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General Assembly

Seventy-second session

Official Records

114th plenary meeting
Wednesday, 12 September 2018, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Lajčák . . . . . (Slovakia)

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

Agenda item 112

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

Note by the Secretary-General (A/72/300)

The President: As members are aware, in accordance with the provisions of Article 12, paragraph 2, of the Charter of the United Nations and with the consent of the Security Council, the Secretary-General is mandated to notify the General Assembly of matters relative to the maintenance of international peace and security that are being dealt with by the Security Council and of matters with which the Council has ceased to deal. In that connection, the General Assembly has before it a note by the Secretary-General issued as document A/72/300.

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

It was so decided.

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 112?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 29

Report of the Security Council

Report of the Security Council (A/72/2)

The President: I now give the floor to the President of the Security Council, His Excellency Ambassador Jonathan Cohen, to introduce the report of the Security Council.

Mr. Cohen (United States of America): Let me begin by thanking you, Mr. President, on behalf of all the members of the Security Council, for your service as President of the General Assembly, and for arranging today's meeting.

The United States, as the President of the Security Council for the month of September, has the honour to introduce the annual report of the Council (A/72/2), which covers the period from 1 January to 31 December 2017. The Charter of the United Nations entrusts the Security Council with the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. With the support of the United Nations membership, the Security Council has endeavoured to discharge its responsibilities in accordance with the Charter to support peacekeeping efforts and urge for the peaceful resolution of conflicts around the world.

Keeping up with recent trends, the activity of the Security Council increased in 2017. During the year, the Council held 296 formal meetings, of which 282 were public. The Council adopted 61 resolutions and 27 presidential statements, and issued 93 statements to the press. The Council also conducted five missions. In

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March 2017, the Council sent a mission to the countries of the Lake Chad basin region — Cameroon, Chad, the Niger and Nigeria. In May, the Council went on a mission to Colombia. In June, it visited Haiti, and in September it met with the African Union in Addis Ababa. Lastly, in October 2017, the Council visited the Sahel region, including Burkina Faso, Mali and Mauritania.

Last year, the Council continued to prioritize thematic, general and cross-cutting issues, including non-proliferation, threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts, the protection of civilians in armed conflict, children and armed conflict, women and peace and security, peacekeeping and post-conflict peacebuilding, sanctions, cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations, peace and security in Africa and the rule of law.

I would like to thank China for preparing the report and the members of the Council for their contributions to it.

Finally, on behalf of the Security Council, I would like to express our appreciation to the Secretariat and all others involved in compiling and producing the report. We look forward to this afternoon's discussion of it and to hearing any views or comments from the members of the General Assembly, which we will be happy to take back to our colleagues in the Security Council.

Mr. Khoo (Singapore): We thank the members of the Security Council and the Secretariat for producing the annual report of the Security Council, as contained in document A/72/2.

Last year, my delegation noted that the annual debate on the report of the Security Council had become a ritual (see A/71/PV.95). We spoke of the need to take this agenda item more seriously, and to have the report finalized and circulated earlier, so that Member States could prepare for a more substantive and constructive exchange. Otherwise, this meeting is but one more formality in a long list of formalities. My delegation is therefore surprised and disappointed that this minimum request for more time was once again not met. Today's debate was scheduled very late, and the 243-page report was distributed late as well.

That is not merely a matter of scheduling. The General Assembly has spent much of the past year discussing the importance of multilateralism. Multilateralism is not only about the interactions between Member States. It is about the framework and norms that govern those interactions, particularly those that exist at the United Nations. Member States have engaged in important discussions in various forums about the proper role of the United Nations and its related organs. We have collectively spoken at length about the relationship of the Security Council to the wider membership. In fact, each year, the General Assembly approves between $7 billion and $8 billion to fund the Council's mandates. It is therefore pertinent to ask how the Security Council is accountable to the General Assembly, which is the only universally representative body that hears the voices of countries large or small. How do we assess the performance of the Security Council? That is the basis of this agenda item and why we should take this debate seriously.

Let me now turn to the report itself. My delegation notes that the report provides an overview of the activities of the Security Council for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2017. We welcome the move to align the report to the calendar year, which provides a more logical basis for assessing the Council's work. We are also pleased by the effort this year to include more analysis and improve the narrative. In previous years the reports merely listed the number or type of meetings. This year's report tries to give a sense of the situation on the ground, the context of the Council's work during the reporting period and the outlook for the ensuing period. It is a step in the right direction, and we hope that it will continue in next year's report.

Looking ahead, my delegation would like to make two suggestions for improving the report so that it can help Member States and the wider international community to understand and assess the work of the Security Council and its effectiveness in addressing threats to international peace and security.

First, we note that each Council member is expected to complete and circulate a report on the work undertaken during its presidency. The report before us states that those monthly reports can be found online. We think it would be useful to include them in the annexes to the report of the Security Council to the Assembly. Submitting those monthly reports would be a first step towards that goal, since we note that only four have been submitted for the year 2017. That is disappointing. Reports are missing for eight Council members, including two permanent members. We find it surprising that some countries that have the privilege of serving on the Security Council, including

some that have since left the Council, have not yet published assessments of their presidencies. If those reports are not submitted, how can the Assembly assess their performance?

Secondly, we think that the Secretariat could make greater use of technology in order to make the report more useful and user-friendly. We would like to recognize the work of the Secretariat in collating statistical information and lists of documents for the report. It is particularly useful that all the relevant documents are hyperlinked in the PDF version of the document. That is a good research tool for Member States, for example, when we look into the relevant resolutions or Council products on specific topics.

My delegation thinks that more can be done to make the report more visible on the Council's website. In particular, the Secretariat should look into coordination between the report and the good work undertaken in the *Repertoire*. By itself, the *Repertoire* offers a historical perspective on the Council's work. In recent years, the *Repertoire* has converted this into useful online tools for Member States. Some deserving of mention include the field missions mandate table; research tables on cross-cutting issues, such as women and peace and security, children in armed conflict and the protection of civilians; and highlights of Security Council practice, including maps of the United Nations global presence in the field and data on sanctions regimes. Member States can therefore assess the Security Council's performance using qualitative and quantitative indicators. We can track how mandates have evolved for specific missions. The Security Council's annual report should find ways to collaborate with the *Repertoire*, and leverage its existing online presence to make information more accessible and digestible.

The annual report of the Security Council and today's plenary meeting are important avenues for Member States to provide inputs and views on the work of the Security Council. We have made our suggestions with the aim of helping to improve the transparency and accessibility of the Council's work. They would also help Member States assess the performance of the Security Council against objective, data-driven benchmarks. That in turn, we hope, will help to promote greater accountability for the Security Council, not only to the wider membership but also to the international community.

Mr. Khoshroo (Islamic Republic of Iran): I thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this meeting to consider the annual report of the Security Council to the General Assembly (A/72/2).

Taking into account the important mandate that the Charter of the United Nations entrusts to it, the Security Council's performance, first and foremost, must be rule-based and transparent. Moreover, in carrying out its functions, it should remain accountable to the General Assembly, which encompasses all States Members of the United Nations and on whose behalf the Council acts. That is the raison d'être of Article 24, paragraph 3, of the Charter, which obliges the Council to submit annual reports to the Assembly. In carrying out its duties, the Council should be bound to the Charter and act in accordance with the Organization's purposes and principles. Despite that, the Council continues to consider issues that do not fall under its purview and are therefore inconsistent with the Charter. We have seen examples of that in recent weeks, when issues have been put on the Council's agenda in an effort to pursue the national interests of certain members, and thereby abuse that important body. In many instances, unfortunately, the issues were related to States' internal affairs, interference in which is explicitly prohibited by the Charter. They must therefore cease.

The Council has also continued to examine issues whose consideration the Charter assigns to other United Nations organs. That is an encroachment on their functions and powers. As in previous years, in meetings of the General Assembly and the Council this year, many States called on the Council to studiously avoid the consideration of issues that do not pose a threat to international peace and security. That long-standing demand needs to be heard by the Council.

Another observation that has been made about the Council's performance is that it has been increasingly, excessively and hastily resorting to its functions under Chapter VII as if there were no other provision in the Charter. As a result, in some cases the sovereign rights of States, as well as human rights, have been seriously violated. Chapter VII must be invoked as intended. It is a measure of last resort, and only if necessary.

Furthermore, while the holders of permanent seats on the Council have a special responsibility to promote its credibility, uphold the Charter and implement the Council's resolutions, it is a source of deep concern that this year one of them openly violated a Council

resolution, resolution 2231 (2015). Additionally, for the first time in the Council's history, that permanent member openly invited all Member States to either disobey that resolution or face punishment. If unchecked, that alarming trend will further tarnish the credibility of the Organization and the Council, eroding the rule of law and leading to international disorder.

In conclusion, the Security Council is an important United Nations organ and its performance and credibility are of concern to all Member States. The promotion of transparency and the rule of law in its work is therefore a common responsibility. To avoid further erosion of the Council's credibility, we should take that responsibility seriously and responsibly.

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

May I take it that the General Assembly takes note of the report of the Security Council contained in document A/72/2?

It was so decided.

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

The meeting rose at 3.20 p.m.