

Statement by Ambassador Hardeep Singh Puri, Permanent Representative, during  
United Nations Security Council open debate on working methods of the Security  
Council on November 26, 2012

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of India.

2. At the outset, I would like to thank Ambassador Jose Filipe Moraes Cabral, Permanent Representative of Portugal, and his delegation for co-authoring the concept note for today's open debate. I would also like to put on record our deep appreciation of Ambassador Cabral's stewardship of the Informal Working Group on Documentation and Procedural Questions during the year 2012. His active involvement and guidance has enabled the Working Group to consider several issues related to the Council's working methods in order to promote transparency and greater involvement of elected members in Council's work.

3. The Security Council is mandated by the UN Charter with the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. What and how the Council does to discharge its responsibility is, thus, of interest to the entire international community, not only to Council members, let alone the permanent members.

4. Over the years, there has been growing realization that the Council's composition, rooted in the situation obtaining in 1945, as well as its Working Methods are both divorced from contemporary reality of international relations. These are exemplified by the fact that the Council has shown little interest in consulting with those affected most by its decisions and in adopting transparent and inclusive rules of procedures that remain 'provisional' even after the Council's existence for six and a half decades. The Council has also not acted to harness the capabilities of the wider UN membership. Its all too evident eagerness to apply methods of coercion under Chapter VII to the neglect of provisions under Chapters VI and VIII has proved to be counter-productive in resolving several crises, even while it has sought to expand the definition of peace and security with a view to encroaching upon the Charter-mandated roles of other UN organs.

5. Let me briefly share India's perspective on how the Security Council could better its performance. First, the permanent members of the Security Council must recognize, not only individually but also collectively, that the Council must be reformed to make it reflect the contemporary realities of the international system. Second, the international community as a whole must be cognizant that enlarging the Security Council to reflect contemporary geopolitical realities would improve its representative character and grant greater legitimacy and credibility to its decisions. And third, there is need for real improvement in its working methods to enhance the Council's effectiveness and efficiency. We believe that cosmetic changes to working methods alone will not help. Real improvements need change in both process and approach, which requires reform of the composition of the Council.

6. Insofar as the working methods of the Security Council are concerned, the first and foremost necessity is to make them transparent and inclusive. Access to

documentation and information is an issue of particular concern, and the tendency of holding closed meetings that have no records should be curbed.

7. During the last two years, we have strongly supported efforts in the Informal Working Group aimed at improvements in the Council's working methods. Some specific points include the following:

One, the Council should amend its procedures so that items do not remain on its agenda permanently.

Two, the reporting cycle should be practical and result-oriented so that issues do not come for consideration so routinely as to bog down the limited time that the Council has at its disposal.

Three, the mandate cycle should be streamlined to spread work throughout the year.

Four, Articles 31 and 32 of the Charter must be fully implemented, by consulting with non-Security Council members on a regular basis, especially members with a special interest in the substantive matter under consideration by the Council.

Five, 'penholders' should allow greater and systematic participation of elected members as 'co-penholders'.

Six, non-members should be given systematic access to subsidiary bodies of the UNSC, including the right to participate.

Seven, participation of Troop and Police Contributing Countries in decision making concerning peacekeeping operations must cover the establishment, conduct, review and termination of peacekeeping operations, including the extension and change of mandates, as well as for specific operational issues.

Eight, countries having specific interest in a particular agenda-item must be consulted before an outcome document on that item is adopted.

Nine, the Council should concentrate its time and efforts on dealing with issues concerning its primary responsibility concerning international peace and security as mandated by the UN Charter, rather than encroaching upon the mandate of the General Assembly.

Ten, before mandating measures under Chapter VII of the Charter, the Council should first make serious efforts for pacific settlements of disputes through measures under Chapter VI. In this connection, the Council must also improve its cooperation with regional organizations, particularly with the African Union, since a large volume of the Council's work concern the African continent. Such cooperation must be serious and include providing assistance for the AU's capacity building as per their requirement, not only when some permanent members deem it in their interest.

8. It is our expectation that these ideas will be pursued by Council members in the coming months so that views expressed by the wider UN member-states find resonance in the Council's work and working methods.

9. In conclusion, let me reiterate India's considered view that genuine reform in the working methods of the Security Council requires a comprehensive reform in the membership of the Council, with expansion in both permanent and non-permanent categories, not only improvement in its working procedures. This is essential both for the credibility and continued confidence of the international community in this institution.

Thank you.

BACK TO SECURITY COUNCIL