follow-up measures taken by the Council, including the establishment of an ad hoc Working Group to review the Secretary-General’s recommendations in that report, raised expectations that the peace, security and sustainable development so deserved by people in Africa will receive as much attention and devotion as they do in other parts of the world.

We believe that it is the legitimate right of the Member States, which conferred on the Security Council the responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, to receive special annual reports and be fully aware of its activities. Despite the great number of questions before the Security Council which are considered to have threatened international peace and security, the General Assembly has not received any special report during the past half century. We believe that the time is ripe to define the word “necessary” in Article 24, paragraph 3, of the Charter. The Working Group on the reform of the Security Council is the appropriate forum to take up this important issue.

One of the improvements introduced into the present report is the inclusion of information about the issues considered in the consultations of the whole. It is well known that the important decisions of the Security Council are taken during those consultations. My delegation welcomes this improvement. Nevertheless, we continue to believe that the present report reflects very little substantive information about those consultations, which are the basis for the formal decisions of the Security Council. The report still needs to be further improved by providing an analytical assessment of the process of decision-making of the Security Council in such consultations.

In the absence of substantive information on the consultations of the whole, the main avenue available to all non-members of the Security Council is to wait around the South Lounge for scattered pieces of information and to attend the briefings by the Council presidency, which depend on the individual approach of the Council President at the time.

While emphasizing the need for all Council members to inform non-members, we believe that there is also a need for structured contact between the non-permanent members and the members of the geographical groups from which they have been elected to serve in the Security Council. Such contact would enable the non-members to be informed of the latest developments in the Council and eventually enhance the participation of non-members in the work of the Council, thereby promoting the credibility, authority and effectiveness of the Security Council.

According to Articles 10, 11 and 12 of the Charter, the General Assembly may discuss and make recommendations on the maintenance of international peace and security to Member States or the Security Council or to both. It was first thought that the favourable atmosphere created by the ending of the cold war would allow for structuring a balanced interaction between the General Assembly and the Security Council for the maintenance of international peace and security. While the Council has been actively engaged in this field, regrettably the Assembly has found little opportunity to discharge its responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security in cooperation with the Council. In order to realize the goal of these Charter Articles, it is necessary to find proper ways to use the potential of the general membership of the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security.

I should not conclude without referring to another improvement in the present report — the inclusion of assessments by former Presidents of the Security Council. I would like to express appreciation to all Council Presidents for providing their assessments of the work of the Council. At the same time, there seems to be an opportunity for improvement in this area. We hope these assessments will become more analytical and substantive in the future, represent the view of the Council as a whole and be published routinely, with a structured format, immediately after the end of each presidency.

Mr. Ibrahim (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Article 24 of the Charter states that United Nations Members confer on the Security Council primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security and agree that in carrying out its duties under this responsibility the Council acts on their behalf. This means that the Council is accountable to the Members of the Organization in accordance with the principle that authority is not conferred without accountability.

It is with this understanding that my delegation participates in this debate. We feel that it is of paramount importance since it provides the Members of the United Nations an opportunity to review the work of the Security Council and to evaluate its activities in the light of the purposes and principles of the Charter.

When the General Assembly considered the reports of the Security Council at previous sessions, many comments were made with regard to the Council's working methods and many proposals were submitted on the form and content of its annual report.

It is gratifying to note at this session that the publication of the journal of the Security Council on a daily and monthly basis has become an established practice. The periodic briefings by the Presidents of the Security Council provided an opportunity for Members to have access to more information regarding the Council's informal consultations.

Despite that, the proposals to improve the work of the Security Council and to improve the preparation of its annual report have not been sufficiently taken into account.

The report of the Security Council contained in document A/53/2 has brief information on the subsidiary organs of the Council, including the sanctions committees.

Appendices V and VI contain the resolutions and presidential statements adopted by the Council during the period under review. Part I of the report contains brief reviews of what took place in the informal consultations prior to the adoption of these resolutions and presidential statements. The addendum included in the report contains the monthly assessments by the successive Presidents of the Council. This feature has been included for the first time, and we consider it a great improvement.

We hope the Security Council will follow up with other improvements, with a view to fulfilling the need for more transparency in its consideration of the issues, for an official evaluation of the problems it handles, and for the rationale behind the statements and the relevant resolutions it adopts.

Most of the delegations that took part in the debate during previous sessions stressed the importance of holding more open, formal meetings and limiting informal consultations to the minimum possible. However, it seems to us that the Council did exactly the opposite. The record before us states that it held 103 formal meetings during which it adopted 61 resolutions and issued 41 statements.

Despite the fact that the report mentions that the Council held 215 consultations of the whole, totalling some 588 hours, it does not have any information on the debates that took place during these consultations — information that the Council often provides to high-level officials of the Organization's Secretariat.

My delegation fully understands that a small group would enable the Security Council to accelerate its work. But it is untenable to have recourse to informal consultations in such an unacceptable way that would cast aspersions on the legitimacy of the work of the Security Council as far as the rest of the membership of the United Nations are concerned. It is this membership that has entrusted the Council its main responsibility in the maintenance of international peace and security.

Paragraph 1 of Article 15 of the Charter states that the General Assembly shall receive and consider annual and special reports from the Security Council that shall include an account of the measures taken by the Council to maintain international peace and security. We do not recall that the Council has recently provided any special reports, despite the conflicts in many parts of the world. If the Council had provided the Assembly special reports on these events, then, in collaboration with the Assembly,

it might have provided solutions for such problems and thus averted possible tragedies and suffering.

It is possible that the Council has its reasons. If that is indeed the case, it would have behooved the Council to clarify those reasons in its annual report in order for the Assembly to consider them and find other means to avert future tragedies.

The report of the Security Council contains a list of Council consultations with the States that contribute troops for peacekeeping operations. My delegation welcomes this inasmuch as it has been a demand which the Member States have advanced and insisted upon. But we must express our concern that the Council is not committed to the Charter of the United Nations as in the case of its disregarding consultations with other States which are not Council members and which are parties to a conflict under consideration by the Council, as is provided for by Article 31 of the Charter.

Our experience with the Security Council has made it clear that some Council members do not just oppose adhering to Article 31. Their inclination towards unilateralism and towards the adoption of resolutions with uncommon and unjustifiable haste with regard to complex issues has in fact been accentuated.

On 25 August last, the United States and the United Kingdom presented a draft resolution to the Security Council on their dispute with my country concerning the Lockerbie incident. On 27 August, the Council adopted the draft resolution even before the documents annexed to it had been translated and before the authorities concerned in my country had had a chance to consider them. This conduct ignored the call for transparency and openness in the work of the Security Council. It also resulted in wasting an opportunity to adopt a resolution that would take into account the interests of all parties concerned to expedite the resolution of a conflict, and hasten the lifting of sanctions from which the Libyan people have suffered for almost seven years.

The Security Council has taken many measures to improve its annual report, and we hope that such measures will pave the way for others that would make the report more comprehensive so that in the future it may contain justifications for the Council's actions.

This should also include a comprehensive and clear summary of discussions taking place in informal consultations, especially when there is a periodic review of sanctions. This would enable other States Members of the United Nations to learn in a documented way the positions taken by Council members during such consultations. Only then will the report of the Security Council to the General Assembly really reflect the Council's work and honestly record its activities.

We consider that it is important to review the working methods of the sanctions committees with a view to enabling the countries concerned to attend the meetings and state their views on these issues. We also consider that the Security Council should return to the proper practice, and enable other Members of the United Nations to state their views regarding the issues under discussion, and to contribute to the decision-making process, instead of being confronted with predetermined resolutions on matters that affect them all. The Council should broaden the base of its consultations with States not members of the Council particularly those that are concerned with what the Council is discussing. That is one of the principal means to legitimize the Council resolutions, and to improve the possibility of their being implemented.

My delegation wishes in conclusion, to reaffirm the importance of strengthening dialogue and interaction between the General Assembly and the Security Council. This should not be limited to a single annual occasion, when the Assembly considers the Council's report. Rather, it should be an ongoing process based on the primary Charter responsibilities of those two organs.

Mr. Larraín (Chile) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I wish first of all to congratulate Ambassador Sir Jeremy Greenstock, Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom and current President of the Security Council, on his clear and concise introduction of the report of the Council for the period 16 June 1997 to 15 June 1998. My congratulations go also to the devoted staff of the Security Council secretariat on their excellent work.

This is the first report to contain assessments made by the successive Presidents of the Council, in their personal capacity. As a member of the Council, Chile participated in the work of the informal working group of the Security Council concerning the Council's documentation and other procedural questions, which devised this formula, which was described in the note by the President of the Council of 12 June 1997 (S/1997/451). This formula has enabled us to move towards meeting the universal desire for more analytical and substantive reports, as expressed by an overwhelming majority of the membership of the General Assembly

through the adoption of resolution 51/193 of 17 December 1996, as aptly recalled this morning by the representative of Colombia.

We are pleased that from July 1997 each Council President prepared an assessment of the work of the Council during his presidency. This, we believe, is a practice that should be followed by all future Presidents; we urge all to follow the example of the delegation of Costa Rica, which was the first to distribute copies of its assessment to all Member States well before the publication of the report before the Assembly today. We believe too that future Presidents of the Council, especially those representing non-permanent members, should try to include as much substantive information as possible so as to make good use of this formula. These assessments should be a real working tool for the other Members of the Organization. Taken together, the 12 substantive assessments constitute a great contribution to transparency because they will enable the General Assembly to be better informed about measures adopted or agreed upon by the Security Council relating to the maintenance of international peace and security, thus ensuring the necessary coordination and cooperation between the two organs.

By the same token, we think it would be most useful for members of the Council to know the extent to which this new formula of assessments by each Council President has helped Member States to understand better how the Council is dealing with the matters pertaining to international peace and security that lie within its purview.

The report of the Council to the General Assembly is basic to the good relations and coordination that must exist between the two organs; it falls within the general framework of the transparency that must characterize the work of the Council. But these good relations and this transparency do not end here: the Council should constantly improve its working methods and increase their transparency. To that end, there should be an effort increasingly to reflect the discussions on so-called cluster II questions in the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council. Along the same lines, the recommendations set out in the position paper prepared by the 10 elected members of the Council for 1997 are of particular relevance; we had the honour to participate in the preparation of that paper. Such exercises within the Security Council are an effective way to promote greater transparency and openness and should continue. Only in this way can we put an end to formal, descriptive reports, which are of little use.

It would be impossible to refer now to all the items considered by the Security Council; I believe that each delegation will speak of those that are of interest to it. My delegation would like to note how the Council has been addressing the question of Africa over the past months, drawing its inspiration from the report of the Secretary-General of 13 April 1998, entitled “The causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa” (S/1998/318). We particularly welcomed the convening of a second ministerial meeting on Africa and the establishment of an ad hoc working group to consider all the Secretary-General’s recommendations; this led to the preparation of a number of documents that were adopted by the Council. We believe that the question of Africa must continue to be considered exhaustively, using a comprehensive approach. The Council, along with the other organs of the United Nations, must attach the highest priority to this matter, and we are pleased that this is understood.

Turning to another matter, two cases of sanctions imposed by the Council have evolved somewhat. I refer here to the cases of Libya and of Iraq. We hope that the procedural details of a trial in the Netherlands of the suspects in the Lockerbie incident will be quickly clarified, and that these will not prove an obstacle, so that the trial can take place, enabling the sanctions affecting the Libyan people to be lifted soon.

During the reporting period, one of the items that was the focus of the greatest attention was the crisis with Iraq, which took place early in the year. Thanks to the timely intervention of the Secretary-General, military action was averted. While the tension that directly led to the crisis seems to have abated, the situation in Iraq is far from satisfactory. That is why we express the hope that a renewal of cooperation by Iraq with the United Nations, as a first step, and, as second step, a comprehensive review of the sanctions imposed on that country by the Security Council, sending clear, precise and consensus-based signals to Iraq as to what remains to be done, will very soon permit the unblocking of this situation that has already stretched out over many years and that has caused so much suffering to the Iraqi people.

I would also like to refer to Haiti. Almost a year after the Security Council established the United Nations Civilian Police Mission in Haiti (MIPONUH), my country considers that the role that Mission has played in creating

a professional police force that respects democratic values has been of enormous significance. Nevertheless, despite the progress achieved by MIPONUH, the political situation prevailing in Haiti today does not make it advisable to end this Mission, whose mandate will expire on 30 November. In this connection, my country believes that the international community has a duty towards the Haitian people, which is being fulfilled today through an appropriate international presence. If the continuation of that international presence is requested in due time by the head of State of Haiti, my country will do everything possible in its capacity as a member of the group of Friends of the Secretary-General for Haiti to assist that country of my region.

In conclusion, I wish to take this opportunity to congratulate the sister Republic of Argentina on its illustrious election to the Security Council, as well as Canada, Malaysia, Namibia and the Netherlands, which will also be members of the Council in the coming biennium. We are sure that they will know how to continue the task of making the Security Council what we all desire it to be.

Mr. Lidén (Sweden): First of all, I wish to thank the President of the Security Council, Ambassador Jeremy Greenstock, for his presentation of this year's report to the General Assembly.

This annual debate is a welcome opportunity for the full membership of the United Nations to take stock of the work of the Security Council. My country attaches particular importance to this opportunity.

The Security Council carries a heavy responsibility. It exercises this responsibility on behalf of all Members of the Organization, and must be seen to do so. The highest possible degree of openness is a requirement in this regard. Sweden has, for its part, tried to make openness and transparency a hallmark of its present Security Council membership. Openness is a significant goal in itself; but, in particular, it is a means to promote broad consultations and to involve non-members of the Council in the work to prepare and implement Council decisions.

The format of the Security Council report before us differs, as has already been noted by other speakers, from that of preceding years. An important new element is the addition of monthly assessments by the respective Council Presidents, the first of them, as it happens, having been provided by Sweden. These assessments should try to meet the need expressed by many States for a more analytical and succinct Council reporting. I trust that all Council members will carefully consider the views expressed during today's debate on this and other aspects of the report.

Improving the transparency and the working methods of the Council is an important issue of principle. It is not a theoretical question, but one in which practical steps that lead to concrete results can and should be taken. During its tenure on the Council, Sweden has argued and striven consistently for such improvement. Non-members of the Council have the right to be well briefed about the work of the Council. We continue to work for an improved use of troop-contributor meetings as an instrument to influence and inform Council decision-making. Statements by the President of the Council to the press should be readily available to the general membership of the United Nations. During Sweden's presidency of the Council a record was kept of daily activities in the Council on the Mission's Internet home page, which included statements to the press. The Presidency before us also made such statements public on the Internet, and we hope that others will follow that practice.

This report of the Security Council covers an active and, in many respects, troublesome period. A number of crises which have been on the Council's agenda for a long time have continued to call for the Council's attention. In some cases they have been further aggravated. At the same time, other issues have come to the fore, such as the nuclear-test explosions by India and Pakistan, the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea and the aggravated situation in Kosovo. The past year has been a period of significant achievements for the Council, but it has also been one of substantial difficulties in tackling a number of complex issues.

From Sweden's perspective, some particularly important highlights of the work of the Council over the past year deserve to be mentioned: first, the adoption of a firm resolution on Kosovo setting out clear demands that are now to be met under international control; secondly, continued insistence on full Iraqi compliance with Security Council resolutions, while the oil-for-food mechanism has been improved; thirdly, steps taken to develop a long-term strategy for peace and security in Africa, together with African organizations and States; fourthly, Security Council support for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament in the wake of India and Pakistan's nuclear testing; and fifthly, increased attention to international humanitarian and human rights law in the context of the responsibilities of the Security Council,

including through the strengthening of the two ad hoc Tribunals.

The Security Council has followed through on major peacekeeping operations in all parts of the world and agreed on necessary steps to develop their mandates in keeping with changing circumstances. Since last year, two new peacekeeping operations have been established in Africa: in Sierra Leone and the Central African Republic. These are concrete examples of the Council's willingness to exercise its responsibility for international peace and security.

The Security Council is becoming more conscious of the need for a broad mix of personnel and the right balance in peacekeeping operations. Military, civilian police and other components must be better integrated. The appointment of special representatives of the Secretary-General in conflict situations, with the support of the Council, has proved a useful tool. That said, there is reason for concern that sometimes Security Council deliberations on peacekeeping are stymied by a narrow and short-term budgetary approach. A penny-pinching or tardy Council weakens its own authority and often also that of the Secretary-General. It runs the risk sending an inadvertent message of lack of concern to the parties affected, and it runs counter to the general acknowledgement of the need for early and preventive action.

There are of course situations in which fundamental disagreements or competing interests, in particular between permanent members, will stall the work of the Security Council. Such situations are today fewer in number than before, but almost by definition significant when they occur. They affect the overall work of the Council, but, fortunately, there is also a general understanding on the need to try to limit the damage they cause.

In many situations, it is clearly difficult for the Security Council to define an effective strategy. The instruments available can seem ill-suited to some of today's complex conflicts, in many ways domestic but with major cross-border aspects, sometimes with the participation of several parties with less than clear command structures or political objectives. In such situations, durable peace is rarely a straightforward result only of political leaders reaching an agreement to be implemented. Peace has to be established through a lengthy process of confidence-building and the reconstruction of torn societies.

But such difficulties can never be an excuse for the Security Council not to play its part in earnest. The Council's responsibilities impel it to act, when necessary by setting a framework for other actors and factors to fulfil their roles.

The increasingly central role of regional organizations for peace and security is an important development with long-term implications. Such a role is and must be a result of the aspirations and the ability of those organizations themselves. Regionalism should be by design and not by default, in the interest both of regional organizations and the United Nations. The mere fact that someone else is seized of a matter should not, however, mean that the Security Council may dispense with considering what it needs to do.

The Security Council's ability to address difficult issues and to take action is largely a question of political will and of leadership by all members of the Council. The elected members are essential in this regard, as they help bring further legitimacy to the work of the Council.

The permanent members are equally important in that respect. If there is a sense in their permanency — beyond political realism — it should be that it induces a long-term perspective, consistency and a willingness to be bolder and to take on difficult and uncertain tasks that require staying power from the international community. That type of leadership would, I am convinced, be welcomed by the broad membership of the United Nations.

Openness and effectiveness should be interrelated objectives for the Security Council. The actions of the Security Council and the General Assembly, and indeed the United Nations system as a whole, must be mutually reinforcing. Responsibilities may differ, but not the vocation as set out by the Charter.

Mr. Guillén (Peru) (*interpretation from Spanish*): We are particularly grateful to the Security Council for the report we have received and are considering today, and to the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom — the current President of the Security Council, Sir Jeremy Greenstock — for his clear and comprehensive introduction of the report to the General Assembly, in keeping with the practice initiated earlier by Brazil during its presidency of the Security Council.

We interpret this introduction as an expression of the will of the Council to establish a dialogue with the General Assembly, in accordance with Article 24 of the Charter. This interaction and effective relationship between the Security Council and the General Assembly

is essential. The work of both organs must be mutually reinforcing because, although their responsibilities in the area of peace and security differ, their goal is a shared one, as set out in the Charter. The Assembly's role is not limited to adopting resolutions on financial allocations for peacekeeping operations.

We welcome the ongoing efforts of the Council to improve the content of the report and the measures taken to that end. We welcome also the significant improvements that were made, in particular the inclusion of background information with the list of decisions, resolutions and presidential statements adopted by the Council the previous year; a description of the consideration given to each item in the course of the year; communications received by the Council; and reports of the Secretary-General submitted to the Council.

We particularly appreciate the assessments of the work of the Security Council prepared under the responsibility of representatives who have completed their functions as President, which are appended to the report. In this regard, we are pleased to recall the initiative taken by the Permanent Representative of Portugal in April 1997, which established this practice.

Given the importance of these assessments, we believe that it would be very useful to have them available as soon as each presidency is over, without having to wait until this report is submitted. Such evaluations should be submitted on behalf of the Security Council and should not be limited, as in some cases, to a mere summary of facts that appear in other parts of the report, without being accompanied by an assessment. In this regard and with a view to a careful study and analysis of the document in the General Assembly, it would be advisable that the Council not adopt its report two and a half months after the end of the period covered in that report.

Given the frequent use of statements to the press by the presidency of the Council, such statements should be recorded in some manner in order to determine their political and legal value, since they stem from agreements that are sometimes reached with difficulty by the members of the Council.

It has been proposed that States that are not members of the Council should be able, under Articles 31 and 32 of the Charter of the Organization, to participate in meetings or consultations in which they are involved prior to the Council's reaching a decision. In our view, this is a precondition for according legitimacy to a given Council decision. Of course, this also requires establishing a mechanism of timely notification and information.

We agree with the Secretary-General's views on the proposal that the Security Council should resort to the power conferred on it in Article 65 of the Charter to obtain from the Economic and Social Council the necessary information and assistance to enable it to consider a specific situation in a more comprehensive and effective manner. We believe also that difficult agreements on peacekeeping in regions affected by conflicts could unravel in the absence of political, economic and social stability. Hence these political agreements require a strategic convergence of economic and social cooperation projects, which should bring the Security Council closer not only to the Economic and Social Council but also to other United Nations bodies as well as financial institutions.

In the report of the Security Council now before the General Assembly we can see both that the increase in serious crises within States calls for urgent measures, above all of a humanitarian nature, and that the crises are becoming ever larger. But something new has been added: serious reluctance and indifference regarding international concerns. All of this together has produced a vacuum that the Council members explicitly mentioned in the Charter are hardly willing to fill. All of this has radically transformed the import of the solemn statement of 31 January 1992 by the heads of State of the member countries of the Security Council.

Perhaps it is not necessary to repeat that the Organization was not designed to deal with these new situations, especially when a system of collective action such as the one provided for in the Charter was never established or implemented. However, generally speaking — and therefore in relative terms — all efforts of the Council to deal with such cases deserve the consideration of all Member States.

The information we have — not from the Security Council but glimpsed or guessed at from outside — gives the impression that the new conflicts require actions clearly backed by the authority of the Council, and in some cases also by deterrence. At the same time, depending on the case, in other situations operations should be deployed in the field only on the basis of civilian, not military, approaches. Above all, operations must always be based on not only the consent of but also the cooperation of the States affected by the conflicts.

To a large extent the validity of the Security Council's actions depends on its members' accountability to all the Member States regarding the measures it takes on their behalf and on the extent to which its decisions are based on the Charter. This is because the Council is an essentially political organ operating under the Charter; its decisions would not be legitimate in those cases where they exceeded the Charter provisions or the norms of international law.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.