



Security Council

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Letter dated 11 February 2020 from the Permanent Representative 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 seventeenth annual workshop for the newly elected members of the Security Council, which was held on 7 and 8 November 2019 at the Greentree Foundation in Manhasset, New York (see annex). The final report has been compiled in accordance with the Chatham House Rule under the sole responsibility of the Permanent Mission of Finland.

On the basis of the very positive feedback that we have received from the participants each year, the Government of Finland remains committed to sponsoring the workshop as an annual event. The Government of Finland hopes that the report will contribute to a better understanding of the complexity of the work of the Council and provide useful information on the practices, procedures, working methods and political dynamics of the Council, in particular to its new members. In this regard, the report also contains a list of lessons learned as highlighted by participants during the workshop.

I should be grateful, accordingly, if the present letter 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 11 February 2020 from the Permanent Representative of Finland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

“Hitting the ground running”: seventeenth annual workshop for newly elected members of the Security Council, held on 7 and 8 November 2019 at the Greentree Foundation in Manhasset, New York

The Government of Finland, in collaboration with the School of International and Public Affairs of Columbia University and the Security Council Affairs Division of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs of the Secretariat, convened the seventeenth annual workshop for the newly elected members of the Security Council on 7 and 8 November 2019.

Launched in 2003, the annual workshops have offered incoming members of the Security Council an unparalleled opportunity to learn about the practices, procedures, working methods and political dynamics of the Council from the current members. The workshops have, in that manner, fulfilled their initial promise of helping newly elected members to “hit the ground running” when their terms on the Council commence the following January. This remains the primary purpose of the exercise. Over time, it has become increasingly evident that the workshops have served a second, complementary, purpose as well. They have provided current, as well as incoming, members with a trusted venue for reflecting and exchanging views on how the ongoing work of the Council is faring, on steps that might be taken to enhance its functioning, and on priorities for the year ahead. From the outset, the conversations have been held under the Chatham House rule of non-attribution to encourage candid and interactive discussions. To that end, the only speaker identified in this report is the keynote speaker at the opening dinner. As in past years, the present report was prepared by Professor Edward C. Luck of the School of International and Public Affairs of Columbia University.

The opening dinner, held on 7 November, featured welcoming remarks by Ambassador Jukka Salovaara, the Permanent Representative of Finland to the United Nations, a keynote address by Jean-Marie Guéhenno, former Under Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Affairs, and closing remarks by the President of the Security Council and Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations, Jonathan Guy Allen.

The full-day programme took place 8 November and consisted of round-table discussions among all participants. The conversation focused on the following themes:

- (a) State of the Security Council 2019: taking stock and looking ahead (session I);
- (b) Working methods and subsidiary bodies (session II);
- (c) Lessons learned: reflections of the class of 2019 (session III).

Opening dinner

In his remarks, Mr. Guéhenno observed that, while most of the work of the members of the Security Council took place in New York, it must never be forgotten that its purpose was to assist those caught in zones of conflict. Therefore, solutions mattered much more than rhetoric, which should not be allowed to prevent action.

Likewise, even though the Council was an intrinsically political body, politics should not be used as an excuse for inaction, especially when civilians needed protection. The members of the Council should not lose sight of the strategic objectives they sought to achieve. Sanctions and peacekeeping were valuable tools for advancing strategic and political ends, rather than ends in themselves. In terms of its functioning, the “leakiness” of confidential consultations and conversations in the Council needed to be reduced. At the same time, members needed to be more prepared to take risks, given the magnitude and complexity of contemporary security challenges.

In the ensuing discussion, the question of transparency versus efficiency was raised. Although the two goals were not always incompatible, it was suggested that the efficiency and effectiveness of the Council should take precedence. Although intransigence in the Council might appear to open more space for the Secretary-General and regional arrangements, it was noted that divisions within the Council could have chilling effects on possible diplomatic initiatives by others. More use could be made of regional efforts at prevention before positions harden. Again, the Council’s capacity for preventive diplomacy depended in part on its ability to keep internal deliberations confidential.

Session I

State of the Council 2019: taking stock and looking ahead

Moderator

Ambassador Dmitry Polyanskiy
First Deputy Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation

Commentators

Ambassador Marc Pecsteen de Buytswerve
Permanent Representative of Belgium

Ambassador Jerry Matthews Matjila
Permanent Representative of South Africa

Ambassador Wu Haitao
Deputy Permanent Representative of the People’s Republic of China

Assessment of the performance of the Council in 2019

A participant noted that outside observers had voiced quite depressing assessments of the work of the Security Council, attributed, in large part, to a decidedly unfavourable geopolitical context. They had pointed to the record numbers of forcibly displaced people and the numbers of serious crises on which the Council remained deadlocked. The Council had been unable to deal effectively with the turmoil in the Syrian Arab Republic, Myanmar and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, while the situations in Yemen and the Sahel had been backsliding. The situation in Libya had been particularly frustrating. Those situations had led some to call into question the credibility of the Council and its members, as difficult circumstances could not be blamed for everything. Nevertheless, continued the speaker, there were places, such as the Syrian Arab Republic, Yemen, Libya, and possibly Iraq, in which the Council could still make a difference. There were peace processes underway in South Sudan, Afghanistan, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Cyprus. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Sudan there had been more progress than had been expected a year ago. Despite some differences within the Council, there had been tangible progress on some thematic issues, such as sexual violence in armed conflict, children and armed conflict, counter-terrorism, and climate and security. More needed to be done to protect civilians and on respect for international humanitarian law, but

the reform of peacekeeping operations was beginning to bear fruit, with decreasing incidents of sexual exploitation and fewer cases of failures to protect populations.

The key question, according to another discussant, was whether the Security Council was doing its job or not. There tended to be a stark divide between people outside the Council, who tended to answer this negatively, and the greater optimism found within the Council, where even small agreements on language were treated as major accomplishments. Public groups in member's home countries regularly expressed profound disappointment in the performance of the Council. The inability of the Council to call for a ceasefire or to condemn violations of the arms embargo in Libya had been, in that regard, a low point in the Council's credibility. Another participant agreed that, if delegates outside of the Council were to be asked whether the Council had been successful in 2019, they would reply that it had not been. They would describe it as paralyzed, ineffective and plagued by mistrust among its members.

A speaker noted that the Council continued to be very active. Not only had the pace of visiting missions and meetings remained at relatively high levels, but more time was being spent in meetings, in part because of larger numbers of speakers and briefers. The tendency to produce longer and longer resolutions had persisted. These and other statistics, asserted a second discussant, documented that the members of the Council continued to work very hard and to do so within the authority of the Charter. The Council had very complex situations on its agenda, but there had been progress in the Central African Republic, the Sudan, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region. There was a new constitutional committee in the Syrian Arab Republic. Palestine and Yemen faced continuing difficulties, and the Council needed to keep a watch on developments in Lebanon and Iraq. A third participant disagreed with those who had characterized the situation in Syrian Arab Republic as a failure, the situation had improved compared with a few years ago. The Council faced a world that was far from ideal, so it needed to target its efforts in places where it could make a difference.

Assessments of the Council's performance, posited a discussant, should focus on results achieved, not on metrics of meetings held or products produced. Had it advanced practical political solutions and facilitated positive change on the ground? Had it done everything it could, even within the limits of national interests? A second participant agreed that the members should focus on the Council's effectiveness more than on numbers of meetings or products. According to a third interlocutor, people outside of the Council, including the media, tended to be confused by the different layers of products produced by the Council. The core question was whether all of the Council's activity was having an impact on people's peace and security.

Members needed to ask, added another speaker, whether the Council was a serious force for peace. Could it help to resolve the most difficult situations? Another discussant noted that with its seventy-fifth anniversary approaching, the Council should have a serious discussion about how to boost its credibility. A third participant underlined the importance of knowing that what happened in meeting rooms in New York had a positive impact on local populations and real people. They should not talk for the sake of talking. Another interlocutor suggested that there were several reasons why it was difficult to assess how well the Council was fulfilling its primary purpose of maintaining international peace and security. The situations on its agenda were complex and not subject to quick and decisive solutions. External observers were unlikely to have detailed knowledge of the inner workings of the Council and were likely to have inflated expectations. Historically, the Council was a unique instrument, both in competence and structure, with no institutional comparators; it could only be compared with itself.

It was essential that members of the Council not give in to cynicism, posited an interlocutor. There was no reason for despair and members needed to continue to work to find ways to have a positive impact. According to a second participant, visiting missions to the field, such as to South Sudan, had had a positive impact and channels of communication with the Secretary-General had improved. Those were two positive signs. The bottom line, added a third speaker, was whether the Council had credibility in terms of having an effect on the ground in improving peace and security. That was the expectation of common people, civil society and delegates not serving on the Council. Had the decisions and actions of the Council improved the reality faced by those affected by conflict? The Council's credibility had been conditioned, in part, by whether the plans it had developed with other actors in a given situation had been fully and properly implemented on the ground.

Unity

A participant stressed the cardinal importance of seeking unity within the Council. Unity tended to reinforce both the authority of the Council and to encourage the full implementation of its decisions. Council members should seek to demonstrate unity both in their decision-making and in their efforts to carry out the provisions of its resolutions, as this was a sign of political will. Better use should be made of dialogue and consultations as means of overcoming differences and developing mutual understanding. In the view of a second discussant, it was essential to try to deliver a unified position and convincing messages to the world. This might require both listening to each other more and more opportunities for members to share their views in private, out of the reach of cameras and public scrutiny, instead of the public posturing that often characterized open meetings. A third interlocutor agreed that it would help to get off the hamster wheel of incessant Council activities more often and to set aside time for talking, listening and looking for possible areas of collaboration.

The Council had been united, putting forward sustained commitment over time, pointed out a speaker, when taking measures to counter terrorism. For instance, it had been quite innovative when dealing with the financing of terrorism. However, noted another participant, when the Council was not united, it was very difficult to know how to proceed. Thus, forging unity remained the Council's biggest challenge. There was a need to find ways to expand the areas where the Council was united, since that could determine its capacity to effect change. According to a third discussant, the Council should try to be both ambitious and united, but sometimes the two goals were not completely convergent. It could be hard to achieve unity when pursuing ambitious ends. The members should not despair if all that could be achieved at a given point was incremental progress.

The delegates on the Council represented 15 sovereign Member States, underscored a discussant, so it would be unrealistic to expect unity on every matter before the Council. If there was agreement on fundamental principles, such as international humanitarian law, the protection of civilians, and counter-terrorism, that would be a good starting point. There would never be unity on everything. Another speaker, agreeing that there could not be 100 per cent unity on everything, urged members to be realistic and to move forward when possible. There had been cases in which there appeared to be substantive agreement among the members, but there was no outcome because some issues were being used as proxies for larger geopolitical concerns. It was not productive to hold some matters hostage to others. A third participant asked whether a unanimous vote in the Council always translated into a common commitment to implement a resolution and whether the desire to achieve unanimity in voting ever contributed to the trend toward very long resolutions with something for everybody – the so-called “Christmas tree” effect. In other words, did the drive for unity in voting in New York always result in better outcomes on the ground?

Regional collaboration

Disunity in the Council, pointed out a speaker, had often resulted in the regional and subregional bodies taking on a heavier burden. Fortunately, regional arrangements had matured and were better placed to serve as effective partners for the Council. Working with regional partners had allowed the Council to help resolve a number of dangerous situations earlier, easier and faster. In the view of another participant, collaboration with regional and subregional bodies should be a keystone of the Council's efforts to maintain international peace and security. There had recently been productive efforts to work with the African Union and the Arab League. Such groups had local knowledge and experience, which had proven especially valuable in addressing a number of situations in Africa. A third interlocutor declared that the Council's mixed track record in working with regional and subregional groups in Africa, doing relatively well in South Sudan and the Central African Republic, but not so well in Guinea Bissau. There, the Council did not give strong enough support to the sanctions imposed by the Economic Community of West African States. Members needed to listen more closely to regional voices. The Council had also failed to agree on a resolution on the financing of peacekeeping operations in Africa, something that should be on the agendas of incoming members of the Council.

A speaker contended that the Council had been quite consistent in its efforts to improve coordination with regional arrangements. It was getting better at implementing Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations. The relationship with the African Union had included briefings, consultations and coordination on the ground, such as in South Sudan and the Central African Republic. Collaboration on prevention had paid dividends in South Sudan. It was regrettable that it had not yet been possible to agree on a resolution to increase support for peacekeeping operations in Africa. The Council had also begun to work more closely with the European Union and the Arab League, there were more interactions with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and the United Nations regional offices had been a boost to efforts at preventive diplomacy. Another participant declared that the Council's most important association was with the African Union. Collaboration with the African Union had yielded productive joint action, although there were times when the two groups had had different perspectives.

A discussant emphasized that, as the Council tried to improve its agility and effectiveness at early warning and early action, collaboration with regional arrangements under Chapter VIII of the Charter could be very helpful. In terms of sharpening tools for conflict prevention, another participant noted that ongoing efforts to enhance the Council's interactions with the Secretary-General and to overcome bureaucratic silos could be supplemented by closer cooperation with regional and subregional bodies. In the Sahel, commented a third speaker, the Council had been able to work productively both with the United Nations Secretariat and with regional and subregional organizations on encouraging sustainable transitions.

Concurring with the positive comments of other participants about the value of working with regional partners, a discussant pointed to the possibility of expanded collaboration between the Council and ASEAN in the future, perhaps encompassing conflict resolution and peacekeeping. Calling for a strengthening of the tools offered in Chapter VIII of the Charter, another speaker pointed to the successful partnerships the Council had already had with the African Union, the Arab League and the European Union. A third interlocutor noted that working with regional and subregional groups could provide the Council with a better sense of what was going on in those areas.

Challenges ahead

The Council needed to be more strategic, holistic and global in its work, stated a participant, instead of leaving most situations and issues to be addressed by one or two members. It needed to be more selective about deciding where to focus its efforts, and it had to become much better at identifying forces for change and at working with civil society to address them. In that regard, more attention should be devoted to women, youth and the effects of climate on security. These were not just thematic or cross-cutting issues, as they affected individual situations and the choice of strategies for conflict prevention and resolution. The Council's initial deliberations on youth had been encouraging, but it was time to consider how to mobilize young people to spur positive change. Another speaker agreed that more attention should be paid to women and youth. Young people constituted a growing percentage of the population in many countries, including those in which youth unemployment was a growing social and political problem. According to a third discussant, youth, women and climate change were all issues that had important implications for the security of their country. Human rights and the treatment of women were also important. It was time for the Council to adopt a more strategic and longer term understanding of the scope and nature of security, as the Council had discussed these matters for many years with very little impact on conditions faced by people on the ground.

In the view of a participant, the biggest challenges to improving the Council's performance were related to sharpening its tools for preventive diplomacy and early warning. There had been some resistance within the Council to hold more informal meetings with the Secretariat to monitor developments from a regional perspective. The Council had talked about prevention for many years, but mostly on a theoretical level. When it came to assessing specific situations, there had been some resistance within the Council. Another speaker agreed that the Council needed to focus more attention on conflict prevention, including further collaboration with regional arrangements. It was important, however, to find ways of pursuing preventive efforts without stigmatizing the countries concerned. A third interlocutor concurred that prevention without stigma was an admirable goal. Preventive diplomacy was doubly needed in places where the Council lacked a political strategy. Also, it was important to recognize that, for fragile countries, such as Liberia, prevention was relevant for every stage of the conflict cycle. Pointing out that gross violations of human rights was a continuing problem in many places, another speaker stressed that addressing human rights should be an integral dimension of the Council's approach to conflict prevention and conflict resolution.

What was the key to making the Council more relevant?, queried a participant, what was the common denominator? They asserted that it was improving governance at the local and global levels by respecting human rights, criminal justice and international humanitarian law. This could ease efforts to prevent civil conflicts from escalating. In addition, the Council needed to focus on a new generation of terrorist threats and on weapons of mass destruction, particularly given the differences that had been encountered within the Council on how to handle chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic. Another speaker called for an integrated approach across the pillars of peace and security, including development and human rights. The Council needed to put more emphasis on prevention. In South Sudan, for instance, the Council was helping to build a framework for elections, even though this was a sensitive issue. Moreover, the Council members needed to continue their deliberations on the situation in Cameroon. A third discussant commented that counter-terrorism was their delegation's top priority, because economic and social development depended on overcoming threats from terrorist groups. That, in turn, would require political stabilization in neighbouring countries as well. In the view of a fourth interlocutor, some parties might resist looking at the root causes, as they considered monitoring for prevention purposes an expression of neo-colonialism. The Council was not a

world government and should be wary of imposing solutions on others. It should be careful, moreover, not to act on fake news.

Calling for principled pragmatism, a participant stressed the importance of listening, bridge-building and coalition-building within the Council. A holistic approach to the peace-security-development nexus should guide the Council's work, encompassing issues such as women and peace and security, children and armed conflict, youth, and the effects of climate change on security. Another speaker commented that, while it should pay attention to what other organs were doing in those areas, the Council should address both climate change and cybersecurity. According to a third interlocutor, the Council, faced with such a wide array of issues, should strive to focus on those that had a real and direct impact on peace and security. It should address symptoms and root causes of conflict as well. The Council needed to work out a clearer division of labour with other organs concerned with these matters, as well as coordinating with them on an ongoing basis. A fourth participant asserted that, although the agenda was packed, cybersecurity, climate change and conflict prevention were priorities.

Peacekeeping operations had been making a growing contribution to peace and security, commented a speaker, but faced new challenges in complex situations. Too often, mandates imposed an overly heavy burden on peacekeeping contingents in the field. Mandates, should seek to facilitate political solutions on the ground and to help countries build their own security capacities. The safety and security of peacekeepers and other personnel had to remain an overriding priority. A discussant agreed that mandates were sometimes too burdensome, and noted that they often lacked a clear political strategy and exit strategy as well. Those were things that the Council could address at the time of mandate renewals. In addition, there could be a more integrated relationship between peacekeeping and peacebuilding, as peace and development should go hand in hand.

An interlocutor asserted that the performance of peacekeeping had improved significantly due to the efforts of both the Council and the Secretariat. There were areas of continuing concern, however, including the Sahel, Libya, Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic, as well as the plight of the Rohingya people. In the view of another speaker, there were chances to make progress in Yemen, Libya, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Sudan and South Sudan. Progress would likely be more difficult in the Syrian Arab Republic, the Middle East peace process, Ukraine and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. The Council had no choice but to deal with the world as it was, achieving whatever incremental progress was possible in places such as Mali and Burkina Faso. The Council was doing its job if it could make tough problems at least a little smaller.

Session II

Working methods and subsidiary bodies

Moderator

Ambassador Dian Triansyah Djani
Permanent Representative of Indonesia

Commentators

Ambassador Juergen Schulz
Deputy Permanent Representative of Germany

Ambassador Cherith Norman-Chalet
Representative to the United Nations Management and Reform, United States of America

Berioska Morrison
Counsellor and Political Coordinator, Dominican Republic

Transparency and efficiency

Weighing the relative value of open meetings in the in the Security Council Chamber versus closed consultations, a speaker contended that there was a need for more of the latter, because that was where the real diplomatic work took place. Yet, they continued, open debates were important, too, to provide access and a voice for the larger United Nations membership. The key was to strike the right balance between the two. Another participant noted that some presidencies had tried to keep everything in the open, but found that candid, private deliberations were needed as well. Finding the right balance, therefore, should be the subject of continuing discussion in the Council's Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions. A third discussant acknowledged that the Council had pledged greater transparency for decades, but that it had struggled to define the relationship between transparency and efficiency, which were both worthy goals. There were discussions underway about possible guidance on such matters, though flexibility was needed as well.

Concurring that a balance should be struck between open debates and closed consultations, an interlocutor suggested that the former were especially useful when there was good news to be announced that could affect actors in situations of conflict. As members of the Council, it was important to keep in mind that its meetings were of interest to all Member States. There should be more closed sessions, countered another speaker, to permit more interactive and in-depth conversations. In the view of a third participant, the pursuit of greater candour and interactivity was a good thing, but there were times when a member had to articulate its national position to a larger audience. Therefore, open formats made more sense in some cases and closed ones in others. Even in closed consultations, however, whatever was said confidentially was likely to be leaked as soon as the session ended, so there was a need to respect the secrecy of confidential conversations.

A discussant pointed out that the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency group, in its proposals for Security Council reform, had not included efficiency among its goals. If that objective had been included, then others might have had a clearer understanding of the value of closed discussions among Council members. At times, closed consultations could be a means of producing progress that could then be the subject of an open debate. According to another speaker, there were times when members had to read a statement from their capital, but it would be helpful to have more opportunities for brainstorming and interactive discussion. It should still be possible to maintain a proper balance between open debates and closed consultations. Another participant stated that yes, balance was the key, but open debates were often followed by closed consultations on the same subject, resulting in redundant statements. To ease this problem, there could be better use of the network of political coordinators to decide whether an open debate on the matter was required. Furthermore, those members who had spoken in the open debate could go to the bottom of the list of speakers for the subsequent consultations.

The Council was an executive body, emphasized a speaker, and that fact should be reflected in the way its work was conducted. Public meetings offered a venue for conveying messages, and everyone agreed on the utility of maintaining a balance between open and closed meetings. Yet, additional time was needed for deeper and more focused conversations among the members as a basis for making decisions on outcomes and other matters. Negotiations entailed time and space for members to make decisions with some degree of confidentiality. Another discussant agreed that more consultations were required to achieve more results, though open debates had a place too. Consultations could be a means of expanding discussions on drafts, particularly if pen holders would start the process of drafting and negotiating earlier

and if ambassadors became more engaged in the process. According to a third interlocutor, the choice of open debate or closed consultation depended on the issue. Sessions in the Chamber were one-way conversations for the benefit of the public and media. Yet there was too much time spent reading statements in closed consultations as well. It was time to reconsider the purpose of open debates. A fourth speaker commented that there seemed to be a general recognition that the Council needed to be both transparent and effective, rather than choosing one over the other, it was time to explore how both goals could be advanced.

Meetings

In the view of a participant, it would be instructive to compare the number of meetings held by the Council with the results achieved. An effort should be made to improve the conduct of meetings so that they would become more interactive and more efficient. The choice of briefers mattered. In that regard, the Council should hear more from women and from representatives of civil society. Another speaker agreed on the desirability of increasing interactivity, which could make consultations much more substantive and productive. There had been far too much reliance on talking points for closed consultations, as well as for open sessions. Prior to some meetings, some members could agree in advance not to make an opening statement to save time. There could be an opportunity to ask direct questions of other members as well as of briefers, and there could be more use of video briefings. And members could generally be more disciplined in the length of their statements to open time for the exploration of additional issues.

Consultations should be more interactive, commented an interlocutor, but that would not necessarily guarantee that there would be more agreement among the members. On this and other dimensions of working methods, the burden of being more creative and flexible had fallen on the President of the Security Council, allowing practice to vary somewhat from month to month. Why could the members not agree to make the emphasis on interactivity a consistent practice of the Council, regardless of the presidency? Arria formula meetings had proven to be a good device for bringing more disparate voices, including non-members, before the Council, continued the speaker. But, over the years, the original informality had been lost and they had become too formal and insufficiently interactive. Sometimes they had become a first recourse rather than trying other meeting formats first. It might be time to return to the original concept. According to a second discussant, the innovation of “sofa talks” in some ways corresponded to the original intent of the Arria formula meetings, which were indeed meant to be quite informal. In the view of a third speaker, all of the delegates on the Council were quite ready to speak, but not necessarily ready to listen. That was human nature, but without a better balance between the two, meetings could not become either interactive or productive.

Almost every presidency has attempted to improve time management, noted an interlocutor, because they were all concerned with efficiency. It would be helpful to have more press elements to let the world know that some conclusions had been reached by the Council. The trend towards using “any other business” more frequently, such as on the Syrian Arab Republic and Guinea Bissau, had been a healthy development because it embodied an effort by the Council to be more responsive to unforeseen events. Their overuse could pose time management issues, of course, but Presidents had found ways to compensate. It was pointed out by another participant that “any other business” was originally used for short interventions, but increasingly had been employed for full consultations. Consultations were listed in the Journal with an agenda item, while that was not the case for “any other business”, which was sometimes used when a member did not want it to appear in the Journal. A third discussant asserted that “any other business” should not be treated as a

substitute for normal consultations, because the former did not permit time to consult with capitals and might be seen by some as a provocation.

It was acceptable to try to get speakers to be more succinct in the name of efficiency, suggested a participant, but there should be exceptions when the delegate was from a country directly affected by the situation. A second speaker commended those Presidencies that had made constructive efforts to enhance time management by addressing both the efficiency and the interactivity of meetings. Members, commented a third interlocutor, should support a strong chair and limit their interventions to 2 to 3 minutes. If limits on interventions were enforced in open debates – even by cutting off the microphones – then that would compel better preparations by speakers.

Speakers should be encouraged to be succinct, contended a participant, because that was a way of showing respect to the Council. Consultations should be a place for interactive dialogue, including the posing of questions, not the reading of prepared statements. In these cases, the use of a two-finger rule would be helpful. The participant asked whether a speakers list was necessary for consultations. Another discussant countered that it was not necessarily efficient to bring briefers from distant places and then to limit their presentations to the Council to only five minutes. In the view of a third speaker, however, it might make sense for briefers to provide written statements in advance and then allow a more in depth exchange rather than an extended opening statement. A fourth participant pointed out that verbatim records were only of the spoken word.

Pen holding

The Council should be more inclusive in selecting both pen holders and chairs of subsidiary bodies, asserted a discussant. There should be greater sharing of responsibilities, especially regarding pen holders, a shift that would benefit the functioning of the whole Council. The discussant's delegation had had positive experiences when sharing or taking the pen, but others needed this opportunity as well. In terms of chairing subsidiary bodies and carrying that substantial workload, the non-permanent members had been "over privileged." Another speaker had also had a good experience as a pen holder, but wanted to feel, from the outset, that that was always an option. A third interlocutor noted that they had served as co-pen holder with two different pen holders and took the initiative as pen holder on another matter. All of those experiences had gone well. A fourth participant suggested that members from a region should be considered to be de facto pen holders for situations in that region. The three members of the Council from Africa, for instance, should be holding or sharing the pen on African matters, not leaving those questions to the European axis in the Council. The pen should not be inherited as the Council's membership changed. Moreover, there had often been too little time left to review drafts before voting, a practice that had disadvantaged members not holding the pen.

A speaker recalled the discussion at the last "Hitting the ground running" workshop on the need to improve the quality of Council products, particularly the texts of resolutions. It might help to have a framing discussion when a draft text was first introduced. Also, better use could be made of the expertise of the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General and other representatives of the United Nations and of regional and subregional arrangements with special knowledge of how situations were evolving. There had been some progress on increasing consultations with troop- and police-contributing countries and on the inclusiveness of pen holders, but more needed to be done. According to another discussant, texts of resolutions tended to be too long. Often, 30 to 40 per cent of the wording was drawn from earlier resolutions, giving them a generic or even a public relations feel. There had been too great an attachment to repeating existing language, when a reference to the earlier

resolution in which the language appeared should be sufficient. The key, noted a third interlocutor, was to consult early and widely when preparing a draft text. Their experience had been that it was possible to cut as much as one-half of the language of some texts, resulting in clearer and more accessible resolutions.

As a rule, contended a participant, chairs of the relevant subsidiary bodies should serve as co-pen holders. In any case, pen holders should seek the substantive input of the chairs of the corresponding subsidiary bodies, especially the chairs of sanctions committees, because they have important knowledge and background information about the most critical issues and developments. It was important for them to develop and maintain strong working relationships. That connection, commented another speaker, was essential. It often had to be built step by step. However, in the view of a third discussant, pen holders too rarely met in person, as much of the drafting and negotiation was typically done by email.

Subsidiary bodies

The working methods of subsidiary bodies themselves, observed a participant, could be reviewed. This was particularly true for sanctions committees. Requiring unanimity for decision-making had not enhanced their efficiency or responsiveness. The work of subsidiary bodies, moreover, was often quite consequential, but was largely carried out at an expert level when input at the political level may have been called for. There was a need, commented another discussant, to be realistic about what subsidiary bodies, and particularly sanctions committees, could achieve. Not all members were enthusiastic about sanctions, so a careful and disciplined political strategy should be put in place. It should address how the perspectives of affected countries could be taken into account in the process of implementation. For sanctions committees, pointed out a third speaker, there was an acute challenge of trying to appear independent given the often negative views of affected countries and others. While praising the hard work done by the chairs of subsidiary bodies, especially given the demands placed on the leadership of sanctions committees, a fourth interlocutor underlined the sensitive nature of the matters they addressed. In this context, there were times when the Council as a whole should give more guidance to the work of the subsidiary bodies, especially to sanctions committees. Closer interactions between the two levels were needed. Listing related decisions, for instance, had been a recurrent problem. On some sensitive regional issues, the conversations at the Council and committee levels were not always fully congruent.

It was awkward to chair a sanctions committee, commented a discussant, and not be a pen holder or co-pen holder on that issue. As committee chair, an in-depth knowledge of the subject, including tracking the latest developments, was acquired. Yet, only pen holders had a voice in crafting mandate renewals. As another participant underscored, the Council had 15 members, not 5 or 10. When it came to selecting committee chairs or pen holders, however, there was no sense of parity whatsoever. A third speaker acknowledged that, though it was a heavy burden, chairing several subsidiary bodies had provided one avenue to having a bigger role in the work of the Council. However, based on the principles of equity and fairness, it would be much better to have those positions shared among both permanent and non-permanent members.

External relationships

Interactions between the Council and the Peacebuilding Commission, noted a speaker, had become more regular and more substantive. There was, however, a lot of untapped potential, particularly in terms of engaging in conflict prevention without stigma. Countries were understandably reluctant to be on the Council's agenda. Working through the PBC in such circumstances could be helpful, as it could maintain

an ongoing dialogue with the country concerned, not just viewing the situation through the crisis response lens that characterized the work of the Council. Another participant concurred with the notion that the PBC could be helpful in easing the stigma of preventive action and that links between the Council and the PBC should be enhanced.

One of the discussants underscored how useful it had been to lead a series of Council visits to the region in which they had been chairing a sanctions committee. The visits had provided first-hand knowledge of conditions on the ground and the very complex issues involved. Pen holders should make more use of the insights and information gained through such visits. In the view of another speaker, the Council's visiting missions had indeed proven to be very useful in bringing the members closer to the people affected by conflicts and the actors who were involved in them. Such visits were especially productive when properly targeted and prepared. They should not be undertaken for their own sake, however. A third participant pointed out that it was no longer regular practice to prepare a written report following visiting missions.

Chairing a thematic working group, observed a discussant, had provided a valuable opportunity to work both with the United Nations Secretariat and with civil society organizations interested in that topic. Commenting that there was much distrust of the Council among the public and the wider United Nations membership, another participant underscored that the non-permanent members had been elected by the General Assembly. They were accountable, therefore, to other Member States beyond the Council and that meant that they needed to have more of a role in the work of the Council across the board. A third interlocutor pointed out that the practice of monthly self-assessments by the President had mostly fallen by the wayside. They provided material for the Council's annual report to the General Assembly. According to a fourth speaker, the Council had not been adept at reaching out to the public. It had very little presence on social media. Even press elements were only posted on the Council's website. It was time to develop a wider social media presence in order to show the public what the Council was up to.

Process of reforming working methods

Over the years, observed a speaker, the efforts to improve the Council's working methods had made an important contribution to enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of its work. That remained an essential task. As the metrics provided by the Security Council Affairs Division demonstrated, commented another participant, the Council had proven remarkably adaptable at adjusting its working methods as circumstances required. The chair of the Informal Working Group had greatly contributed to that process, which had been ongoing for a number of years. Citing the long history of attempts to refine the Council's working methods, a third discussant pointed out that each chair of the Informal Working Group had worked with their successor to ensure a continuity of effort. Higher level participation in the Informal Working Group, however, might be useful at this point.

A speaker questioned why the Council's rules of procedure were still considered provisional. Why had there been resistance to giving them a permanent status? Whatever the status of the rules of procedure, commented another participant, the critical factor was that the Council remained an unusually flexible and adaptable body. New members did not need to accept the status quo, as its working methods were always subject to discussion in the Council. In the view of a third discussant, there had been substantial progress in improving working methods over the past year, though much more work remained to be done. There had been less of a tendency to try to embarrass other members of the Council instead of seeking common ground. A fourth interlocutor pointed out that there had been extensive deliberations among Council members on enhancing working methods over the past two years, including

a number of informal discussions in addition to the two open debates. These had produced both multiple draft notes and a substantive non-paper, all of which reflected a convergence of views on a number of topics. This process, which had been sustained over many years, was aimed at improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the Council as it sought to maintain international peace and security.

Transition for incoming members

Newly elected members were grateful, observed one participant, for the progress that had been made in permitting earlier elections and expanded opportunities to observe the Council at work. A next step, however, would be to allow the observation of negotiations among Council members as well. That would permit new members to hit the ground sprinting, not just running, in January. A discussant responded that allowing the observation of negotiations for three months might make sense, particularly if it was linked to a larger reflection within the Council about what did and did not work in the negotiating process. In the view of a third speaker, this was an idea well worth exploring, as was the notion of having them invited to the monthly lunches with the Secretary-General and having the Security Council Affairs Division send relevant materials to the newly elected members earlier in their transition periods. A fourth interlocutor underscored how useful the earlier elections and wider access during the transition process had been. At the same time, it was important to respect the need for both transparency and efficiency and to make sure that incoming members did not become overwhelmed by the amount of information and opportunities available as they prepared to join the Council.

Session III

Lessons learned: reflections of the class of 2019

Moderator

Ambassador Anne Gueguen
Deputy Permanent Representative of France

Commentators

Ambassador Job Obiang Esono Mbengono
Deputy Permanent Representative of Equatorial Guinea

Ambassador Joanna Wronecka
Permanent Representative of Poland

Ambassador Bader Almunayekh
Deputy Permanent Representative of Kuwait

Ambassador Luis Ugarelli
Deputy Permanent Representative of Peru

Antonin Bieke
Counsellor of Côte d'Ivoire

Speakers pointed to many achievements during their tenures on the Council, including: raising awareness of the role of mercenaries; helping to get the Democratic Republic of the Congo moving in the right direction; an emphasis on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, on respect for international humanitarian law, on the prevention of sexual violence in armed conflict, and on children and armed conflict; unprecedented resolutions, such as resolution [2401 \(2018\)](#) demanding a 30-day cessation of hostilities in the Syrian Arab Republic to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance; resolution [2417 \(2018\)](#) condemning the starvation of civilians as a method of warfare; and resolution [2474 \(2019\)](#) on persons missing as a result of armed conflict; closer relations with the Arab League; active and wide-ranging deliberations on working-methods reform; a series of timely and informative

visiting missions to several critical regions; a renewed emphasis on preventive diplomacy; bringing to Council deliberations the perspective of a country that had had the experience of hosting a United Nations peacekeeping operation; and the Council's active engagement with the complex crises in the Sahel, Mali, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Guinea Bissau. Less successful was the resolution on peacekeeping in Africa, commented one of the participants, which fell short of expectations.

A discussant asked what the criteria for success during one's tenure on the Council ought to be. Another speaker replied that it depended, in part, on the audience or constituency. Sometimes expectations were quite high, and the key was doing as much as possible to try to make a difference in challenging circumstances. The responsibility to try, commented a third interlocutor, was shared by permanent and non-permanent members alike. A fourth discussant noted that their delegation had adopted a stance of moderate pragmatism, based on a set of principles, such as respect for international law, human rights and the protection of civilians. In that spirit, as a chair of sanctions committees, their message to affected countries had been that the goal of sanctions had not been to punish people. This was an example of how a sanctions committee chair could play a positive role even when not afforded the opportunity to act as pen holder. It paid, in that regard, to be creative. There was reason to hope that the Council's efforts would produce positive results in the Sudan and South Sudan.

According to a participant, it was not fair that the permanent members had had so many chances to preside over the Council over the years. Could non-permanent members be permitted to have more than one presidency? It was also awkward and unfair, continued the participant, that there was a widespread expectation that the three members of the Council from Africa should consistently take a common position. That same expectation had not been applied to the European or Asian-Pacific members of the Council. Views in Africa were as diverse as those of any other regional group.

Among the lessons learned mentioned in session III, the following were highlighted:

- Set priorities early and stick with them. Each month, try to reserve some time with your team to take stock of how these matters are advancing. Embed your agenda in a strategic vision that can be communicated at the outset to the other members of the Council, as well as to the larger United Nations membership.
- Articulate national interests, objectives and priorities at the outset, be very clear about them, and do not waver from them. Otherwise, you can become overwhelmed quite quickly by the breadth, urgency and dynamism of the Council's work.
- Take on three to five files and stick with them throughout the term on the Council. Build and nurture alliances with other Member States, in or out of the Council, which share those concerns. Organize, with them, preparatory meetings and side events on those matters. They may invite you to share in related events outside of the Council.
- Select two or three matters to highlight during your presidency. Do not abandon them afterwards. Develop a long-term vision for the entirety of your tenure on the Council (and beyond). At the same time, be prepared to have urgent and unanticipated crises erupt during your presidency.
- Take (or share) the pen on a few issues that matter to your delegation.

- Build your staff with reinforcements from home to help handle the workload, but be aware of the time it takes to fully integrate them into your team. So be sure they arrive well before you actually join the Council. Building a solid team is an essential first step to a productive term on the Council. Choose team members wisely.
- Be mindful that your Security Council team will work long hours. Experts carry an especially heavy burden. Use your Deputy Permanent Representatives, political coordinators, and issue experts wisely and strategically. Involve them in making, not just implementing, policy. Treat them well and keep them in good spirits. You particularly cannot afford to wear out your political coordinators.
- Define and sustain a clear and close line of communication between your Mission and your national capital. Have the answers in New York, so that others will not be tempted to go to your capital first. Be, as well, the first source of information that your Minister turns to.
- When issues that are important to your country are on the horizon, urge your capital to send high-level representatives to the relevant Council sessions.
- At the outset, organize bilateral meetings with current members of the Council. You can learn a lot from them.
- Engage with the other elected members in their efforts to find a common voice. When that is possible, they all can benefit.
- When chairing a subsidiary body that is addressing a specific situation, reach out and develop a productive working relationship with the Permanent Representative of the country in question.
- Try to maintain good relations with all of the other members of the Council, but anticipate that you will have to take positions that some of them will oppose. Listen to members with viewpoints that differ from yours. Yet do not expect everyone to agree with each other all of the time.
- Be transparent and communicate with all members, while pursuing solutions to differences in a respectful and discrete manner. The more transparent you are, the higher will be your rate of success.
- Develop good interpersonal relationships, as it is critical to a productive tenure on the Council. The Council is intensely political, but it is also highly personal. It can be a decidedly friendly environment.
- Touch base with the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General when they visit New York. They are well positioned to know what is happening on the ground.
- Encourage the Council to undertake visiting missions and participate in them whenever possible.
- Ask the Security Council Affairs Division for advice, and ask them again. They can be a great resource. Use them.
- Develop and maintain close relationships with others in the Secretariat with expertise in the matters that concern you. Their knowledge and perspectives can help you to address complex and sensitive issues before the Council.
- Encourage the Council to continue its efforts to develop closer working relationships with the Secretary-General.

- Keep substantive contact with civil society and non-governmental organizations and listen to their views. Maintain an ongoing relationship with those groups interested in your priority areas, including thematic and cross-cutting ones.
- Be cautious with the media. Interact with them most actively during your presidency. Respect confidentiality.
- Look for opportunities to convene private, informal and interactive discussions among members to foster more listening and more candid communication.
- In consultations, ask questions, be interactive, and make comments. Try not to read statements. If it is necessary to make a prepared statement, limit it to 500 words.
- Respect time management and do not speak too often.
- Do not launch an initiative without first laying the essential political groundwork. Plan ahead. Prepare carefully. Consult widely. Other members of the Council do not like surprises any more than you do.
- Do your due diligence on the issue. Identify potential coalition partners. Know the views of each regional group. Build alliances across regional lines.
- Look for related initiatives in other United Nations intergovernmental bodies, such as the General Assembly and the Peacebuilding Commission, and within the Secretariat. Coordinate with them and learn from them. Their efforts may complement yours.
- Familiarize yourself with the Council's working methods. Read the note by the President of the Security Council ([S/2017/507](#)), not once but several times.
- Do not be afraid of suggesting adjustments to the working methods, as they are not set in stone. Innovation is possible and priorities change, even for permanent members.
- Change in how the Council does its work does not come easily, but it is every member's responsibility to try to induce improvements. Keep this conversation on reform going throughout the year, not just at these workshops. Keep pushing to do better. Implement the ideas raised here.
- Try to avoid procedural votes. No one benefits.
- Do not wait for the opportune moment. Choose a moment and make it opportune.
- Your legacy will not be defined by the quantity of resolutions produced but by the creativity and quality of your work. That will be your added value.
- Time on the Council passes very quickly. Two years may appear like a long time at the outset, but it flies by remarkably rapidly once you are immersed in the work of the Council.
- Never forget that membership on the Council is a singular privilege and an awesome responsibility. What other opportunities do most of its members have to contribute to international peace and security on a global scale? Incoming members will need to develop a wider lens in order to take considered positions on many of the most dire, complex, and intransigent situations affecting the lives of millions of people around the world.

Appendix

Prior to the workshop, Mr. Luck suggested the following questions:

Session I

- To what extent and in what ways has the Council met its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security so far in 2019? Where has it fallen short? Where could it do better in 2020? Looking at the Council's performance over the last several years, are the overall trend lines encouraging or discouraging?
- At the 2018 workshop, there were a number of comments about the tendency of unresolved issues to leave little room for the setting of priorities or the introduction of new initiatives. Has that been the case in 2019? How could this problem be overcome in 2020? Where do newly elected members hope to make the most difference in 2020 and 2021? What are their priorities?
- At every workshop, there is much discussion of the need to do better at conflict prevention, both through Council undertakings and through support for the preventive diplomacy of the Secretary-General and regional arrangements. What are recent examples where such collaborations have been particularly successful? Where could have the Council, or its partners, done better?
- Another perennial discussion topic at these workshops has been how to enhance the institutional and operational relationships between the Security Council and regional and subregional arrangements. As the Council develops ties to a growing number of regional and subregional partners, what could be done to make these relationships more productive and sustainable?
- Participants in recent workshops have been particularly critical of the Council's failures in the realm of humanitarian affairs, citing the growing flows of forcibly displaced people and the prevalent disregard for international humanitarian law by states as well as by non-State actors. What could the Council do in 2020 to help reverse those trends, for instance by improving the implementation of mandates to protect civilians or provide humanitarian access?
- Peacekeeping, which remains one of the tools most frequently employed by the Council, has been the subject of intensive scrutiny by the Council, the Secretariat and civil society over the past few years. What conclusions stand out from these reviews? Are there lessons for practice in 2020 and beyond? Are further adjustments or reforms needed at this point? Are further enhancements needed in the way in which the Council consults with troop- and police-contributing countries?
- Even when differences emerged on other issues, the members of the Council have tended to find common ground in countering terrorism and in curbing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Is that still the case? What should the Council do in 2020 to advance counter-terrorism and non-proliferation norms?
- Are there situational issues that look riper for Council attention at this point than they did at the time of the last workshop? Where and why?
- Judging by information provided by the annual "Highlights of Security Council Practice", as produced by the Security Council Affairs Division, it appears that the portion of Council attention applied to thematic and cross-cutting issues has declined marginally over recent years. Is there a balance of effort between these matters and situation-specific ones? Could more attention be paid to the way thematic and cross-cutting perspectives might condition the Council's approach

to situational concerns? For instance, is the Council paying enough attention to how climate and resource-related factors might affect conflict prevention, conflict management and peacebuilding?

Session II

- At past workshops, it has often been observed both that the Council has been the most flexible and adaptable intergovernmental organ in the United Nations system when it comes to modifying its working methods and that the process has been slow and uneven. In recent years, where has this process been most and/or least productive? Why has it proven possible to move forward in some areas, but not in others?
- Are there some areas in which progress appears possible over the coming months? Where and why? Is there any low-hanging fruit?
- In the view of newly elected members, what should be the priorities in terms of modifying the Council's working methods? Where do they believe that they could make a difference in 2020 and 2021?
- At the last workshop, several participants suggested that the implementation of the provisions of note [S/2017/507](#) had been uneven. Where has the implementation fallen short and where might a renewed effort pay dividends?
- The Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions has been quite active, including in trying to find common ground on several difficult issues. Where should it focus its efforts in 2020?
- One matter that has attracted substantial discussion at recent workshops has been the question of pen holders. Despite assurances that any member could hold the pen on any issue at any time, the practice of a few members holding the pen on most questions most of the time persists. Are procedural changes needed, such as giving sanctions committee chairs and members from the region in question the option of serving as co-pen holders as a regular practice? Or is this more a matter of members simply taking the initiative if they are interested in holding or sharing the pen? Why has this question proven so difficult to resolve? Are there steps that could be taken in the coming months to address this issue?
- The question of how to more fairly distribute assignments for the leadership of subsidiary bodies sparked a particularly lively exchange at the last workshop. Have the efforts in recent years to modify the process by which these determinations are made been helpful? How might they be improved? What has been the experience of newly elected members this year?
- Should permanent members chair more of the subsidiary bodies? If so, which ones? On what basis would this be determined? Are there committees or working groups that should not be headed by a permanent member?
- Does the Council hold too many public meetings (or too few private ones), as several speakers contended at the last workshop? Does the Council spend too much time in the Chamber and too little in consultations? How might the latter be made more informal, interactive, and productive? Are there too many Arrria formula meetings or too few? Too many high-level events?
- Given how demanding are the responsibilities of chairing a sanctions committee, has there been sufficient effort to fully brief incoming chairs and to allow time for a proper turnover? In that regard, what has been the experience of the newly elected members to date? What are the implications for organizing a Mission to take on such a burden?

- Likewise, there were a number of comments at the last workshop about the quality of draft resolutions and other texts. Should ambassadors get more involved, and at an earlier stage, in the drafting process?
 - In 2019, the Council has continued to make robust use of the option of undertaking visiting missions to places of particular interest. Clearly the members have found these to be of value, but questions have been raised, including at the 2018 workshop, about the need for more strategic planning, better-defined objectives, more consistent outcomes, and closer attention to costs and programmes. Is there a need for a Council-led review of how to maximize the benefits of this unique instrument? What lessons have been learned from recent visiting missions?
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