



## Security Council

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### **Letter dated 16 February 2022 from the Permanent Representative of Finland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council**

I have the honour to transmit herewith the report on the nineteenth annual workshop for the newly elected members of the Security Council, which was held on 18 and 19 November 2021 at the Greentree Foundation, in Manhasset, New York (see annex). The final report has been compiled in accordance with the Chatham House Rule, solely under the responsibility of the Permanent Mission of Finland.

I would like to warmly thank all participants for their active contributions to the workshop. It offered the five newly elected members an opportunity to become acquainted with the inner workings of the Security Council, provided a unique occasion to take stock of the Council's performance over the past year and allowed members to explore how the Council's working methods can be improved. We were particularly happy to be back in person at the Greentree Foundation after exceptional times under restrictions related to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. It was also an honour to host our keynote speaker, the former Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Fatou Bensouda, at the workshop.

The Government of Finland remains committed to sponsoring the workshop as an annual event at the Greentree Foundation. Finland hopes that the annexed report will contribute to a better understanding of the complexity of the work of the Security Council and its practices, procedures and working methods.

I should be grateful, accordingly, if the present report and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Jukka Salovaara  
Ambassador  
Permanent Representative of Finland to the United Nations



**Annex to the letter dated 16 February 2022 from the Permanent Representative of Finland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council**

**“Hitting the ground running”: report on the nineteenth annual workshop for the newly elected members of the Security Council, held on 18 and 19 November 2021 at the Greentree Foundation, in Manhasset, New York**

Since 2003, the Government of Finland has convened and hosted the annual “Hitting the ground running” workshop for incoming members of the Security Council. The workshop is organized in cooperation with the Security Council Affairs Division of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and the non-profit organization Security Council Report. The late Professor Edward C. Luck of the School of International and Public Affairs of Columbia University played an instrumental role in conceptualizing and planning the annual workshops from their inception until his passing in early 2021. His contributions and unique input to previous workshops have been invaluable, and he will be greatly missed.

Over the years, Security Council members have valued and appreciated the workshop, which offers the five newly elected members an opportunity to become acquainted with the inner workings of the Council. The annual workshop informs the incoming members of the demands and expectations of being an elected member, takes stock of the Council’s performance over the past year and explores how the Council’s working methods can be improved. Incoming and current members alike engage in candid discussions in a relaxed, informal environment that stimulates openness, camaraderie and reflection away from the formality of the Council Chamber at United Nations Headquarters. Outgoing members share advice and highlight lessons learned as they conclude their Council terms.

From its inception, the workshop has been conducted under the Chatham House Rule of non-attribution, to foster spontaneous and frank discussion. To that end, speakers are not identified in the present report, which was prepared by Security Council Report.<sup>1</sup>

The 2021 “Hitting the ground running” workshop was held at the Greentree Foundation, in Manhasset, New York, on 18 and 19 November. On 18 November, following welcoming remarks by the Permanent Representative of Finland to the United Nations, Jukka Salovaara, the former Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC), Fatou Bensouda, delivered a keynote address to Security Council members. A discussion ensued between Ms. Bensouda and members of the Council. The President of the Council, Juan Ramón de la Fuente Ramírez (Mexico), delivered closing remarks, which were followed by dinner.

On 19 November, participants convened for the following three substantive interactive sessions, each lasting 90 minutes:

- (a) State of the Council in 2021: taking stock and looking ahead (session I);
- (b) Working methods and subsidiary bodies (session II);
- (c) Lessons learned: reflections of the class of 2021 (session III).

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<sup>1</sup> Reports on previous workshops can be found at <https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/content/htgr>.

## Keynote address

In her personal remarks, Ms. Bensouda identified several possible avenues to enhance cooperation between the Security Council and ICC. That relationship was enshrined in the Rome Statute, which established ICC and endowed the Council with referral and deferral powers.<sup>2</sup> Ms. Bensouda observed that non-compliance by States with ICC decisions taken pursuant to Council referrals – such as failure to arrest ICC suspects – fostered impunity and undermined the credibility of both institutions. Timely arrests could also contribute to an efficient use of resources, given that the longer a suspect remained at large, the more prolonged and costly investigations may become. To increase compliance, she urged the Council to take concrete action on ICC communications relating to non-compliance and to develop guidelines for addressing such instances. She suggested that the Council consider, for example, the automatic imposition of asset freeze sanctions on individuals sought for arrest by the Court.

Ms. Bensouda maintained that, if the two institutions were to achieve their shared goal of preventing atrocity crimes threatening international peace and security, the Council's support for ICC should go beyond the referral of cases. One way to enhance cooperation was to encourage more frequent interaction between the Council and ICC than the regular biannual briefings by the ICC Prosecutor on Darfur and Libya. In that regard, she welcomed the designation of a focal point for interaction between the Council and ICC as a positive development that had offered many benefits, such as more systematic follow-up to Council resolutions, referring situations to ICC. Ms. Bensouda suggested that the Council consider inviting ICC representatives to participate in meetings in which the expertise of the Court could bring added value, including on situations involving mass killings, rape and other forms of sexual and gender-based crimes, the recruitment and use of children and attacks against peacekeepers.

Following the keynote address, Council members interacted with Ms. Bensouda, discussing, among other things, the importance of establishing robust justice institutions to address impunity and reinforce public faith in judicial processes. They were interested in learning more about Ms. Bensouda's work in developing and implementing policy guidance on addressing sexual and gender-based crimes and preventing the destruction of cultural heritage. Ms. Bensouda said that sexual and gender-based crimes were a feature of almost every conflict, adding that the Court encountered many challenges in investigating and prosecuting those crimes, including local social and cultural practices and the stigmatization of victims. She emphasized that political will to address those issues should come from the highest levels. Ms. Bensouda said that, during her term as Prosecutor, she had led the development of a policy that could serve as guidance not only for the Court but also for States, including those that were not parties to the Rome Statute, on how to investigate and address those crimes.

An incoming member asked how the Security Council could improve its working methods to support ICC. In response, Ms. Bensouda said that the Council should support the work of the Court, even though some Council members were not parties to the Rome Statute. She added that there needed to be a change in the notion that a State had no stake in the success of ICC if it was not a party to the Statute. Ms. Bensouda argued that even States that were not parties thereto recognized that

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<sup>2</sup> Under article 16 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, the Security Council is permitted to defer an investigation or a prosecution for one year, through the adoption of a resolution adopted under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, for reasons relating to the maintenance of international peace and security.

justice and accountability should trump politics, and that some of those States had cooperated with the Court despite their public rhetoric.

### **Session I**

#### **State of the Council in 2021: taking stock and looking ahead**

##### **Moderator**

Ambassador Jeffrey DeLaurentis  
Senior Adviser for Special Political Affairs at the United States Mission to the United Nations

##### **Commentators**

Ambassador T.S. Tirumurti  
Permanent Representative of India

Ambassador Jim Kelly  
Deputy Permanent Representative of Ireland

Ambassador Geng Shuang  
Deputy Permanent Representative of China

Mr. Salovaara welcomed the participants to the second day of the workshop and introduced the Director of the Security Council Affairs Division of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, Hasmik Egian, and the Executive Director of Security Council Report, Karin Landgren. Ms. Egian and Ms. Landgren delivered brief remarks prior to the session. Ms. Egian gave a statistical overview of trends in the work of the Council through the end of October 2021. Ms. Landgren said that ambition and imagination were essential tools for Council members if the Council was to fulfil its mandate in a world that was changing so quickly.

#### **Assessment of the performance of the Council in 2021**

Participants reflected on the performance of the Security Council in response to the tumultuous geopolitical developments of 2021, a year in which the Council resumed in-person meetings after conducting its work virtually throughout most of 2020 owing to COVID-19 restrictions. They referred to the changing nature of international peace and security. It was observed that the Council often found itself in crisis response mode and that its toolbox was becoming outdated, with prevention and mediation remaining underdeveloped. One speaker underlined the importance of agile adaptation by members to ways of addressing emerging crises, reflecting on the fact that the issues that then occupied most of their attention had not even been on their radar when they were preparing for their Council term. Another speaker felt that the Council should curb its enthusiasm for adding to its heavy agenda, while a third said that the Council could not approach its mandate from the perspective of 1945.

The year had witnessed upheavals involving abrupt leadership changes in several situations on the Security Council's agenda – Afghanistan, Haiti, Mali, Myanmar and the Sudan – and a continuing crisis in Ethiopia. Several discussants pointed to the speed and sense of urgency with which the Council had reacted to developments in Afghanistan, adopting resolution [2593 \(2021\)](#) of 30 August 2021, in which unhindered access for humanitarian actors was called for. Another said that the price of a calm Afghanistan could not be “turning a blind eye to the rights of women and girls”. One speaker pointed to the inconsistency with which the Council responded to military takeovers, suggesting that the Council saw “good coups and bad coups”. The speaker stated that, in some cases, such as that of Myanmar, the Council's public involvement had created greater instability.

A participant noted that the Council needed to establish clear approaches and common strategies for handling new issues on the agenda. Several interlocutors contended that the Council had been too slow in addressing developments in Ethiopia and Myanmar, with one speaker positing that, in some cases, the Council gave too much weight to regional solutions. As important as cooperation was between the United Nations and regional organizations, it should not become a “straightjacket” and an excuse for Council inaction. Another discussant agreed that external politics impeded Council action with regard to several country situations, including in Africa, but maintained that, in many cases in which the Council had not been proactive, divisions among the five permanent members, not failure on the part of regional organizations to act, had usually been to blame.

One discussant gave the Council a failing grade in addressing African issues, adding that “piling on” benchmarks for the removal of sanctions in countries such as the Central African Republic and Mali was making it harder for those countries to be taken off the Council’s agenda, alienating them from the Council. The speaker said that the Council should not be paying lip service to “African solutions to African problems”; it should not treat that as a mere slogan, but should seek to increase its cooperation with African regional organizations in addressing crises on the continent.

There was a call for the Council to provide more serious support for counter-terrorism, and several participants alluded to the difficult Council dynamics surrounding support for the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel. One speaker said that, although the Council was not united on how to finance the Joint Force, the request for United Nations assessed contributions for the Joint Force should be discussed seriously; it was important that the Joint Force have predictable resources to stem the spread of terrorism across the region.

### **Negotiating Council products and managing difficult dynamics**

A discussant noted that negotiations in 2021 had often been difficult, leading in some cases to the presentation of competing drafts by members. The challenging Council dynamics resulted in shorter mandate extensions for the peace operations in Haiti and Libya, of 6 months rather than the customary 12 months. It was suggested that some mandates had been extended through short technical rollovers because of the threat of a veto by a permanent member. However, one participant said that, where developments on the ground were unfolding rapidly, such as in Haiti in 2021, a shorter mandate renewal may be advisable, as it allowed the Council to assess the situation and amend the mission’s mandate accordingly.

On the positive side of the balance sheet, several speakers noted the Council’s unanimous extension of the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and the authorization of the cross-border humanitarian aid delivery mechanism to the Syrian Arab Republic, the Council’s first unanimous renewal of the cross-border mechanism since December 2016. In addition, the Council had issued a press statement on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, an issue on which Council products rarely garnered consensus. However, a non-permanent member lamented that, in the case of the Council resolution on the Syrian Arab Republic and several others, crucial phases of the negotiations had been held among the permanent members, with elected members told to sign on to the compromise text as the timing of the vote drew nearer.

Overall, many participants observed that the working environment in 2021 had been better than in previous years, in particular among the permanent members. Some speakers attributed that improvement to fewer personal attacks and the less frequent raising of controversial issues. Discussants highlighted the importance of the resumption of in-person meetings, which had fostered more direct dialogue among members. Members had met more often, searching for consensus, a measure

described as “painstaking, but productive”. Members had been exhorted to bridge divisions and think creatively.

Several participants pointed to the non-use of the veto up to that point in 2021 as evidence of improved relations among the permanent members.<sup>3</sup> While the threat of a veto had become a defining feature of some negotiations, it was nonetheless noteworthy that members had made the effort to avoid that public display of disagreement. A united Security Council was an important tool for international peace and security.

One speaker argued that the mere absence of the veto was not in itself a success. Another said that analysis was needed to understand the impact of the threat of the veto. Nor was consensus always a mark of success – success was “a change on the ground”. The Council should pay more attention to the implementation of its resolutions because that “implementation gap” tarnished the Council’s image and affected its authority. For instance, the Council had adopted resolution [2565 \(2021\)](#) in February 2021, in which it called for a humanitarian pause to facilitate the delivery of the COVID-19 vaccine in situations of armed conflict, but its provisions had largely gone unfulfilled.

### **Preventive diplomacy**

As in previous years, many speakers mentioned preventive action as an area in which the Council had underperformed. One speaker noted that the Council was often responding to crises instead of preventing them and identified human rights violations, food insecurity and gender inequality as examples of “writing on the wall” that portended conflict. The speaker cited human rights abuses and disregard for humanitarian law in Ethiopia, saying that many lives could have been saved and immeasurable suffering avoided if the Council had acted earlier. Instead, the crisis was escalating and may have dire implications for the region.

A participant cited Belarus as another situation in which the Council had failed to take preventive action. Other speakers countered that the Council should not be discussing situations that were not on its agenda and did not pose a threat to international peace and security. In response, the first participant said that the situation had had implications for regional security because it had recently evolved into a migration crisis on the Belarus-Poland border. One speaker said that an argument in favour of the Council taking more preventive action was that it could help to change the situation when actors on the ground knew that the Council was watching, thus making prevention a “cheap way” for the Council to address disputes.

The November 2021 open debate on the theme “Peace and security through preventive diplomacy: a common objective to all the principal organs of the United Nations” had shown that the United Nations system was ready to cooperate with the Security Council on preventive action and to provide relevant data and recommendations. One speaker suggested that a way to increase the preventive work was to expand the themes addressed by the Peacebuilding Commission. Another discussant said that the Secretariat could provide situational awareness briefings to the Council to allow the Council to identify potential conflict situations and develop ways to better address them in case conflict were to erupt. The Council used to request such briefings in the past but had not done so in recent years. The discussant said that the Council should engage with the Secretariat at an early stage, including through informal formats such as “sofa talks”.

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<sup>3</sup> The sole veto of 2021 was cast after the workshop, on 13 December, when the Russian Federation voted against a draft resolution co-authored by Ireland and the Niger on climate change and security.

## Thematic issues

There was lively debate on the question of which thematic issues the Council should address. Several participants found the Council's discussion in the past year of such emerging issues as cyberthreats, maritime security and the COVID-19 pandemic a positive practice. Some welcomed the Presidency Trio for Women, Peace and Security initiated by Ireland, Kenya and Mexico during their consecutive presidencies in September, October and November 2021, which saw those members committing to a series of actions on women and peace and security.

Speakers expressed sharply diverging opinions on whether the Council should discuss the effects of climate change on peace and security, with some saying that the Council must address the threat posed by climate change if it was to meet its mandate to protect international peace and security and others arguing that the Council was not the appropriate forum in which to address matters relating to climate change. Several discussants noted that climate change was already causing upheaval in many of the situations on the Council's agenda, as evidenced by the fact that, in 13 Council products that year alone, the adverse implications of climate change had been mentioned. They maintained that the Council should increase its work on the matter using tools at its disposal and appealed to members to support the draft resolution on climate change and security initiated by Ireland and the Niger, which was being negotiated at the time of the workshop.

One delegation said that, while it did not oppose Council discussion on such issues as climate change, children and armed conflict, cybersecurity, and women and peace and security, the Council should find the right angle and perspective through which to address them. The speaker emphasized that some of those issues were discussed by the First and Second Committees of the General Assembly, and it was important not to duplicate their work. The speaker added that those matters may be better addressed by the wider United Nations membership of the Assembly.

An incoming member said that the Council should be careful to not overburden its agenda by taking on issues that "belonged elsewhere", while another speaker said that "everything in life could be linked to international peace and security". In response, another discussant argued that the concept of peace and security had been enriched over the years, and that they "should be proud" to see the Council addressing new threats. Another speaker added that most States favoured a wider perspective on what constituted a threat to international peace and security. It was suggested that one of the challenges was that human rights, development and security were "all spilling over into one another". The way in which the Council should handle that was one of the big questions. While the Council should not try to do everything, it should act on issues where it could clearly make a difference.

While several speakers pointed out that the Council could address emerging issues in informal formats, such as Arria-formula meetings or "sofa talks", views varied on the merits of the current use of Arria-formula meetings. One participant noted that the increasing number of Arria-formula meetings in the past years may indicate that Council members were seeking opportunities to explore additional issues that the Council could not address through its formal meetings. The participant cautioned, however, against using Arria-formula meetings to raise matters that were completely unrelated to the Council agenda. Another speaker suggested that the Council was overusing the Arria-formula format, which was being abused for finger-pointing and, unhelpfully, to raise politically sensitive issues. The speaker said that members needed to "find a formula not to boycott one another's Arrias".

In a similar vein, a discussant lamented the growing trend of convening meetings under "any other business". The speaker observed that, while they were

historically short, superficial meetings in which members could bring issues to the Council's attention had in recent years included briefers and addressed substantial matters, making them more akin to other parts of closed consultations. The discussant argued that "any other business" should be used less, saying that that format had also become a "public relations stunt" that could poison the atmosphere in the Council, given that the focus of the media was often on the press statement that might be issued after the meeting.

Several participants raised other issues relating to working methods, the topic of session II. They included suggestions for striking a better balance between open and closed sessions, with some expressing a preference for more closed consultations, which allowed members to have frank discussions and achieve progress on difficult matters.

Some discussants argued that overcrowding the Council's schedule with meetings of subsidiary bodies and Arria-formula meetings left too little time to focus on crucial issues. In that vein, two participants maintained that there was no need for three separate monthly meetings on the Syrian Arab Republic (on the political, humanitarian and chemical weapons tracks) because there were not so many new developments to cover. They suggested that meetings on the political and humanitarian situation in the Syrian Arab Republic could be consolidated or the frequency of the meetings decreased to every two months. Regarding Lebanon, those participants said that holding separate meetings on Council resolutions [1701 \(2006\)](#) and [1559 \(2004\)](#) was unnecessary, given the overlap in the themes discussed at each meeting.

## **Session II**

### **Working methods and subsidiary bodies**

#### **Moderator**

Ambassador Inga Rhonda King  
Permanent Representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

#### **Commentators**

Ambassador Juan Ramón de la Fuente Ramírez  
Permanent Representative of Mexico

Ambassador Nicolas de Rivière  
Permanent Representative of France

Ambassador Dmitry Polyanskiy  
First Deputy Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation

#### **Balancing transparency, effectiveness and efficiency**

Participants discussed the balance between open and closed meetings and shared their views on the benefits and shortcomings of each format. One discussant said that open meetings promoted transparency by allowing the membership to follow briefings, while closed meetings facilitated the Council's ability to hold candid discussions and deliver effective solutions. Another speaker emphasized that closed consultations were necessary when Council members did not want countries with a strong interest in a conflict to be present. Council members may not want Algeria or Morocco in the room when discussing Western Sahara, for example. Advocating greater use of closed meetings, the speaker described them as conducive to asking questions of briefers, addressing sensitive issues and negotiating common positions. Two speakers agreed that ambassadors should engage more in negotiations, using the



authority granted by their capitals to make compromises, rather than, as one speaker said, “becoming spokespersons and speechwriters”.

Two participants took the view that closed consultations could be superfluous if the Council had already held an open briefing on a topic on which all members had made statements and had little else to say. Others noted that it was particularly important for elected members to convey their positions publicly in the Council, given that their two-year terms afforded them fewer opportunities to do so than permanent members. An incoming member added that, because the permanent members never saw the Council from the outside, they may not appreciate the importance of the transparency provided by open meetings in the same way as elected members.

There was extensive discussion on the role of press elements delivered after consultations. Some speakers said that press elements allowed the Council to convey a message of unity; they did not need to be extensive and could consist of three or four key points that reflected the consensus forged in consultations. Other speakers thought that press elements had become more serious than they should be, with members negotiating them as though they were “press statements”. One speaker said that the Council President should be able to give the press a factual account of the consultations without having to negotiate his or her comments with Council members in advance, underlining that Council diplomats should be skilled enough to convey information without generating political conflict.

It was suggested that Presidents needed some flexibility in speaking on behalf of the Council, lest they become so cautious that they told the press nothing. If they did spark controversy, other members could register their concerns. Several participants favoured caution in that regard, saying that the Council President should not deliver press elements without securing the agreement of the entire membership. One participant said that Presidents needed to be careful in answering questions on behalf of the Council because the press in particular sought to hear about divisions. Differences among members in consultations on sensitive issues should not be shared with the press, given in particular that a “trust deficit” meant that some groups of members worried that a Council President would call out other members with whom he or she disagreed. One of the speakers urged members to respect one another and to not leak drafts or views expressed in private because such tactics undermined the Council’s ability to reach consensus.

Another member observed that, from 2017 to 2018, press elements had been the norm; after reading the elements, the President could leave the stakeout without answering questions. Several speakers said that they were willing to try that. One speaker noted a shift to long, negotiated press elements, whereas from 2015 to 2017, the President would jot down some observations during the meeting and run them past the group before briefing the press. In an apparent reference to the largely remote nature of the Council’s work since the start of the pandemic, it was noted that the “muscle memory” of issuing press elements may have been lost during COVID-19.

### **Penholdership**

As in previous years, several speakers advocated a more equitable distribution of the drafting of Council products. One member lamented the “de facto monopoly” that still existed regarding penholdership and that it did not adequately reflect the participation of elected members in the Council, a concern raised not only by elected Council members but also by the wider United Nations membership during the annual open debate on working methods. The Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions was continuing its efforts to negotiate a presidential note recognizing the role that the chairs of subsidiary bodies could play in the

preparation of outcomes by making consultations between penholders and chairs of relevant subsidiary bodies a standard practice.<sup>4</sup>

Many speakers emphasized the benefits of sharing the pen more widely, one maintaining that allowing elected members to draft more outcomes would enhance their quality by reflecting a broad variety of views and expertise. It was further argued that distributing drafting responsibilities more widely would make the Council more efficient as its workload increased.

One speaker said that elected members faced pushback when they wished to take up the pen; however, some permanent members declared their support for sharing penholdership responsibilities. They said that the pen was “not private property”. One permanent member recommended flexibility regarding who could take the pen, while another suggested the idea of rotating penholders. That member had mixed views on whether regional countries should hold the pen, saying that they may have more in-depth knowledge of regional dynamics, but could also have conflicts of interest in such cases.

One member from Africa called upon penholders to increase their cooperation with the African members of the Security Council on drafting products on Africa. That member further noted the value of enhanced interaction with conflict-affected countries by allowing them to participate in open meetings under rule 37 of the Security Council’s provisional rules of procedure or through informal interactive dialogues.

### **Contingency plans for unusual circumstances**

Several members underscored the need for contingency procedures to be established to help the Council to function during crisis situations. COVID-19 had been a “wake-up call” in that regard. In addition, severe storms in New York City could shut down United Nations Headquarters. During the open debate on working methods held in June 2021, several delegations had called upon the Council to interact with the Secretariat to draw lessons learned from the pandemic and to put forward protocols for operating during crises. The participant said that such protocols should take into account all elements of Council operations, noting the challenge of simultaneous translation during the pandemic and referring to the adoption of a presidential note in July 2021 (S/2021/648) in which the Council reaffirmed its commitment to multilingualism. Another speaker suggested that the provisional rules of procedure were not well suited to address extraordinary circumstances.

The pandemic had led to the Council becoming better versed in technology, with the videoconference platform making it possible to hold meetings and benefit from the participation of a wide range of briefers. One speaker said that remote meetings were useful, but should not be overused, given that in-person interactions were key to solving difficult issues.

One permanent member maintained that the letter dated 27 March 2020 from the President of the Security Council (China) addressed to the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Council (S/2020/253) sufficed with regard to contingency plans under extraordinary circumstances. Since the publication of that letter, virtual meetings had not been considered formal meetings of the Council. The representative outlined why the virtual format should not be considered a formal session. Video images could not always be trusted, given that there were deepfakes, and it was not difficult to hack a live broadcast. Translation failures, inaudibility and dropouts occurred during remote meetings, and there could be a more extreme scenario of a speaker being threatened off-screen. The videoconference format was

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<sup>4</sup> The note had yet to be agreed as at the end of January 2022.

good for informal sessions, such as Arrria-formula meetings and side events, however, and it allowed members to economize on meetings.

A discussant expressed displeasure with the practice of ministers speaking to the Council from their capitals during videoconference meetings. Ambassadors were appointed by their foreign ministries, and it was suggested that over-reliance on virtual participation from capitals minimized the role of permanent representatives in New York.

### **Promoting priorities through joint initiatives**

Several speakers welcomed the Presidency Trio initiative of Ireland, Kenya and Mexico to promote the issue of women and peace and security during their September, October and November 2021 Council presidencies. One delegation indicated its intention to continue and build on the initiative during its Council presidency and invited other members to do the same. An outgoing member observed that it was hard for elected members to sustain their priorities, given that they were limited to two-year terms. When priorities did converge, promoting them across presidencies, and having them sustained by incoming members, was a good way to address that challenge.

It was observed that rolling presidencies could help to add political weight to certain issues and avoid the duplication of efforts. A similar approach had been pursued by the Council members of the A3+1 (Kenya, the Niger, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Tunisia) through commitments to working methods, such as their pledge to consult conflict-affected countries and regional and subregional organizations during their presidencies. Another speaker recalled the “twin presidencies” of France and Germany, in March and April 2019, during which both countries sought to highlight issues, including the role of women in conflict situations, with a focus on their protection and empowerment, and to promote the upholding of international humanitarian law. A permanent member concurred that pursuing themes through rolling presidencies could help to advance certain issues rapidly.

Among the commitments of the Presidency Trio for Women, Peace and Security were gender balance among briefers and the strong representation of women civil society speakers in Council meetings. The question of gender balance among civil society briefers in Council meetings elicited lively discussion. One permanent member maintained that having women briefers represented a Council commitment to the equality of women. An elected member described a joint working committee that it had formed together with two other members to promote the representation of civil society in the Council on a regular basis and to hear diverse voices of women. Another elected member said that women always needed to have a seat at the table and that the Council should practice what it preached, given that in many of its resolutions, the equal participation of women in political processes was called for. The member added that, during its presidency in 2021, other than when it had sought men civil servants who had been responsible for particular agenda items, it had sought to invite only women briefers. Another permanent member replied that supporting gender equality should not mean disposing of male briefers altogether.

One speaker emphasized that briefers should bring value and should not aggravate differences: their interventions should be informative, not counterproductive. A permanent member questioned the qualifications and legitimacy of some briefers, including civil society representatives who lived far from the suffering civilians in conflict-stricken countries.

**Working methods: codification and implementation**

Underlining the importance of working methods, one member spoke of the need to record what had and had not worked. Another participant urged members to implement what had already been agreed (that is, codified) and the best practices that had been developed over time. The speaker said that trying to codify all of the Council's best practices could be redundant and wasteful. What was important was implementation.

A participant said that the Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions sought to have presidential notes adopted that clarified aspects of the Council's work. Presidential notes on working methods were the result of often protracted negotiations among members. One proposed note on capacity-building, which was aimed at addressing the preparedness gap for incoming members, had not found consensus.

**Selection of subsidiary body chairs**

Some members referred to the delay in selecting the subsidiary body chairs for 2022. One elected member said that that process had been problematic during the previous two years. Noting that chairs were meant to be determined by October every year, the participant observed that incoming members needed to know their chairing assignments before entering the Council. Another elected member argued that, if the incoming members agreed on the available chairmanships, that consensus should be respected by the entire Council. A permanent member said that, in the spirit of burden-sharing, it would be willing to chair a vacant committee if no one else wanted to do so.

**Session III****Lessons learned: reflections of the class of 2021****Moderator**

Ambassador Barbara Woodward  
Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

**Commentators**

Ambassador Sven Jürgenson  
Permanent Representative of Estonia

Ambassador Abdou Abarry  
Permanent Representative of the Niger

Ambassador Inga Rhonda King  
Permanent Representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

Ambassador Tarek Ladeb  
Permanent Representative of Tunisia

Ambassador Hai Anh Pham  
Deputy Permanent Representative of Viet Nam

**Making a difference in a difficult geopolitical environment**

There was general recognition that the current geopolitical environment was a difficult one and that the Council faced many challenges. One participant lamented that, during their two-year tenure, a substantial number of the crises on the Council's agenda had worsened. Some genuinely complicated conflicts had been hard to resolve, while other crises that should have been solvable had not abated. For

instance, the potential environmental disaster of the *Safer* oil tanker off the coast of Yemen remained unmitigated, two years later.

One speaker noted that there was a gap between the Council's responsibilities and its ability to deliver. The Council was not doing enough to move from a reactive crisis management role to a more sustainable and proactive conflict prevention approach. Flagrant violations of Council decisions contributed to the complexity and protraction of many conflicts. One participant argued that the Council needed to do better job of enforcing its resolutions, providing the examples of resolutions on the Middle East peace process and the Libya arms embargo in that regard.

It was observed that, despite those challenges, the peace and security environment would be worse without the Security Council. The Council had played a role in protecting thousands of civilians, addressing the threats posed by terrorism and combating COVID-19. Progress had been made, even if the results were not as significant as Council members would like them to be.

There was some discussion on how to pursue priorities as an elected member and measure the success of a Council term. One outgoing member had initially thought that signature events during Council presidencies were the principal way of highlighting the member's priorities but soon came to see ways in which members could pursue their priorities every day. For example, a Council member who valued accountability and human rights could emphasize those themes in Council engagement on matters such as Afghanistan and the Syrian Arab Republic.

Many speakers agreed that serving on the Council was a great and worthwhile experience. One speaker observed that Council membership elevated the diplomatic profile of an elected member, who was then consulted more frequently. For a small country, Council membership came once in a generation. One participant maintained that being on the Council had allowed his country to focus international attention on the detrimental effects of terrorism, climate change and humanitarian issues in its region.

There were different ways of measuring success in the Council. Resolutions in which international law was created or peace operations were mandated could be one indicator. It was argued that the quality of public statements in the chamber was also important. Countries followed closely what was said about them in the chamber, a sign that such statements mattered. One participant maintained that, rather than focusing on concrete measures, elected members should simply strive to be good, constructive members. An outgoing Council member concurred with Ms. Landgren's assertion regarding the importance of imagination and implored the incoming members to display that quality in the Council, telling them not to be afraid to innovate.

One speaker sought to demystify the challenges facing smaller countries entering the Council, recalling that a permanent member had advised them that it was "not rocket science". Early in a Council term, small countries may feel daunted by grappling with issues with which they had limited familiarity, and even by building a team. However, over time, issues recurred, and members acquired the information that they needed and drew on support, including from the Security Council Affairs Division. One speaker noted that, by its second year, the team had gained self-confidence and had been willing to be a penholder.

### **Alliances in the Council**

One participant observed that building alliances was the modus operandi of small States in the Security Council. Such alliances were not intended to be divisive, but to enhance the political weight of shared positions. It was noted that members in

a well-defined group could also be partially insulated from political pressure by assuming joint positions. In addition, from the standpoint of working methods, groups within the Council contributed to the efficiency of its meetings by making joint statements.

There was considerable discussion on the role of the A3+1 in the Security Council. One member contended that the role of the A3+1 had been carefully crafted to provide the Council with leadership on and understanding of African, Latin American and Caribbean issues. The commitments in the working methods of the A3+1 included a pledge to undertake several actions during their Council presidencies, such as consulting conflict-affected countries, regional and subregional organizations, the other main United Nations organs and the Chair of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union. Such consultations with a wide array of relevant actors were highlighted as a way of gaining a greater understanding of “the other” and a key to finding solutions. One member praised the coordination among the A3+1 and the group’s ability to forge common positions on so many issues – it had delivered 43 joint statements (including explanations of vote) from January to October 2021 and 38 in the year 2020.

### **Dynamics between permanent and elected members**

Council dynamics, especially relations between permanent and elected members, were a topic of discussion. One outgoing member said that his country had joined the Council to work together with all members, resisting the distinction between permanent and elected ones. To succeed on the Council, a member needed to build good relations with permanent and elected members alike. Citing the unanimous reauthorization of a resolution authorizing the delivery of cross-border aid to the Syrian Arab Republic in July 2021 (Council resolution [2585 \(2021\)](#)), another outgoing member said that, while it was true that the permanent members often disagreed, they were able to come together on controversial matters when they wanted to.

There was criticism of the behaviour of the permanent members. One outgoing member implored the permanent members to be more inclusive and to listen to the views and ideas of elected members. A positive example cited was the regular breakfast meetings of the United Kingdom with the A3+1 to listen to the group’s views. The speaker pointed out that the General Assembly elected 10 members to serve on the Security Council to have their voices heard. If the permanent members were not willing to listen to the 10, then the Council could just consist of 5 permanent members “to continue business as usual”. Another outgoing member said that their two years on the Council had left them even more convinced of the need for Council reform, an issue that was “worthy of the full attention of the General Assembly”.

The relationship between permanent and elected members also arose in connection with the working methods of the Council. One outgoing member called for earlier involvement of the Coordinator of the Permanent Five and the Coordinator of the elected 10 with respect to the assignment of subsidiary body chairs. In addition, the representative said that all members needed to understand the provisions of note 507 and subsequent notes on working methods to promote the transparency, efficiency and effectiveness of the Council. Knowing the Council’s working methods was useful for “navigating” what was “arguably the most political space on planet Earth”.

### **Field visits**

Several outgoing members emphasized the importance of visiting missions to the Council’s work. One member regretted that, during their two-year term, there had only been one visiting mission because of the COVID-19 pandemic, and others implored the incoming members to visit the field as often as they could.

Several speakers noted that diplomats gained a better understanding of situations addressed by the Council when witnessing them first-hand. One diplomat observed that the “feeling and texture” of what was happening was “absolutely different”, and another distinguished the depth of information acquired in the field from that received in the Council chamber. Referring to the Council’s visiting mission to West Africa in November 2021, one member said that, while he would have liked a closer encounter with conflict-affected populations, such as visiting a displaced persons camp, face-to-face meetings on the ground were still preferable to videoconference meetings.

A sanctions committee Chair said that his visit to a host country had enabled him to appreciate the challenges facing the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the United Nations team with regard to violations of the status-of-forces agreement. He had also learned about the frustrations that host country authorities experienced in their communications with the United Nations. Two outgoing members said that field visits were an important way of demonstrating to people in host countries that the United Nations was there in a supportive role.

### **Security Council teams**

Several discussants emphasized the need for members to have a strong Council team in New York. One speaker posited that an elected member needed 10 or 11 experts dedicated to the Council to be able to function effectively. Another noted the importance of having legal expertise in the mission to handle procedural matters arising in the Council’s work.

Noting that his country may only serve on the Council once every 30 years, one participant called being on the Council an “energizing” and “historic” experience for the team. The team had risen to the challenge with great enthusiasm, improved the way in which its members shared information with one another and volunteered to cover meetings for colleagues who “had to be in two places at the same time”.

### **Communication with the capital**

Several speakers stressed the importance of communicating effectively with their respective capitals during their Council terms. Consistent connection with the capital helped Governments to stay informed of Council developments, allowed missions in New York to manage expectations back home and helped to clarify the value of the national commitment to serving on the Council. One member underscored the importance of reporting developments to one’s capital rapidly and before other Member States did so through their access to the country’s President or Foreign Minister. A member called the “bypassing” by Governments of the diplomatic team in New York and their taking of matters straight to the capital “disrespectful”.

### **Role of Security Council Affairs Division**

Several outgoing members said that they had benefited from the advice and guidance of the Security Council Affairs Division in preparing for the Council and during their terms. One outgoing member complimented the Division’s professionalism, saying that its support was “indispensable to the work of the Council and to elected members in particular”.

## Appendix

Prior to the workshop, the following questions were suggested:

### Session I

- How would you evaluate the Council's performance with regard to maintaining international peace and security in the past year, what are the major challenges facing it in this regard and how can the challenges be tackled most effectively?
- How can the Council better support the political transitions under way in several countries on its agenda?
- How would you assess the Council's approach to emerging issues, such as climate and security, pandemics and cyberthreats, and acute and emerging country situations?

### Session II

- Should the Council develop and agree to a set of contingency procedures in preparation for unexpected crises that hinder its normal operation?
  - Should the elected members assume a greater role as penholders (or co-penholders), and how would it make a difference in the Council's effectiveness and efficiency?
  - How can the Council best strike a balance between transparency and effectiveness in its work?
  - What lessons can be learned from the approach taken by the Presidency Trio cooperating to highlight the issue of women and peace and security?
  - How can the processes of selecting chairs of subsidiary bodies and preparing them for their responsibilities be improved?
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