

**Security Council**

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Letter dated 20 March 2008 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Finland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to send you the report of the Workshop for Newly Elected and Present Security Council Members, which was held on 15 and 16 November 2007 at Tarrytown House (see annex). The final report has been compiled in accordance with Chatham House Rules under the sole responsibility of the Permanent Mission of Finland.

On the basis of the very positive feedback we have received each year from the participants, the Government of Finland remains committed to sponsoring the workshop as an annual event. The Government of Finland expresses the hope that this report will not only assist in familiarizing newly elected members with the working methods and procedures of the Council, but also contribute to a better understanding among the wider United Nations membership of the complexity of the work of the Council.

I should be grateful, accordingly, if this report could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Heidi **Schroderus-Fox**
Ambassador
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

Deputy Permanent Representative of Finland to the United Nations



**Annex to the letter dated 20 March 2008 from the Chargé
d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Finland to the
United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council**

**“Hitting the Ground Running”: Fifth Annual Workshop for the
Newly Elected Members of the Security Council**

**15 and 16 November 2007
Tarrytown Conference Center
Tarrytown, New York**

The Government of Finland — in cooperation with the Center on International Organization of Columbia University, the Security Council Affairs Division of the United Nations Secretariat, and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) — convened the fifth annual workshop for the newly elected members of the Security Council on 15 and 16 November 2007.

The annual workshops have served to help familiarize the newly elected members with the practice, procedure and working methods of the Council so that they are in a position to “hit the ground running” when they join the Council the following January. The series has also provided current members of the Council with an opportunity to reflect on their work in an informal setting. The workshops have been designed to complement the annual UNITAR briefings on aspects of the Council’s work.

This year, the opening evening featured remarks by Ibrahim Gambari, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the International Compact with Iraq and Other Issues, and Jean-Marie Guéhenno, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations.

The full-day programme on 16 November included four roundtable sessions that focused on the following themes:

- I. State of the Council 2007: taking stock and looking ahead
- II. Working methods
- III. Security Council committees and working groups
- IV. Lessons learned: reflections by the class of 2007

Opening dinner keynote addresses and discussion

Ibrahim Gambari, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the International Compact with Iraq and Other Issues, delivered the first of two keynote addresses during the opening dinner of the retreat. Drawing from his own experience as Permanent Representative of a member of the Security Council between 1994 and 1995, he offered advice to the incoming Council members, and presented observations on the respective roles of the Security Council and the good offices of the Secretary-General.

Mr. Gambari recommended that all incoming members of the Security Council make use of the Secretariat as a source of timely and reliable information, and encouraged them to meet frequently with Secretariat officials on issues of concern. He underlined that the Security Council Affairs Division of the Department of

Political Affairs constituted a particularly valuable resource at the disposal of the Security Council and its members.

According to Mr. Gambari, incoming Security Council members should focus their resources and attention on a few specific issues on the Council's agenda, particularly those closest to the region of the Council member. All Council members will respect and appreciate the expertise of each member on issues close to its region, allowing non-permanent members to play an important role in the Council's policymaking process.

Mr. Gambari stressed the need for the permanent missions of Council members to keep their own Government informed at all times. When they fail to explain all stakes and positions, they incur the risk that another Council member might contact their own Government before they do, and that the latter might convince the Government to revise its instructions to the permanent mission.

Finally, Mr. Gambari recommended that incoming Security Council members work closely with the permanent members of the Security Council and with other States, especially their own constituencies in the broader United Nations membership. Ongoing contacts between Security Council members and the broader United Nations membership ensure that the decisions of the Security Council have the full buy-in of the membership at large, which improves the prospects for their effective implementation.

In the second part of his address, Mr. Gambari laid out his observations on the relationship between the Security Council and the Secretary-General's good offices. He listed six elements of critical importance for the success of the Secretary-General's representatives: (i) the Secretary-General's envoy has to evaluate the positions of the parties constantly; (ii) he has to earn, nurture and preserve the parties' trust and confidence in his work; (iii) the envoy has to be impartial; (iv) he needs to have carrots and sticks available to him, especially in dealing with spoilers; (v) the envoy has to have the full confidence of the Security Council; and (vi) he requires the strong support by the Security Council. When the Security Council cannot reach agreement, it may choose to grant considerable freedom of action to the Secretary-General's envoy, while paying close attention to each of his or her steps. Irrespective of how divided the Council is on the issue on its agenda, it is crucial that the Council lends its support to the Secretary-General's envoy and that it publicly and regularly displays such support.

Jean-Marie Guéhenno, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, opened his remarks by offering his perspective on the evolution of United Nations peacekeeping. He noted that peacekeeping is the creation of the Security Council, particularly its elected members. Mr. Guéhenno observed that at the time of the Suez Crisis when the five permanent members were in disagreement — with the United Kingdom and France opposing the other permanent members — peacekeeping was the solution created by the elected members of the Council. He noted that peacekeeping has developed into something much different than what was envisaged at the time of the Suez Crisis. He observed that today peacekeeping has a more multidimensional character, frequently including security sector reform and the integration of humanitarian and development responses.

According to Mr. Guéhenno, hard lessons about peacekeeping were learned as a result of difficult missions in the 1990s in Rwanda, Somalia and the former

Yugoslavia. Mr. Guéhenno suggested that United Nations peacekeeping has recovered in recent years as a result of intensive analysis of the failures of this era, as shown, for instance, by the reports on Srebrenica (A/54/549) and Rwanda (S/1999/1257), as well as the Brahimi report (S/2000/809-A/55/305). However, Mr. Guéhenno suggested that there is a risk of forgetting some of the hard lessons learned in the 1990s. In this regard, he posed five fundamental questions for the Security Council regarding the viability of United Nations peacekeeping missions:

- *Is there a peace to keep and does the consent of the parties exist?* Mr. Guéhenno suggested that many grey areas exist in peacekeeping when there is a weak agreement between the parties and there are spoilers on the ground. Mr. Guéhenno suggested that in such cases the decision of whether or not there is a peace to keep is a judgement call that makes the Council's work especially challenging.
- *Is peacekeeping suitable when stronger action is needed?* Mr. Guéhenno cautioned that peacekeeping will lead to failure when the key parties in a conflict are not committed to peace. This is why, in his opinion, the Council must sometimes explore other options, such as mandating coalitions of the willing, as it has done in Timor-Leste and in Afghanistan.
- *Is the Security Council unified?* Mr. Guéhenno stated that it is essential to have the unity of the Council not just in words but in substance, if peacekeeping is to succeed. He noted that the troops and the military hardware that are deployed in a peacekeeping mission merely create the space for a political process. Mr. Guéhenno also suggested that in circumstances where the permanent members are divided, the elected members can often help to create a better sense of balance, common purpose and unity in the Council.
- *Will the necessary resources be there to fulfil the mandate?* Mr. Guéhenno expressed concern that a lack of adequate resources can lead to failure in peacekeeping missions. He suggested that in peacekeeping one success is easily forgotten or unnoticed, while one big failure is enough to destroy the progress of several years.
- *What is the partnership like today between the United Nations and other organizations?* Mr. Guéhenno suggested that in collaborating with each other, the United Nations and regional organizations have to keep in mind their respective comparative advantages and expectations. He also expressed concern that the notion of "subsidiarity" could become an excuse for the United Nations to disengage from regions where some external help may be needed.

Mr. Guéhenno suggested that peacekeeping is the most visible and risky part of United Nations activity. He further observed that consistent attention by the Security Council to peacekeeping missions is fundamental, as the adoption of a resolution mandating a peacekeeping operation marks the beginning — rather than the end — of the Council's work on an issue. In addition to peacekeeping missions, he also observed that other matters — including strategies for dealing with issues such as Iran, Iraq and the Israel-Palestinian crisis — contribute to the heavy workload of the Security Council. Mr. Guéhenno suggested that new Council members do their best to manage this workload by striving for political unity,

exerting political will, and, in general, considering the five questions posed during his talk.

In the ensuing discussion, participants discussed the relationship between the good offices role of the Secretary-General and the Security Council. One speaker observed that the Security Council had to be careful not to encroach on the activities of envoys of the Secretary-General and raised the situation in Myanmar as a case in point. This speaker emphasized that “unnecessary interference” from the Council could undermine progress made through the good offices mechanism, which should be perceived as confidential and independent. While sympathetic to this point of view, one of the presenters suggested that the primary responsibility of the Security Council is to maintain international peace and security, and, as such, it should have a role to play in supporting the good offices of the Secretary-General during crisis situations such as the one in Myanmar. However, this presenter also cautioned that the Council had to be perceived as fair and objective in order to enhance its credibility and effectiveness in supporting the good offices of the Secretary-General. He observed that this is why the reform of the Security Council is so important and suggested that the elected members work together to exert their influence in order to ensure that the Council is not dominated by the permanent members.

One speaker asked about the potential consequences of failure of the planned African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). One of the presenters responded that such a failure could lead to the deterioration of the situation in the rest of the Sudan. In particular, he noted that it could jeopardize the next steps in the implementation of the North-South agreement, which could result in local conflicts in other parts of the country, including Kordofan, northern Sudan, and perhaps eastern Sudan. It was observed that while Sudan is still a strong State, such conflicts could lead to the fragmentation of the country and create a political vacuum that might be filled by non-State actors. The presenter also suggested that if UNAMID did not succeed, then collaborations between the United Nations and regional organizations in peacekeeping operations might be discredited, narrowing future options and prospects for successful peacekeeping.

Session I

State of the Council 2007: taking stock and looking ahead

Moderator:

Ambassador Vitaly I. Churkin
Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation

Commentators:

Ambassador Dumisani S. Kumalo
Permanent Representative of South Africa

Ambassador John Sawers
Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom

At this session, participants were encouraged to discuss trends in the work of the Security Council, including issues related to the Council’s agenda and workload; the Council’s accomplishments and innovations over the past year; the strengths and

weaknesses in the Council's performance, including the role of the Groups of Friends; perceptions of legitimacy and encroachment; and the challenges ahead.

Key features and trends in the Security Council work: agenda, workload, perceptions of legitimacy and encroachment

One speaker stated that his delegation, in its work in the Security Council, had been guided by the principle that the Council acts on behalf of all States Members of the United Nations in carrying out its responsibilities, as enshrined in Article 24 (1) of the United Nations Charter. Therefore, during its Council tenure, his delegation had sought to determine whether the Council's decisions would benefit all Member States, and whether those decisions would "make the world a better place" in terms of responding to threats to international peace and security. He was of the view that the Council could claim success in some cases, but not in others. The speaker said that the people of Liberia and Sierra Leone would likely agree that over the past years the Council had performed well on behalf of their interests and supported them in their hour of greatest need. However, the people of Western Sahara and Palestine would likely have a different opinion of the Council's work with their respective populations, while the people of Somalia would be even more disappointed by the Council's performance in their country.

The same speaker suggested that the Council's objectivity was at times influenced by the quality of information presented to it. He acknowledged that some reports of the Secretary-General were beneficial to the Council's work. Still, other reports of the Secretary-General, such as those on Lebanon (the last report on the implementation of resolution 1559 (2004) being a "case in point"), were not very helpful. These reports appeared to emphasize particular issues that could "elicit certain responses from some Council members". He contended that the Council allocated too much time to Lebanon. Another speaker responded that the reports of the Secretary-General on Lebanon actually "contributed quite a bit" to the Council's work, noting in this regard that perceptions of "subjectivity and objectivity" varied from member to member. It was also suggested by one speaker that it might be helpful for the reports of the Secretary-General to incorporate the perspectives not just of the primarily affected country, but also of other countries in the region.

Taking up the issue once more, the initial speaker on this subject pointed to the reports of the Secretary-General on the situations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Côte d'Ivoire. Such reports, he said, and others coming from countries where United Nations staff members were on the ground, proved to be "good intelligence" for the Council. On the other hand, in reports such as those on Lebanon, the drafters often referred simply to third-party reports or to information that they had "received" from an unspecified source, while at the same time avoiding saying anything about Israel. This approach to preparing reports was not satisfactory, he emphasized.

With reference to the Council's efforts to maintain international peace and security, one participant proposed periodic "retreats" where members could have "strategic debates" on a number of issues before the Council. According to the same speaker, such retreats could take place every three or six months, allowing Council members to consider certain issues more holistically and without confining them to the "narrow constructions" of the Council agenda. In this connection, he pointed to the Council's consideration of the Sudan and the Middle East, issues that he

believed could be discussed more comprehensively at retreats in terms of their impacts on the respective regions. He also cited the situation in Lebanon, which he noted was related to the Iranian and Syrian issues.

Another speaker agreed that regular retreats by members — as opposed to only “formulaic discussions” of Council agenda items — could benefit the work of the Council. Specifically, he believed that the impact of the Council’s imposition of economic measures under Chapter VII of the Charter could benefit from such discussions. Another participant supported the suggestion of retreats where members could take a more “holistic” approach to some issues, though emphasizing that whatever was discussed at such gatherings should also be “injected” into the work of the Council proper. By contrast, another discussant believed that retreats were unnecessary and that nothing prevented the Council from having discussions “in a larger context” in the regular course of its conduct of work. In addition, noted this speaker, retreats for comprehensive discussions were not always possible. Nevertheless, such work was in fact ongoing among members whether it was by telephone, at the respective Council missions, or on the margins of proceedings in the Chamber and in the consultations room.

The initial speaker on this subject reiterated that the idea of regular retreats was a proposal only, while re-emphasizing that many issues on the Council’s agenda could benefit from such discussions. Citing the Eritrea/Ethiopia and Somalia items in this regard, he strongly underscored the link between these issues. At the same time, he hastened to note that he was not suggesting that there be outcomes to such retreats nor was he proposing that the Council adopt a resolution that would comprehensively address those issues. He then referred to the importance of the non-proliferation item, asking whether, in that regard, the Council had at any time discussed the links among Iranian, Israeli, Lebanese and Syrian issues.

Turning to the Sudan as another case in point, this speaker noted the links of that item to the situations in Chad and the Central African Republic. He pointed out that in the lead-up to establishing UNAMID, the Council had insisted that the Government of the Sudan accept the deployment of the peacekeeping operation as well as cooperate with UNAMID. In addition, the Council had also called on the Government to cooperate with the Darfur rebel groups. On the other hand, and in connection with MINURCAT (United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad, established by resolution 1778 (2007)), the Council did not insist that the Government of Chad engage in talks with Chadian rebel groups. While such “double standards” were perhaps not apparent to Council members in New York, they were evident and did matter to those in the region. Responding to this point, one speaker noted that the Government of the Sudan had created the conditions by which approximately 200,000 people had been killed and in excess of two million others displaced. The Council had taken the measures it had against the Government of the Sudan since it must be held accountable for its actions. Citing the Council’s failures with the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, he warned that if there were to be a “genocide in 2008”, the Council would have again failed.

With respect to emerging trends in the Council, one participant observed that there were a limited number of “tools” with which to exercise the Council’s mandate, noting in this regard (1) verbal diplomacy, (2) operational activities (peacekeeping and special political missions), (3) economic measures, (4) the threat of the use of force, and (5) the authorization of the use of force. He pointed to the

need for the Council to identify issues, countries or regions that could pose threats to international peace and security early on, specifically through having discussions that could recognize such threats before they materialize. The Council, he believed, could create the capacity to identify threats six months or even two years in advance. In this regard, he pointed to the April 2007 Council high-level debate on climate change, which had addressed that issue in the context of it being a threat to international peace and security. He also commended the United Nations Conference on Climate Change in Bali (to be held in December 2007) for addressing the issue. When considering the views of islands and low-lying States that climate change posed a threat to their security, he continued, there was indeed a contribution for the Council to make in terms of its mandate under the Charter. Another speaker was in favour of the Council developing capacities to anticipate crises, but cautioned that this should not be done at the expense of overcrowding and overshadowing more pressing matters on the Council's agenda. Developing such capacities could place a heavy burden on Council members, notably elected members with scarce resources. It was also suggested that there was a danger that some Council members could exploit the media to focus attention on climate change and other matters that play well with domestic audiences instead of giving sufficient attention to more pressing issues.

Referring to the huge increase in the Council's workload, another discussant noted that, when the Charter was drafted over 60 years ago, threats to international peace and security were generally viewed as conflicts between States. However, threats to international peace and security more recently have also emanated from acts of terrorism, intra-State conflicts and the spread of HIV/AIDS. The speaker thus queried whether threats to international peace and security were now broader than before and whether the Council needed to place a limit on what constituted such threats for the purpose of its work. In this context, he observed that, while climate change and poverty were not direct threats to international peace and security, those issues did have such implications.

Also characterizing the Council's workload as heavy, another participant drew attention to the latest resolution adopted on the Sudan which, *inter alia*, had requested the Secretary-General to report to the Council on its implementation on a monthly basis. In his view, the purpose of such monthly reporting remained unclear and, at the same time, it had unnecessarily increased the Council's workload.

One speaker questioned whether the Council had simply become more active without becoming more effective. Comparing the Council's work and impact in 2007, he observed a high level of non-compliance with Council decisions. There was also a "General Assemblyization" of the Council, he said, with a lot of time being misspent in consultations that could be used more productively. He believed that Council members, in consultations, should not only present the views of their capitals but also actually determine the course of action that the Council should take.

According to one speaker, there were issues that did threaten international peace and security but that the Council did not want to "deal with vigorously". This tendency had negatively affected the Council's credibility and even its legitimacy. The speaker held that if the Council wanted the international community to continue "believing" in its role and assisting in the implementation of its decisions, then the Council must be more attentive to such issues. In this respect, the speaker advised

the Council to consult more with regional organizations and to listen carefully to their positions. In one participant's view, there was a danger of the Council encroaching on the mandates of other United Nations organs when it took up certain issues. According to another speaker, as the General Assembly was not as "effective or authoritative" as the Council, the onus was put on the latter to address such issues.

The role of Groups of Friends

One speaker suggested that Groups of Friends were frequently politically biased. Citing the practice of such Groups of "developing" Council draft resolutions, he believed that should the Council continue to use such Groups, their membership should at least reflect what he referred to as a "diversity of opinion". He likened the Groups of Friends to being "Groups of likeminded people". Reliance on such "outside mechanisms", he continued, should not be allowed to encroach on the Council's work. Another speaker, while noting that Groups of Friends were at times helpful, concurred that they were sometimes politicized. Specifically, he noted that, with respect to the Council's agenda item regarding the situation in Georgia, a number of efforts had been made to facilitate a meeting of Abkhaz representatives with members of the Council so that the views of the latter could be taken into account. Stressing that Abkhazia was an "internationally recognized" party to that conflict, the speaker pointed out that such unsuccessful efforts had included attempts to convene "Arria-formula" meetings, which, in his view, could be arranged by any Council member.

Still, several participants spoke in favour of the Groups of Friends. One speaker stated that it was a "fact of life" that those Groups existed, adding that they had a legitimate role to play since some issues that were on the Council's agenda were also discussed within structures outside of the Council. However, he did caution that whereas the Groups of Friends in many ways laid the groundwork for much of the Council's work, their respective opinions could not override what the Council wished to discuss vis-à-vis a given item. Another participant noted an understanding that the Groups of Friends were supposed to facilitate the Council's work and not substitute for it. While there may sometimes be indirect political pressure on Groups of Friends, Council members should not use their criticisms of these Groups as an excuse for inaction. It was observed that all Council members should take the responsibility of making persuasive arguments to support their views and exert influence on the Council's decisions. Therefore, draft resolutions submitted by the Groups should not be taken on without discussion within the Council or be considered as completed drafts. It was also observed that the Council should pay closer attention not only to the countries concerned with a particular agenda item, but also to other affected countries in a given region. Given that it may sometimes not be possible for leaders to travel to New York to meet with the Council, one speaker suggested that the Council take more advantage of teleconferencing technology. In addition, another speaker noted that the Group of Friends of security sector reform served to bring into the work of the Council the views of the wider United Nations membership on that issue. In this way, the Council could be more responsive to the wider membership, he said.

Challenges ahead

On the challenges ahead, one speaker drew attention to the situation in Myanmar, where the Council was facing a situation of “grievous disrespect” for human rights and where the ruling military junta was “ensuring” that the country did not enjoy the economic prosperity that was being experienced by most Asian countries. In his view, the Council might have “missed an opportunity” in early 2007 with respect to Myanmar. If that opportunity had not been missed, he said, the Council could have perhaps prevented the repression there later in the year. After the recent demonstrations in Myanmar, and the Government’s repressive reaction to those demonstrations, the Council “did get its act together” and had given a boost to the good offices mission of the Secretary-General. In his view, the Council’s actions had strengthened the hand of Ibrahim Gambari, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the International Compact with Iraq and Other Issues. The speaker noted that the Government of Myanmar was now responding to the General Assembly, the Secretary-General and the Council. In this respect, he queried how the Council could maintain a level of pressure on Myanmar to encourage the authorities to take further positive steps while, at the same time, not applying the pressure in a way that would “tip them over” into possibly refusing the good offices mission of the Secretary-General. Another speaker cautioned that, if a Council resolution had been adopted in early 2007, “who knows what would have happened”. He added that the item had been “bulldozed” through the Council with a procedural vote to place it on the agenda, which was not a good approach for the Council. Subsequently, though, the Council managed to be more effective in its actions vis-à-vis Myanmar, because it was more inclusive and consensus driven, which was a good lesson for all Council members.

In terms of other challenges ahead, one speaker also drew attention to the Sudan, which he characterized as a “reputational” issue for the United Nations. With success in Darfur, the reputation and effectiveness of the United Nations would be enhanced. On the other hand, should there be a failure in Darfur, the organization’s reputation — especially that of United Nations peacekeeping — would “very much suffer”. Further, he underscored the need to balance the Council’s pressure and coercive measures on the Sudan in light of the Council’s four “strands of activity” vis-à-vis Darfur. These strands included deploying an effective peacekeeping force in Darfur; improving the regional security situation; boosting the political process jointly undertaken by Jan Eliasson (Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Darfur) and Salim Ahmed Salim (African Union Special Envoy for Darfur); and the judicial tract, where the International Criminal Court was mandated by the Security Council to undertake investigations. On the last point, the speaker added that, unfortunately, the Government of the Sudan’s cooperation with the Court was lacking.

The same speaker perceived the issue of Iran to be the “toughest of all” challenges ahead, especially given its nuclear activities but also in light of that country’s activities in Lebanon, Afghanistan, Iraq and in the broader region. While uncertain whether Iran was pursuing nuclear weapons, or just a capacity to build those weapons, he stressed the need not to be naïve and to accept that Iran was pursuing such activities solely for energy purposes. He also warned that a situation must be avoided wherein Iran made sufficient progress in its nuclear activities to pose a threat to its neighbours and the region, especially Israel. He cautioned that such progress would create a climate for military confrontation in an already tense

region. A situation wherein Iran possessed nuclear weapons would also “blow a hole” in the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons so that the Treaty would “probably sink totally”. Acknowledging the role of the permanent members plus Germany in negotiating draft resolutions on this Council agenda item, he underlined that there actually had been cooperation on the issue among Council members. By contrast, on this point, another speaker remarked that it was “ludicrous” for the permanent members plus Germany to prepare the draft resolutions on Iran without involving the elected members, as this issue was of importance to all delegations in the Council. Similarly, one discussant lamented instances in which the permanent members had negotiated draft resolutions to which the media had had access before these texts were given to the elected members of the Council.

Session II

Working methods

Moderator:

Ambassador Ricardo Alberto Arias
Permanent Representative of Panama

Commentators:

Ambassador Liu Zhenmin
Deputy Permanent Representative of China

Ambassador Marcello Spatafora
Permanent Representative of Italy

The session addressed several aspects of Security Council working methods: (i) responsibilities of the President; (ii) Security Council missions; (iii) conduct of business of the Security Council; (iv) cooperation with other United Nations organs and bodies; and (v) broadening inputs and outreach.

In introducing the topic, the moderator observed that, in recent years, the responsibilities of the Security Council had changed dramatically, with conflicts becoming more complicated due to the close linkages among security, human rights and development. Expressing concern about the long-standing provisional status of the Council’s provisional rules of procedure, he noted that “form should follow function”. One of the commentators concurred that the Security Council had been playing a more complex role in the maintenance of international peace and security. He emphasized, however, that the core question was whether the Council had become not only more active, but also more effective, in its action. He expressed his doubts in this regard. Another commentator, although acknowledging that the Council had worked unsparingly to improve its working methods, pointed out that working methods were a technical matter with “great implications” for the effectiveness and credibility of the Council itself.

In the ensuing discussion, considerable attention was devoted to identifying ways to enhance the Council’s transparency, accessibility and efficiency. Still, some participants contended that, in order to achieve results, the discussion should focus on practical issues that could be realistically improved instead of advocating unrealistic changes related to general diplomatic practice. In this regard, according

to one speaker, the Security Council's Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions should be the appropriate forum to address all issues related to the Council's working methods and conduct of business. The same speaker also suggested holding a meeting of the Informal Working Group at the ambassadorial level in order to deal with matters that could not be properly addressed at the experts' level.

A number of participants emphasized the need for newly elected members to quickly familiarize themselves with the working methods of the Council. To this end, the usefulness of the following documents was underscored: the note by the President of the Security Council (S/2006/507); the unofficial handbook on the working methods of the Security Council prepared by the former Chairman of the Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions; and the special research report produced by the Security Council Report, entitled "Security Council transparency, legitimacy and effectiveness: efforts to reform Council working methods 1993-2007".

Responsibilities of the President

The responsibilities of the President were discussed in detail. In particular, one speaker emphasized that the President, as the "master of proceedings" for the current month, should undertake the following core functions: (i) share communications and information with the members of the Council at any time in a timely manner; (ii) handle the discussions in a very balanced manner; (iii) observe the provisional rules of procedure prudently; (iv) promote consensus-building among members whenever possible, with a view to preserving the unity of the Council; and (v) speak to the media and the public on behalf of Council members. With reference to the latter point, it was remarked that, in order to avoid confusion, the President should avoid speaking in his national capacity, while assuming an impartial approach without disclosing too much information about closed meetings to the media. On the issue of consensus-building, some speakers underscored the importance of maintaining the Council's unity and warned that the President should be very cautious in putting any issue to a vote. Another participant warned that consensus may sometimes be artificial, and that putting an issue to a vote could sometimes be helpful.

Security Council missions

Participants acknowledged that Security Council missions constituted a valuable way for the Council to carry out its responsibilities under the Charter. They provided a means for gathering first-hand information, interacting with the parties, building mutual trust with a wide range of local stakeholders, and eliminating misunderstandings, as reflected by the Council's recent missions in connection with the Kosovo issue and to various African countries. A discussant cautioned, however, that the use of this tool should be limited to three or four missions per year so they do not become a burden for Security Council members and the Secretariat. The same speaker pointed out that such missions do not constitute official visits of the Council and that their informal nature should be retained. With regard to the level and size of missions, participants welcomed the increasing tendency of members to participate at the ambassadorial level. On the other hand, it was pointed out that it should not be mandatory for all Council members to take part in missions, although it was felt that the participation of those members with a particular interest or

influence in the region should be encouraged. Referring to the post-mission phase, a speaker underlined that the recommendations included in the final report should provide appropriate guidance to the Secretariat as well as to United Nations missions on the ground for their future action.

Conduct of business of the Security Council

Improving transparency remained a priority, though it was acknowledged that a number of steps aimed at improving the Council's working methods had recently been undertaken. However, participants remarked that a number of provisions of the note by the President of the Security Council (S/2006/507) were still far from being fully implemented.

Some speakers expressed concern about the overly formal nature of informal consultations, including the tendency of members to read prepared and lengthy statements, thus limiting the scope for a more strategic and decision-making oriented exchange of views. A different speaker, however, reminded participants that Ambassadors spoke on behalf of their Governments; therefore prepared statements were sometimes needed. In order to avoid extensive repetitions, while increasing the interactivity of discussions, another discussant appealed to Council members to avoid repeating the same concepts whenever they agreed with what was said by a previous speaker. The same participant noted that a precondition to making the Council's discussions more interactive and action-oriented was the full respect of confidentiality for positions expressed by delegations during informal consultations. According to some, this lack of confidentiality generated a tendency among Council members to shift real discussions outside the framework of informal consultations, notably through bilateral, permanent members, or Groups of Friends meetings. Another participant recommended focusing on exactly those procedural shortcomings that could be addressed by the Council members. In his view, other frictions, such as those caused by frequent information leaks to the media, are unavoidable because they are part of the nature of diplomacy.

Recognizing that elected members could not exert leadership on each specific issue of which the Council was seized, one speaker emphasized that a principle of "burden-sharing" could be beneficially applied. On the bulk of the active items on the Council's agenda, each member could focus on the issues of most interest to its delegation. Nevertheless, it was noted, all Council members should be granted the opportunity, as well as adequate time, to be informed about developments regarding other agenda items, to examine the proposed course of action, as well as to provide inputs to the decision-making process.

Cooperation with other United Nations organs and bodies

During the discussion, participants saw scope for improving the Council's efficiency and transparency through enhanced interaction with other United Nations organs and bodies such as the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the Secretariat and the Peacebuilding Commission.

1. General Assembly and Economic and Social Council

According to several speakers, further engagement between the Council and the General Assembly should be considered. In particular, it was pointed out that it was very much in the interest of the elected members to build a culture of increased

interaction and cooperation between the two organs. Council members could hold more frequent briefings for members of their regional groups, as elected members were said to have a special responsibility for reaching out to non-members. One participant called for a more institutionalized consultation process between the Presidents of the Council, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council.

The discussion also touched upon another aspect of the relationship between the Council and the General Assembly, namely the Council's annual report to the General Assembly. The annual report had frequently been criticized by the wider membership for lacking adequate analytical and substantive elements assessing the Council's work, including cases in which it had failed to act, as well as justifications for major actions it had taken. Responding to these criticisms, one speaker stated that the report should maintain its factual character, because it would be very difficult for the Secretariat to prepare a more analytic text and because such a text would have to be substantively discussed in the Council. However, the same speaker noted that, keeping in mind the sensitivity of the issue, there was room for making the report more comprehensive. He also recommended consulting with the Secretariat with a view to submitting the report some weeks earlier. By contrast, another discussant noted with disappointment that the improvements aimed at making the report more analytical, introduced by Singapore during its last tenure in the Council, were no longer taken into account. One participant claimed that, while the General Assembly was discussing the annual report in its joint debate from 12 to 14 November 2007, the Council was in session. In response, another speaker clarified that the President of the Security Council had specifically not convened the Council on 12 November, when the General Assembly had discussed the annual report.

2. Secretariat

Emphasizing that the Secretariat's role was to provide substantive services to the Security Council, one commentator stressed the importance of improving the efficiency of this cooperation. He suggested that it would be helpful if the issue could be thoroughly discussed with both the Secretary-General and the Security Council Affairs Division of the Department of Political Affairs. At the same time, participants emphasized that the latter provided critical support to the Council, especially to the elected members, which often did not have at their disposal either the institutional memory or the resources of permanent members.

In the view of another speaker, the briefings from the Secretariat in informal consultations could be more purpose and result-oriented in order to provide members of the Council with enhanced guidance.

With reference to the good offices missions of the Secretary-General, one discussant questioned the extent to which the Security Council should be involved in providing support. It was argued that the Council should convey general support to the missions, while giving more discretion to the Secretary-General and his envoys and avoiding micromanagement. In this connection, the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the International Compact with Iraq and Other Issues was cited as an example.

3. Peacebuilding Commission

Cooperation with the recently established Peacebuilding Commission was also discussed by participants. To one of the commentators, peacebuilding should not be seen in isolation from peacekeeping and, given the Council's responsibility for the latter, it was in the purview of the Council itself to decide which countries should be referred to the Commission. Another discussant contended that the Commission was a body with purely advisory functions that should not be seen as an instrument of economic and financial aid to countries on its agenda.

Broadening inputs and outreach

The need to increase the transparency and outreach of the Council's work was widely recognized by participants in three areas: (i) the interaction with non-members of the Security Council and troop-contributing countries; (ii) the interface with non-governmental organizations and experts; and (iii) the relationship with the media.

Several speakers underlined the importance of finding practical ways of associating the wider United Nations membership with the Council's work. A commentator recalled that, in the World Summit Outcome document, Heads of State and Government had recommended that the Security Council continue to adapt its working methods "so as to increase the involvement of States not members of the Council in its work". In this connection, efforts should be made to hold public meetings whenever possible. Thematic debates, mainly organized by non-permanent members, were also seen as a valuable tool for giving an opportunity for non-Council members to express their views. Two discussants stressed the importance of allowing non-Council members to speak prior to Council members in open debates, so that the opinions of the former could be taken into account by Council members in their subsequent statements as well as in the Council's decision-making process. Another participant concurred that such a practice could be highly beneficial, as it would show the Council's appreciation for the contributions of non-members, especially those particularly interested in or concerned with certain issues under discussion. A suggestion was also made to increase the involvement of non-Council members through regional groups, as well as to institutionalize a more interactive dialogue with the troop-contributing countries aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of peacekeeping missions. Moreover, it was underlined that, as stated in the note by the President (S/2006/507), when drafting resolutions, presidential statements and press statements, members of the Council should increase their consultations with concerned/interested countries, as well as promote closer cooperation with relevant regional organizations. One participant cautioned that the perceived progress in enhancing outreach to and transparency vis-à-vis the broader United Nations membership might actually be an illusion because past reform efforts, such as the initiatives promoted by Singapore in 2002, had not been sustained by the Council in the long run and sometimes were later forgotten by the Council.

With regard to the relationship with civil society organizations, the "Arria-formula" meetings were seen as a valuable tool that many delegations had increasingly utilized in recent years. However, in the view of one speaker, these informal gatherings of the members of the Council should be used sparingly and their unofficial character should be retained, particularly when there is no

substantive consensus among Council members. In this regard, the same speaker contended that issues discussed during “Arria-formula” meetings should not be automatically considered as official agenda items of which the Security Council was seized. It was also argued that, specifically in the framework of the Council’s subsidiary bodies, better access to Council members’ experts could be beneficial.

In connection with the media, participants agreed that more attention needed to be paid to the balance between transparency and confidentiality. One participant urged caution in not disclosing confidential information discussed in informal consultations. A major concern, raised repeatedly by participants throughout the workshop, was that the frequency of “leaks” to the press, which discouraged Council members from speaking more freely during informal consultations and risked seriously undermining the Council’s authority.

Session III

Security Council Committees and Working Groups

Moderator:

Ambassador R. M. Marty M. Natalegawa
Permanent Representative of Indonesia

Commentators:

Ambassador Jean-Maurice Ripert
Permanent Representative of France

Ambassador Johan C. Verbeke
Permanent Representative of Belgium

The opening comments and the discussion that followed focused on ways and means to ensure enhanced efficiency and effectiveness for the Council’s subsidiary machinery. More specifically, in their remarks, participants elaborated on the following main themes: (i) Security Council working groups; (ii) working methods of the Council’s subsidiary bodies and their relationship with the Council itself; (iii) responsibilities of the chairman in the conduct of the subsidiary bodies’ business; (iv) proliferation of subsidiary bodies; and (v) general issues related to sanctions, including listing, de-listing, and monitoring.

Security Council working groups

One participant noted that thematic issues, such as the responsibility to protect, massive violations of human rights and impunity constituted new fields of action for the Security Council, presenting significant challenges to the way it operated. In connection with this expanded role for the Council, the speaker cited, as an example of good progress, the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. Through the efforts of this Working Group, the Council was able to adopt a comprehensive and action-oriented approach to issues such as child recruitment and the protection of children in situations of armed conflict. The mechanism in place foresaw a chain of actions: monitoring on the ground, reporting to the Council and, where appropriate, the application of sanctions and the referral of cases to the International Criminal Court. In the view of this participant, the Working Group had succeeded in combining, in one subsidiary body, a wide range of elements: political

will, tangible instruments, monitoring on the ground and follow-up actions. He indicated that some non-governmental organizations proposed extending this mechanism to other fields, such as “women and peace and security”. Another participant, recalling that the proposed establishment of a subsidiary body addressing the issue of women and peace and security had faced some opposition on the basis that too many subsidiary bodies already existed, held the view that such bodies should be judged on their capacity to produce results. A third discussant cautioned that, in order to avoid further encroachment charges by some in the General Assembly, the Security Council should adopt a very prudent approach to opening up new fields of activity.

Working methods and the relationship between subsidiary bodies and the Council

According to one of the commentators, a clear distinction should be drawn between Security Council resolutions mandating sanctions regimes and the work on their actual implementation within a committee. The work on the resolution’s implementation within a committee had to occur on the basis of the mandating resolution. Committee chairpersons should ensure that such subsidiary bodies are just a means of implementing the Council’s resolutions and are not used as a forum to question or revisit the mandating resolution.

With reference to the working methods of the Council’s subsidiary bodies, in the view of several participants, the principle of consensus constituted a problematic aspect of committee decision-making. It was noted that there was an “odd discrepancy” between voting in the Security Council, which still required a majority of 9 with no negative vote by a permanent member, and the committees’ practice of operating under consensus rule. This peculiarity should not be over-emphasized, commented one participant, since chairpersons should in any event strive for consensus as a way of conveying greater unity and authority. At the same time, another speaker cautioned that it would be dangerous for the subsidiary bodies to develop their own decision-making methods, separate from the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council. Two discussants proposed to remedy the discrepancy in voting procedures by adopting a modulated approach to committee decision-making based on the nature of actions that the subsidiary bodies had to perform. Another speaker concurred that a “one-size fits all” solution would not allow the committees to work efficiently and that a gradual approach could better serve this purpose. It was suggested that a wide array of tasks in which most sanctions committees were engaged, such as listing, de-listing, granting of humanitarian exemptions, overall review of sanctions lists and other actions such as writing letters and making démarches, might be best carried out with more flexible or special rules for reaching decisions. One participant explicitly endorsed the recommendations from a recent report by the International Peace Academy, undertaken in collaboration with the Center on Global Counter-Terrorism Cooperation, which was cited in the background paper prepared for the workshop.¹ Another speaker proposed that the listing of individuals could remain a consensus decision, whereas de-listing could be decided by a qualified majority, with or

¹ Eric Rosand, Alistair Millar and Jason Ipe, *The UN Security Council’s Counterterrorism Program: What Lies Ahead?* (New York: International Peace Academy, 2007), quoted in Background Points and Possible Questions for Panel Sessions for this “hitting the Ground Running” round table.

without a veto for permanent members. Similarly, committees could consider a reversal of the current rules when deciding upon humanitarian exemptions, namely to grant the exception unless opposition against it was expressed. As regards the process of reviewing sanctions lists, a rule familiar in the comitology of the European Union could be applied. A first round of decisions could be taken by consensus, while a second round could be subject to a majority vote. Some participants noted that, as a matter of fact, some committees had already adopted their own rules of procedure, as contained in their respective guidelines. Another proposal related to the working methods of the Council's subsidiary organs concerned the organization of wrap-up sessions of committees at the Council level. It was suggested that issues that could not be resolved at the experts' level be discussed and decided at the ambassadorial level.

Responsibilities of the chairman

With a view to resolving possible situations of impasse, several speakers believed that it should be in the purview of the chairman to refer, if necessary, stalled matters within the subsidiary bodies to the Council for its consideration. By contrast, one speaker held the view that the chairman should not address the Security Council without the agreement of the committee. However, he believed that the chairman should inform the President of what his "sense" was of the issues at stake in the committee.

In more general terms, it was suggested by several participants that it would be helpful if Committee chairpersons be allowed to utilize a certain degree of flexibility in their actions, although always within the mandate established by the Council. For instance, one participant noted that the chairman should have the freedom to mention the existence of disagreements in his report to the Council. Another participant noted that, in view of the fact that sanctions committees had been set up to avoid over-burdening the Council's work with technical details, the chairpersons should exercise the responsibility of ensuring that the Committee fulfils this task. Rather than merely trying to find the lowest common denominator, Committee chairpersons should aim at making the Council more effective in discharging its larger responsibilities. As an example, a discussant raised the case of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1591 (2005), concerning the Sudan, in which the process of reaching consensus, including on the texts of press statements, was extremely difficult.

Proliferation of subsidiary bodies

Since the overall trend in the number and range of the Council's subsidiary bodies had been upward for some years, several participants expressed some concern about their proliferation. The increased number of sanctions committees, however, had suggested to some the need for greater coordination and coherence. In this connection, one discussant suggested that there was room for merging some of the committees and working groups, despite the fact that they had been established by different resolutions. A few speakers felt that this proposal could be particularly beneficial in the area of counter-terrorism, where three distinct committees performed similar functions. However, one discussant cautioned that the merger of different committees would only enhance the Council's effectiveness if it is done not only at the formal but also at the substantive level. He explained that in the field of counter-terrorism it would not be helpful merely to create a consolidated organ

with a notational agenda composed of separate points for each former committee dealing with counter-terrorism.

In terms of addressing terrorism, it was pointed out that the Council has a heavy workload. One speaker noted that, while the Council's response in this regard had been very expeditious, it had been implemented before the United Nations as a whole had developed a comprehensive counter-terrorism strategy. Above all, he cautioned, thought should be given to how the Council could best pursue this issue now that the General Assembly had adopted an overarching strategy. In response, one participant suggested that, since terrorism posed a threat to all Member States, the Security Council should promote closer cooperation and coordination with the General Assembly. The appointment of a new Executive Director of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, he continued, may have opened a window of opportunity. Members of the General Assembly, he cautioned, tend to perceive the Security Council as seeking to retain too much control over the United Nations counter-terrorism effort. The same speaker suggested that enhanced cooperation in the area of counter-terrorism could go a long way towards reducing tensions between the Security Council and the General Assembly.

Sanctions issues, including listing and de-listing, working with expert groups

A number of speakers warned of the risk of erosion of the credibility of several sanctions committees. According to one participant, unless sanctions regimes are continuously adjusted to changing dynamics on the ground, their credibility, and that of the Council, could be undermined. The Committee established pursuant to resolution 1572 (2004) concerning Côte d'Ivoire and the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1267 (1999) were mentioned as examples of committees requiring swift adjustments. In the former case, it was noted that the sanctions regime did not sufficiently take into account political changes since the conclusion of the Ouagadougou Agreement, whereas for the latter, the Committee was trapped in a "2001-2002 mindset" and needed to move forward under the guidance of its Chairman.

According to other participants, the credibility of sanctions committees had also been weakened by the fact that the procedures for listing and de-listing individuals on the consolidated lists had not yet been perfected. Criticisms were voiced about the lack either of transparency in such matters or of clear criteria for the listing and de-listing of individuals and entities. For instance, one participant inquired why the Al-Qaida and Taliban Committee's consolidated list comprised almost exclusively Muslims. While acknowledging the Council's need to act quickly to prevent acts of terrorism, the participant nevertheless lamented the "suspect nature" of the information provided to support listing requests. Similarly, another discussant expressed concern about the reliability of the sources of intelligence of listing requests. In response, one speaker asserted that such information goes through a series of stringent checks on the national level before being submitted to the Security Council. Another discussant recalled cases in which listing affected not only the legitimate target, but also people with identical names, many of which were quite common and widely used. According to this participant, people who fell into this category were unable to travel abroad, noting that even individuals serving their Governments in the diplomatic service had been unable to get visas. While acknowledging that the Council's procedures had already improved, the same

speaker also stated that there was room for an even more enhanced effort by the Security Council to make its listing and de-listing processes more transparent.

In the view of another speaker, the lack of due process and transparency, the retention of names of persons who were cleared by national courts, as well as the limited protection of the human rights of listed individuals, also undermined the credibility of the Council. With reference to the effect of legal sentences at the national level and their impact on committee lists, one participant underscored that the Security Council's work was a non-judicial enterprise that involved preventive diplomacy. The Council did not punish, rather it took preventive action for which it relied on a given set of information. Whether the person concerned had been subject to a national judicial process was taken into account, but this was not the only determining factor. This matter touched upon the larger issue of due process, and the speaker emphasized that all participants were aware that if the Council did not address questions of due process, the credibility of the sanctions instrument in the struggle against terrorism would be undermined.

Turning to the monitoring of sanctions, participants remarked that maintaining the credibility of the expert groups was a pivotal element, as these matters directly affected the credibility of the committees themselves. In this connection, the work of the expert groups was criticized as not always meeting the highest standards, with some of their reports characterized as somewhat questionable. In response, one participant lauded the high professionalism of the expert groups. While a participant contended that, in some cases, the expert groups had credible information, others felt that on occasion those groups made extrapolations based on a thin layer of evidence. In this regard, the case of Somalia, where the Monitoring Group had never visited that country, was cited as an example by this speaker. He also suggested that the Security Council consider organizing hearings with experts.

Session IV

Lessons learned: reflections by the class of 2007

Moderator:

Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad
Permanent Representative of the United States

Commentators:

Ambassador Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser
Permanent Representative of Qatar

Ambassador Peter Burian
Permanent Representative of Slovakia

Mr. Luis Enrique Chávez
Deputy Permanent Representative of Peru

Ambassador Leslie Kojo Christian
Permanent Representative of Ghana

Ambassador Luc Joseph Okio
Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Congo

The moderator opened the session by congratulating the incoming members of the Council and noting that elected members add to the legitimacy and representative nature of the Council's work. He also emphasized the quantity of work that faces Council members.

Advice to new Security Council members

One speaker urged the newly elected members of the Council to use the time that remained before January 2008 to prepare to the extent possible for their tenures. It was important, in that regard, to have a quality team in place and to begin initiating contacts with the current Council membership from the level of Ambassadors down to that of experts. Another speaker observed that it was important not only to have quality staff in place, but also the appropriate quantity of personnel to function well in the Council. Once in the Council, there would be little time to address human resource issues. Cautioning the incoming Ambassadors to not attempt "to cover all matters" on their own, one speaker emphasized the role of experts in helping Ambassadors to learn the issues. The speaker also called the political coordinators the "right hand" of the Permanent Representatives and indicated that, to be effective, they must have a very strong work ethic. Warning the newly elected members that their Council obligations would take up a significant amount of their time, one participant underlined that attending to other matters in the United Nations could be difficult. However, he cautioned elected members "to resist the temptation" of being kept away from other business in the United Nations, since their terms on the Council would last only two years.

Another speaker focused on some of the pitfalls facing incoming Council members. Items on the Council's agenda, for example, were not always a priority for the Foreign Ministries of newly elected Council members. Therefore, there was much catching up and studying for the incoming members to do prior to joining the Council. One delegation noted that it can take a full six months to get accustomed to the issues before the Council. Non-permanent members, he stressed, did not possess institutional memory and were often not familiar with the Council's provisional rules of procedure. New members, however, could rely on the advice of more experienced Council members to address this knowledge gap. One participant also underscored the value of Secretariat briefings and advice in learning issues on the Council's agenda. It was also noted that UNITAR trainings were beneficial for new Council members. It was observed that one disadvantage for small delegations was that they did not have ambassadorial representation in many of the countries that were on the Council's agenda, therefore causing a high degree of dependence on the reports of the Secretary-General. It was suggested that non-governmental organizations, which had first-hand knowledge from the ground, could be a valuable source of information. Some speakers also observed that the publications issued by the Security Council report provided useful perspectives on the Council's work.

Elected members, according to one participant, could add special value to the work of the Council by focusing on issues in which they had a unique perspective or experience, even if they do not know every detail of every issue. This might include members whose countries had gone through a transitional period between different political or economic systems or those with experience in security sector reform or development. In this respect, one interlocutor pointed to his delegation's experience during its tenure of focusing on the issue of security sector reform, which in turn had enhanced its expertise in terms of other Council agenda items that, for instance,

included elements of post-conflict peacebuilding. Other speakers suggested that members would be effective by pursuing issues on the Council that were aligned with their strategic interests.

One participant underscored for newly elected members the importance of emphasizing the implementation of Council resolutions. In his view, resolutions were at times adopted simply to “score political points” without sufficient regard for their eventual implementation. He commented that such instances greatly undermined the Council’s credibility. In a similar vein, another speaker subsequently noted that resolution 1706 (2006) on the Sudan was adopted with some abstentions and that, in practice, that resolution had not been implemented. On the other hand, resolution 1769 (2007) on the same item had been adopted unanimously and was being implemented. When members were “determined to come together”, it was observed, the prospects for implementation rose. One speaker urged elected Council members to be “careful” with the permanent members, whether an elected member was “with or against them” on a given issue. In this regard, another participant encouraged elected members to be “brave enough to resist the challenges” of the permanent members when holding the Council’s presidency. The presidency, he added, included the responsibility to promote consensus, for example, in avoiding what might be a “hasty call for a vote” on a draft resolution.

Security Council presidency

Acknowledging the difficulties inherent in preparing for a Council presidency, a speaker underscored that it was mainly a “learning by doing” process. Another suggested focusing on a thematic issue to give structure to one’s presidency. This should entail preparing one’s own delegation and other Council members, so that the thematic debate could be expected to result in a substantive outcome. However, it was cautioned that Council Presidents should not raise a thematic issue for its own sake. To boost the Council’s credibility and that of other United Nations organs, they should demonstrate a consistent focus on those thematic issues well beyond the term of their presidencies. Another speaker advocated employing a “wider picture” for viewing issues on the Council agenda. For this reason, he deemed thematic debates to be of importance, as well as an area in which elected members could work effectively in the Council. However, he advised that, while some thematic debates belong in the General Assembly, those related to the maintenance of international peace and security belong in the Security Council.

One participant queried how a delegation should balance its responsibilities as Council President with its national responsibilities. A discussant responded that the delegation holding the presidency could always convey its national position in formal meetings or informal consultations. Another referred to the responsibility of the presidency to build consensus in the Council in a way that corresponds to national interests, using the analogy that a Council President does not have “two heads but a bigger head” during the month-long term. It was also suggested that the Council President should appreciate the linkages between domestic and international affairs, as Council Presidents should be skilled at managing expectations back home during their tenure by communicating well with domestic government, media and civil society.

Influence of elected members on the Security Council's work

One speaker advised newly elected members to find their “natural places” in the Council. While it was important not to overestimate their own influence, it was also important that it not be underestimated. In his view, there were two “entry points” into the work of the Council, including one that was “power-based” and which he attributed to having the right of veto. The second entry point, which could be utilized by all members of the Council, he characterized as “authority-based”. Directing his comments to the incoming five, he added that such an influence depended upon how members built their respective authority and credibility in the Council’s debates. In this context, he underscored that elected members could put forward very strong arguments and positions on issues before the Council. He also advised the new members to become engaged in the issues as opposed to “standing on the sidelines”, as well as to concentrate on items on which their delegations had a strategic interest.

One elected member addressed the perception that the Council was a non-democratic entity. In spite of the power of the permanent members, he observed, they needed the support of the elected members to take action in the Council since nine affirmative votes — in the absence of a veto — were required for a resolution to be adopted. In addition, consensus among all members was needed for the Council to express itself in other forms, such as with presidential statements and press statements. In arriving at such consensus, he emphasized, the elected members could play a very active part. Another speaker also observed that elected members could contribute to shaping policy through committee chairmanships, especially since committees such as the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1737 (2006) or the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1591 (2005) concerning the Sudan were not obscure subsidiary bodies without influence. So the role of elected members in committees belies the notion they were mere servants of the permanent members. In discussing possible expansion of the Council, one speaker suggested that, while the current composition of the Council did not reflect regional proportionality nor often the interests of some regional groups, expanding Council membership to resolve this challenge could compromise the effectiveness and efficiency of the Council.

Another participant questioned the perception that Council members tend to address issues as a single body. In fact, differences frequently arise among members, since national interests were often at stake. One discussant, in urging consensus and unity among Council members, asserted that the African members of the Council have a real opportunity to contribute to the maintenance of peace and security on that continent.

Transparency and encroachment

There were several comments about the transparency of the Council’s work. One elected member noted that his delegation had not been excluded from many issues to which it wanted to contribute. By contrast, he pointed out that this was not always the case with other United Nations organs, referring specifically to “some of the negotiation processes” undertaken in the General Assembly. Some speakers pointed to referring specifically to mechanisms through which the Council demonstrates transparency, including regional briefings, open debates, and “Arria-formula” meetings. Another speaker, on the other hand, suggested that the

Council's work often suffered from a lack of transparency, not just for the broader United Nations membership but also for elected members of the Council itself. He observed that on a number of occasions permanent members had negotiated draft resolutions without informing elected members. At times, it was recalled, elected members would find out about these draft resolutions at the same time they were released to the media.

Whenever a member intended to bring up an issue under "other matters" in informal consultations, one participant thought it advisable that beforehand this be brought to the attention of other members on a bilateral basis. On the question of sharing information outside of the Council, he stressed the need to strike a balance between this expectation and the issue of confidentiality. This speaker, echoed by another, deemed it important for members to keep their capitals well informed of the Council's consideration of issues, most notably to enable the capitals to revert in good time with instructions. This would also allow capitals to reflect "at a distance" on the reporting from New York. The need to ensure that the capitals were "on board" with the delegations at United Nations Headquarters was also stressed.

Another speaker described his delegation's entry to the Council as a "revelation". Notable was its realization that, given the nature of the Council's work, some issues were more effectively addressed in informal consultations where the Council was out of the "glare of the public and the press". Still, this approach to the conducting of Council business led to a perception that it lacked transparency. Another participant remarked that sharing too much information with the press created many problems, including at times delaying Council action.

One speaker addressed the view that the Council encroached on the mandates of other United Nations organs. While the speaker said that this could be true, he wondered to what extent the Council was actually "depriving" other organs of their prerogatives. He suggested that perhaps the Council was simply taking on issues that the other organs were not addressing effectively. It was also noted that non-Council members could, at any time, draw the Council's attention to issues by submitting communications to the President to be shared with Council members and which, if so requested, could also be issued as documents of the Council.
