

SECURITY COUNCIL REPORT
Statement to Security Council Open Debate on Working Methods
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Mr President, Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

It's a pleasure to address the Council on behalf of Security Council Report. SCR acknowledges the dedicated work of Kuwait, now in its second year under Ambassador al-Otaibi as the Chair of the Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions, and the intense commitment of the Working Group's members.

Small changes can be potent. The Council has steadily, if slowly, improved aspects of its working methods. In 2007, Slovakia, then-Chair of the Informal Working Group, proposed to hold an open debate on Council Working Methods. It was too controversial to implement. Now, this is an annual event.

Security Council Report is an independent think tank reporting on the work of the Council in the interests of Council transparency, accountability and effectiveness. SCR has published four research reports on Council Working Methods. Our work is made possible through our good working relationships with, among others, Security Council members, other member states, and UN colleagues across the system. Thank you all.

Mr President,

Today's acute challenges include declining trust worldwide in multilateral institutions, and the Council's persistent failure to prevent or respond adequately to several serious conflicts. I will look at working methods in this context, through three sets of actions:

- the strengthened role of elected Council members,
- deepening the Council's engagement with the wider membership, and
- measures to enhance the Council's mandating of peace operations and preventive actions.

Since the adoption of the last Note 507, in 2017, stellar work has been done to enhance the readiness of incoming Council members, who can now observe Council meetings from October onwards, and who often start preparing early, drawing on a range of capacity-building support, including from my own organisation.

The elected members, or E10, have found common ground on several working methods. In late 2018, for the first time, the E10 joined with the 'Incoming Five' to write to the Council Presidency seeking greater burden-sharing among all members in chairing the Council's subsidiary bodies. Until now, this task has gone primarily to the elected members. The Council, they argued, should also make better use of the expertise of the chairs of specific sanctions committees, these chairs being an obvious choice as co-penholders on the related issues. Since January, an elected member is co-penholder on Darfur; as well, the elected member chairing the Libya Sanctions Committee is a co-penholder for sanctions issues on Libya. These are modest changes, but a step towards more equitable distribution of work and towards a more participatory process around addressing country situations on the Council's agenda.

Process affects outcomes, and as far back as 2005, leaders at the World Summit recommended that the Security Council continue to adapt its working methods so as to increase the involvement in its work of states not members of the Council. This was linked to the Council's accountability to the wider membership, and to the transparency of its work.

Wider member state engagement in the Council's work could include more interaction around the Annual Report that the Security Council submits for the General Assembly's consideration. It is due in the spring: this timing is optimal for an engaged and well-prepared debate. This year, and the past two years, summer has arrived with no report. And yet the discussion of the Annual Report is a primary format through which the wider membership can underline their views and expectations of the Security Council. Perhaps this reporting process can be elevated. One suggestion has been that the UN Secretary-General take part.

Other ways for member state engagement to reinforce Council accountability would be more analytical and interactive monthly Council presidency wrap-up sessions. As well, member states with a particular interest in a given situation—who may already participate in public discussions under Art 31 of the Charter—could be invited to meet with the Council in a more private setting, such as the Informal Interactive Dialogue Format.

The tools are available. And meanwhile, in a further form of member state engagement, regional organisations continue to develop their relationship with the Council, refining their efforts to feed in concerted perspectives.

Turning to initiatives for strengthening the Council's role in preventing deadly conflict and in peacekeeping, the Council has used visiting missions to good effect, including to countries not on its agenda – most recently, Burkina Faso. Field visits are valuable: members come away with a different sense of local dynamics, of how mandates are implemented in practice, and of the work of the UN Country Team, which is deeply involved in addressing development- and governance-related causes of conflict but whose members rarely interact with the Security Council. These visits have

occasionally been used with a preventive intent. Field visits are also phenomenally expensive, and they are rarely coordinated with field travel undertaken by the Council's subsidiary bodies, including the PBC. Active

coordination, and the revived use of mini-missions, could give such trips greater strategic impact, while reducing overall costs.

Still on prevention, while Arria-formula meetings cannot substitute for formal Council meetings, used strategically they can frame debate, and even generate political initiatives, on fragile situations and issues which the Council finds itself unable to discuss. Wherever possible, the Council should strengthen informal formats that allow for conflict prevention discussions.

It is widely acknowledged that mandate consultations do not always focus on political strategy, even though political strategy should drive the design of peace operations. Better mandating engages several working methods, of which the most important are keeping discussions interactive, direct, operational, and focused on political strategy. You will find additional practical proposals in SCR's recent report, *"Is Christmas Really Over? Improving the Mandating of Peace Operations"*.

Finally, as a former SRSG, let me say how valuable it is to have a resolution with meaningful language and the entire Council lined up behind it. In 2018, however, four missions had their mandates adopted non-unanimously: this year, the tally already stands at three.

Mr President,

A great deal can be achieved through adaptation of the Council's working methods. In these testing times, the challenge is to use the tools creatively and flexibly, contributing to a culture where better and more consultative decisions can be taken.

Thank you.