



Security Council

Distr.: General
8 May 2020

Original: English

Letter dated 7 May 2020 from the Permanent Representatives of Estonia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to inform you that Estonia, in its capacity as President of the Security Council for the month of May 2020, in collaboration with Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, as Chair of the Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions, intends to hold an open videoconference on the theme “Ensuring transparency, efficiency and effectiveness in the work of the Security Council” under the item “Implementation of the note by the President of the Security Council ([S/2017/507](#))” on Friday 15 May 2020, at 10 a.m.

In order to help to guide the debate, Estonia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines have prepared the attached concept note (see annex).

We should be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) **Sven Jürgenson**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

(Signed) **Inga Rhonda King**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

* Reissued for technical reasons on 14 May 2020.



Annex to the letter dated 7 May 2020 from the Permanent Representatives of Estonia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Concept note for the Security Council open videoconference meeting on the theme “Ensuring transparency, efficiency and effectiveness in the work of the Security Council”, to be held on 15 May 2020

I. Background

1. Article 24 (1) of the Charter of the United Nations provides that: “In order to ensure prompt and effective action by the United Nations, its members confer on the Security Council primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, and agree that in carrying out its duties under this responsibility the Security Council acts on their behalf.”

2. Throughout the years, and through the work of the Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions, progress has been made towards improving the working methods of the Security Council. The latest example of this work was successfully concluded by the Council under the leadership of Kuwait as the Chair of the Informal Working Group in late December 2019, with the adoption of eight notes by the President on various issues of importance for the enhancement of the working methods of the Council. The efforts made thus far have been geared towards facilitating the successful discharge of the Council’s mandate, as provided for in Article 24 (1) of the Charter. In fulfilment of this mandate, the Security Council is expected to make decisions that will secure effective action and does so on behalf of the wider membership of the United Nations. The Security Council acts on behalf of all Member States; consequently, there is a need for transparency, efficiency and effectiveness in the Council’s work, in the context of the responsibilities assigned to it under the Charter and the expectations of the wider membership.

3. While efficiency is the weighing of results or performance against resources over time, effectiveness is the weighing of results against expectations over time. As the Council’s workload has increased owing to the upsurge in global conflicts, it has become necessary for the Council to be able to consider the transparency and the efficiency of its work in accordance with the Charter. There is general recognition among Council members that transparency and efficiency can be secured jointly, without one being achieved to the detriment of the other, and that it can be done against the backdrop of an effectively functioning Council.

II. Objectives

4. The theme proposed for this open videoconference, “Ensuring transparency, efficiency and effectiveness in the work of the Security Council”, is premised on the acknowledgement that the Security Council operates as both an executive and a deliberative body. The theme is proposed in order to invite all Member States to consider and formulate concrete proposals on the ways in which the Council can ensure transparency, efficiency and effectiveness in its deliberations and in its decision-making and follow-up processes, recognizing that all these characteristics are essential in the discharge of the Council’s mandate.

5. In the upcoming discussion, we encourage Member States to bear in mind the latest developments and implementation of the note by the President of the Security

Council (S/2017/507), including gaps in terms of both implementation and identification of areas for further work.

6. On the issue of transparency, the Council has made progress in making its discussions and decisions available to the wider membership of the United Nations and to the public, including through the webcast of open meetings, the issuance of elements for the press when closed consultations are held and the timely publication of important Security Council documents on the official website of the Council. However, there is still room for improvement. At times, there has been a tension perceived between transparency and efficiency, especially in cases where the Council has used closed meetings to consider certain disputes or situations at the expense of transparency towards the wider membership and the public at large.

7. In delivering its mandate, the Council tasks the United Nations Secretariat with different responsibilities. It is critical that Council members follow up on the discharge of these responsibilities and assess whether and how benchmarks are met. In this regard, it is critical to consider the “implementability” and quality of the Council’s mandates and decisions.

8. Furthermore, the emergence of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, which has affected the functioning of the Council, has provided additional food for thought on how to safeguard the effectiveness of the Council during extraordinary circumstances. In this regard, the concept of “agility” is introduced in this concept note for consideration by the wider membership as a critical element to secure the effective, efficient and transparent functioning of the Council. To that end, it is important to consider how the Council can maintain a state of readiness to meet and make decisions in these unique situations; such a capacity is just as critical throughout the ordinary functioning of the Council. The open videoconference will afford the opportunity to Member States to consider the notion of agility in the following two scenarios: when the Security Council functions under ordinary circumstances and when the Security Council functions under extraordinary and unprecedented circumstances.

III. Guiding questions

9. The open videoconference aims to afford interested delegations the opportunity to provide constructive proposals for ensuring the transparency, efficiency and effectiveness of the Security Council’s working methods. The following questions are proposed to assist Member States in preparing their statements:

(a) The Council has made progress in enhancing its transparency. What are some of the ways in which the Council can improve the efficiency of its work while retaining transparency?

(b) In the light of criticism of the Council for its lack of action, including prevention, with respect to certain situations, what measures can be undertaken by the Council to enhance its effectiveness and transform situations on the ground?

(c) Pursuant to Article 24 of the Charter, the Council acts on behalf of the membership. However, how can the wider membership participate in enhancing the Council’s effectiveness?

(d) The working methods of the Council have developed considerably over time. Are the current working methods suited to assist the Council in strengthening its effectiveness as an executive body? What other working methods could be considered?

(e) The Council interacts often with the Secretariat, affected States, interested parties and other stakeholders. How can the Council enhance its monitoring and follow-up of situations? In this regard, what role could the wider membership and civil society play in assisting the Council?

(f) The concept of agility assists in securing an effective functioning of the Council both in ordinary circumstances and in extraordinary and unprecedented circumstances:

(i) How can the Council strengthen and improve its agility when it is functioning in an uninterrupted manner, under ordinary circumstances?

(ii) How can the Council adapt its agility to continue functioning effectively during extraordinary and unprecedented circumstances, for example, when it is rendered incapable of meeting physically owing to emergencies (such as health emergencies, natural disasters or other threats)? How can it preserve its ability to continue to meet and make decisions during emergency situations?

IV. Format

10. The meeting will be held under the format of an open videoconference. The statements of the briefers and Council members will be webcast live and archived on United Nations Web TV. States Members of the United Nations wishing to submit written statements are kindly requested to transmit their statements with a cover letter (duly signed by the Permanent Representative or Chargé d'affaires a.i.) addressed to the President of the Security Council, no later than the date of the meeting, namely 15 May 2020, to the email address provided by the Secretariat: dppa-scsb3@un.org. Written statements will be issued as part of the compilation document of the meeting comprising statements by briefers, Security Council members and non-member States, to be circulated as a document of the Security Council, if the delegation so indicates in the cover letter.

V. Briefers

- Permanent Representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Chair of the Informal Working Group on Documentation and other Procedural Questions, Inga Rhonda King
- Executive Director, Security Council Report, Karin Landgren
- Arnold A. Saltzman Professor of Professional Practice in International and Public Affairs, Columbia University, Edward C. Luck

VI. Follow-up actions

11. In line with the working methods document of the Security Council during the presidency of Estonia in May, as a measure of transparency, Estonia will produce a compilation of all statements transmitted to the presidency, in the form of a document of the Security Council.

12. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, in its capacity as Chair of the Informal Working Group, will produce an analytical summary of the statements of the Member States.