

Statement by Ambassador Hardeep Singh Puri, Permanent Representative  
of India at UNSC's Open Debate on Working Methods of the Security  
Council, on 30 November 2011

Thank you, Mr President.

The Security Council is mandated by the UN Charter with the primary responsibility for maintenance of international peace and security, including by coercive action. What it does and the manner in which it goes about doing its work is, however, of interest to the entire international community. The Council's work as well as working methods thus become of importance for us all. I would like to place on record my delegation's deep appreciation for you and your delegation for organizing this Open Debate on the Working Methods of the Security Council, in spite clearly of the lack of enthusiasm on part of some members of the Council who openly state that the issue of the Council's working methods are the exclusive preserve of its permanent members. I would like to thank the Permanent Representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina for his efforts as the Chair of the Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions. I also align myself with the statement to be delivered by the Permanent Representative of Egypt on behalf of NAM.

2. Mr President, the Security Council's composition, rooted in the situation obtaining 1945, as well as its Working Methods are both divorced from contemporary reality of international relations. These non-transparent rules of procedures remain 'provisional' even after the Council's existence for six and a half decades. The Council's reluctance to consult with those affected most by its decisions, its refusal to harness the capabilities of the wider UN membership, and its all too evident eagerness to apply methods of coercion under Chapter VII to the neglect of provisions under Chapters VI and VIII are not only anachronistic, but, as our experience repeatedly demonstrates, are also counter-productive. They also detract from the Council's effectiveness and efficiency in implementation of its mandate for maintenance of international peace and security. Despite all this, the Council is ever more eager to encroach upon the Charter-mandated role of other UN organs.

3. Time has, therefore, come for the Council to seriously consider why many of its decisions are not having their intended effect, why a large number of UN member-states are not able or willing to respond to its numerous requests for national reports on implementation of its coercive decisions, why it has to resort so often to coercive measures under Chapter VII, why it does not command enough trust and respect from the international community or even confidence in itself to mandate measures under Chapter VI, why it fails to take recourse to cooperation with regional organizations under Chapter VIII to solve regional problems, and, most important of all, how the Council can address its failures and increase its effectiveness and efficiency.

4. Mr President, let me share an Indian perspective on how the Security Council could better its performance.

5. 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. It would also increase the representation of developing countries, which comprise the vast majority of UN membership, who are ready, capable and willing to shoulder responsibility and contribute through all required means for maintenance of international peace and security. And third, there is need for real improvement in its working methods to enhance the Council's legitimacy, effectiveness and efficiency. Cosmetic changes will not help. Real improvements need change in both process and approach, which requires reform of the composition of the Council.

6. Mr President, insofar as the working methods of the Security Council are concerned, the first and foremost necessity is to make them transparent. Access to documentation and information is an issue of particular concern. The tendency of the UNSC holding closed meetings that have no records should also be curbed.

7. We then have the issue of 'penholder'. Quite apart from the fact that it takes quite a while to understand what the concept of penholder is and which member is penholder for which issue, it is difficult to understand why penholding should be basically a monopoly of permanent members with concentration in even fewer fingers.

8. The quality of briefings that we receive often leaves open questions of their being skewed and not really neutral and objective based on observed facts. I also find it strange that reporting on the Council's proceedings tends to be judgemental. For example, on both occasions during our term on the Council when vetoes have been exercised, the DPI reports used the expression "failed to adopt" to describe what transpired.

9. Based on our experience during the last 11 months, I would like to suggest some specific points for consideration:

One, the Council should amend its procedures so that items do not remain on its agenda permanently. There are matters that have not been discussed for decades; at least in such cases further retention should be based on some valid reasons being proffered for the same by those seeking retention.

Two, its consideration of issues should be rationalized so that issues do not come for consideration so often and routinely as to bog down the limited time that the Council has at its disposal.

Three, 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.

Four, non-members must be given systematic access to subordinate organs of the UNSC, including the right to participate.

Five, participation of Troop and Police Contributing Countries in decision making of

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.

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

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

Eight, 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 and not just when it is convenient or fashionable.

10. In conclusion, Mr President, let me reiterate the considered view of my delegation that genuine reform in the working methods of the Security Council really requires a comprehensive reform in the membership of the Council, with expansion in both permanent and non-permanent categories, and 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