

Intervention by Ambassador Hardeep Singh Puri, Permanent Representative, at the informal meeting (closed) of the plenary on the intergovernmental negotiations on the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and other matters related to the Council, on 16 June 2010)

Thank you Mr. Chairman,

Thank you very much for giving me the floor in this third session of the text based negotiations.

At the start of these negotiations, on 2 June, you had encouraged us to draw inspiration from the words of former American President John F. Kennedy by posing the question "Ask not what the text can do for you but what you can do for the text". In our view, the critical issue that we need to face upto now is to recognize that the text, as I said last time, is crying out for help; that it needs to be trimmed of all the fat and for making it lean and thin.

What I heard this morning renews my faith in human nature and the atmosphere of goodwill in which we are conducting our deliberations. My distinguished colleague from Pakistan outlined his position and also explained how his position was different from that of the G4 even though the size of an enlarged Council, as proposed by the UFC and the G4, were similar. The limited difference is in the number of permanent members that the two proposals call for. My distinguished colleague from Pakistan seems to believe that having more permanent members would make the Council more opaque and elitist! I also heard other arguments stating that only a smaller number would make an effective Council. If we were to carry this reasoning to its logical conclusion, the Council would be at its effective best when it has only one member!

The issue is not whether a Council with five permanent members and ten elected ones is more efficient than one with 25 members with a few more permanent members. We should go into the causes for the Council being ineffective, as composed today, which is why we are having these negotiations.

I can appreciate the difficulty in the Secretariat prioritizing amongst delegations if 23 flags go up simultaneously. I understand the reason for the PR of Sierra Leone conveying his disagreement with the procedure that was followed today. It may, therefore, be useful to revert to a speaker's list. Let me also take the liberty of adding another small request. It would be especially useful for some of our delegations to be informed in advance of the programme of work or a timetable for the conduct of the remainder of the negotiations. Other than these small issues, I think our text-based negotiations are proceeding well and discussions on issues have been of a substantive nature.

At the same time, I must stress that everything is not hunky-dory. While I can understand why you said that proposals cannot be removed from the text till removal is acceptable to the member-state which proposed their insertion. I feel it necessary to point out the danger inherent in such an approach. Unless explained, this approach appears to allow an unintended inference to be drawn, that is, those who propose ideas which are of a somewhat extremist nature, on the fringe, would also be vested with a veto. In other words, if someone wants to wreck these negotiations, all that they have to do is to get up and say that they want the Council to be expanded from the current 15 to 49, then proceed to give a one hour lecture on why democracy is better than dictatorship, why bigger numbers are better than smaller numbers. Your position on revisions would give such delegations the right to insist on their proposals for eternity. Surely, that cannot be the message that the Chair wishes to signal. But, since words have meanings, it would be better to place matters in perspective.

In our view, the Chair should eliminate those options that do not reflect the middle-ground. If this is not feasible, at least we should be able to quantify the support that different options have received, either in the body of the text or in footnotes. Not to do so could invite a number of rash proposals and circumscribe the already limited flexibility and autonomy that I believe the Chair enjoys.

We also need to ensure that we move speedily in our negotiations and not take another six months between the conclusion of this round of negotiations and the announcement of the next revised text. In other words, we need a programme of work with an automatic and immediate issuance of Rev. 2 as we go into the next phase.

Mr. Chairman,

Let me now turn to the subject at hand.

We are willing to work with other delegations in a spirit of flexibility and compromise in order to shorten the text. I must add that we see a great deal of convergence on both issues that are the subject of discussions today.

Mr. Chairman,

On the size of an enlarged Council, most proposals veer towards expansion from the current 15 to 25 or 26 and the similarly defined number of "mid-20s." We would suggest that this middle-ground be reflected in the next revised text and the other proposals at the extremities be dropped as part of a process of natural elimination.

Mr. Chairman,

We also associate ourselves with the growing clamour for early reform of the working methods of the Council. This is an integral part of the broader imperative of comprehensive reform and expansion of the membership of the Council in both permanent and non-permanent categories.

On working methods, the large middle ground consists of four sets of proposals for improvement of working methods. First, the call for the full implementation of Articles 31 and 32 of the UN dealing with the participation of non-Council member states whose interests are involved in a discussion on any question or dispute under consideration by the Council. Second, a great deal of support for enhancing transparency and accountability as well as increased access to non-Council members, including through more open briefings by UN officials, more open debates and meetings and the like. I heard one of our colleagues, who spoke earlier, say that it is quite intriguing that while the Secretariat can sit in closed consultations of the Council, member-states whose interests are involved cannot do so! Third, calls for enhancing the Security Council's consultations with TCCs and PCCs. And finally, there is convergence on the need to improve the working of the subsidiary bodies of the Council.

Having identified these areas of convergence, I must place on record, our backing for other measures such as the call for formalizing the rules of procedure of the Council, wider and early circulation of draft Resolutions and draft Presidential Statements, enhancing the coordination and cooperation with regional organizations, rationalizing the use of the Council's powers under Chapter VI and Chapter VII of the Charter with the aim of best achieving the objective of the maintenance of international peace and security.

There are, Mr. Chairman, however, also divergences that pertain mainly to the jurisdictional basis of the improvements in the working methods. What does this mean? Everyone is in favour of improving the Council's working methods. But I did hear a few statements, bordering on the arrogant, which seemed to imply that since the Council belonged to them they would decide its working methods. This would be unacceptable in any other organization. If we had a Charter that was not founded on the democratic principle of one country, one vote there could have been scope for such an argument. But the name of the game here is different. No one is as yet questioning the continuance of those who are on the Council. When talking about improvements in working methods, where discussions involve the interests of the member-states and where the decisions taken by the Council will inevitably have a bearing and impact on those who are not members of the Council, there is great merit in the wider membership having a say in the process. We acknowledge that members of the Council are in the driving seat, but it must

also be acknowledged that the decisions taken in the Council affect the rest of the UN membership and so the involvement of the latter is also a must. Equally, one must look into the interlinkages in the relationships the Council has with the General Assembly and the ECOSOC.

We are of the view that this matter does not pose an insurmountable obstacle and can be sorted out through discussions in a spirit of flexibility and compromise.

It would be useful for the negotiation process if the Chair could produce a shorter version of the text which reflects the middle ground of convergence along with a clear listing of the differences.

In this context, I would like to extend an invitation to the S-5 and others to work actively and in lock-step with the wider international community seeking comprehensive reforms of the Council. Because I believe that in the absence of such comprehensive reform, a fundamental improvement in the working methods would either escape us as has been the case for more than sixty years or, even if miraculously achieved, would not last without the institutional memory, continuing commitment and contribution of new permanent members.

Thank you.

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