



Security Council

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Letter dated 17 March 2023 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 twentieth annual workshop for the newly elected members of the Security Council, which was held on 17 and 18 November 2022 at the Greentree Estate 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.

I would like to warmly thank all participants for their active contributions at the workshop. The purpose of the workshop was to offer the five newly elected members an opportunity to get acquainted with the inner workings of the Security Council, provide a unique occasion to take stock of the Council's performance over the past year and allow members to explore how the Council's working methods can be improved. Our guest keynote speaker at the workshop was Comfort Ero, President and Chief Executive Officer of the International Crisis Group.

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 letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Elina Kalkku
Ambassador

Permanent Representative of Finland to the United Nations



Annex to the letter dated 17 March 2023 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 twentieth annual workshop for the newly elected members of the Security Council, held on 17 and 18 November 2022 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 independent non-profit organization Security Council Report.

The workshop provides an opportunity for newly elected members of the Security Council to gain inside knowledge of how the organ works from those who know it best – its 15 current members – enabling them to “hit the ground running” upon entering the Council. The workshop provides a platform for an unusually candid and wide-ranging dialogue among current and incoming members about the Council’s effectiveness in meeting its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, its likely challenges in the year ahead, and ways in which its working methods and the activities of its numerous subsidiary bodies can be improved.

From its inception, the workshop has been conducted under the Chatham House Rule of non-attribution to promote frankness and spontaneity. To that end, with the exception of the keynote address on the opening evening and introductory remarks by the host and co-organizers of the workshop on the second day, speakers are not identified in the present report, which was prepared by Security Council Report.¹

The 2022 “Hitting the ground running” workshop was held on 17 and 18 November at the Greentree Estate in Manhasset, New York. On 17 November, Comfort Ero, the President and Chief Executive Officer of the International Crisis Group, gave a keynote address that focused on the emerging peace and security challenges facing the Security Council, which was followed by a fireside chat between Ms. Ero and members of the Council.

On 18 November, three substantive interactive sessions were convened:

- (a) State of the Council in 2022: taking stock and looking ahead;
- (b) Working methods and subsidiary bodies;
- (c) Lessons learned: reflections of the class of 2022.

Day 1

Keynote address

In her remarks, Ms. Ero said that the international security environment was challenged by a “polycrisis” – a series of global, systemic and mutually reinforcing shocks, such as the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, inflation, food insecurity and climate change. They had come at a time when the international system was more “polycentric”, with power becoming more widely dispersed among States and decision-making bodies such as regional organizations, the Group of Seven, the

¹ Reports from previous workshops can be found on the website of the Security Council: www.un.org/securitycouncil/content/htgr.

Group of 20 and the Security Council, among others. The adverse effects of the “polycrisis” could be expected to create greater social and political instability in the future. Its effects had been seen, for example, in countries such as Lebanon – which had struggled with COVID-19, inflation and a food crisis – and Sri Lanka, whose rampant inflation and debt default had led to protests that toppled the Government in July 2022.

Ms. Ero observed that the Security Council had struggled to develop adequate policy responses to outbursts of political instability generated by the “polycrisis”. The diffusion of power among multiple institutions in a polycentric world could hinder coherent responses, and the Council might be marginalized because other institutions were perceived as more appropriate to lead on particular issues. There were also likely to be divisions in the Council about whether and how to respond to certain crises, especially in the light of heightened geopolitical tensions.

The Council did, nonetheless, add value to global diplomacy, she said. It retained a unique status as a source of legally binding resolutions and mandates, remained a rare channel of major power cooperation and played an important role in supporting other actors in the international system, as demonstrated by its relationship with the African Union.

Ms. Ero concluded by offering suggestions on behalf of her organization, the International Crisis Group. She called upon the Security Council to enhance its engagement with international financial institutions, such as the World Bank, to exchange ideas on the signs of risk in vulnerable countries. She suggested that, prior to the 2023 United Nations Climate Change Conference, which would be held in the United Arab Emirates, the Council could conduct discreet, analytical discussions with climate experts to ease differences among members on the topic. Ms. Ero also called upon the Council to encourage the Secretary-General to be bold and concrete in his call to improve the United Nations early warning mechanisms, which he advocated in his 2021 report entitled “Our Common Agenda”, in which he outlined his vision for international cooperation.

During the ensuing discussion, Security Council members exchanged views on the scope of the Council’s mandate and the nature of the current international order. One participant argued that the Council sometimes succumbed to the temptation to discuss extraneous issues that were not relevant to international peace and security. The speaker argued that food scarcity, climate change and health were not security issues in and of themselves and that, if the security implications of such issues could not be established, they should not be discussed by the Council. In response, Ms. Ero maintained that it was difficult to compartmentalize various issues that in her view overlapped with international peace and security and were candidates for the Council’s attention.

Another participant maintained that the Security Council should continue to discuss climate change, even though not all members agreed on that point. Describing climate-related disputes over land and resources as evidence of the connection between climate change and security, the participant said that engagement on the issue was part of the Council’s conflict prevention work. Ms. Ero concurred in response that “the train has already left the station”; there were country situations in which United Nations peace missions were present, such as Somalia and South Sudan, where local populations were contending with natural disasters such as flooding, causing people to flee. She added that those issues would come back to the agenda in a way that would be hard to dismiss.

Pointing to a perception that the Security Council was not performing well and failing to address various crises, one member said that the fundamental problem was

that the divisions in the Council reflected the many divisions that the world was facing. “The Council is not sick, the world is sick”, said the speaker.

Day 2

Opening of the meeting and introductory remarks

In her opening remarks, the Permanent Representative of Finland, Elina Kalkku, reflected on how the Security Council had evolved since Finland’s last Council membership (1989–1990). The Council’s workload had grown, its working methods had developed, and elected members now participated in a much more organized way in the Council’s activities. The Council’s difficulty in responding to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine had posed hard questions about the relevance of the Council, taking into account that, through the Charter of the United Nations, Member States had conferred on the Council the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security on their behalf. Nonetheless, the Council continued to address many issues. In 2022, it renewed peace operations mandates, reauthorized cross-border aid deliveries into Syria, backed the mediation efforts of the Special Envoy for Yemen and supported the peace process in Colombia, among other accomplishments.

Violent conflicts accompanied by humanitarian crises were on the rise. These difficult challenges needed continuous attention, Ms. Kalkku said. The Security Council had opportunities to help safeguard a safe, prosperous and sustainable future for all, as in modern times humankind had better tools than ever before to safeguard peace and prosperity. She wished the Council success in upholding international law and the Charter.

James Sutterlin, the Acting Director of the Security Council Affairs Division, made several observations about the Security Council’s work in 2022. He noted that the Council had managed to return fully from the COVID-19 pandemic, as reflected in the number of meetings, which were significantly higher than in 2020 and 2021. He also observed that in 2022 the Council continued the trend towards increased civil society participation in meetings; in this regard, he noted that in the entire calendar year 2017, 30 civil society representatives had briefed the Council, while 82 had briefed the Council between January and October 2022, having become an enduring strand in the fabric of Council meetings. Mr. Sutterlin added that the increase in civil society briefers had been accompanied by enhanced attention and concerns about possible reprisals against them. He further noted that 35 per cent of resolutions (14 of 40) had been adopted non-unanimously between January and October 2022 – the highest percentage during the past decade. While some had noted that all resolutions were equally valid regardless of the vote, many others had observed that Council unity in its decision-making carried considerable weight. Mr. Sutterlin also mentioned that there had been much recent discussion regarding the participation of non-members in Council proceedings under rule 37. The calls for many unscheduled meetings had contributed to the stretching of the “briefing” format beyond the definition set out in the note by the President of the Security Council ([S/2017/507](#)); however, recent Council presidencies had played an important role in consulting diligently with Council members in advance in order to find the most widely accepted balance of invitees.

Karin Landgren, the Executive Director of Security Council Report, argued that, after almost 80 years, it was not naive to still want the Security Council to be an effective forum for addressing international peace and security. There was currently no other more effective forum for that purpose, whatever hopes – or preferences – might be pinned on regional organizations or on the Group of 20. She observed that the Council had received a level of global attention in 2022 that it had not seen in decades, with some calling for it to be dissolved for its failures and others rediscovering its fundamental value.

Ms. Landgren said that a core dilemma for the Security Council was that, while old-style threats to peace and security remained, they had been joined by new threats that were increasingly recognized as such. While the Council was often said to spend too much time on some issues, she asked whether it might be the case that the Council spent too little time on many situations that presented or might present a threat to peace and security. Ms. Landgren observed that there seemed to be no good way around the need for the Council to delve still deeper both into emerging conflicts and into the structural and root causes of conflict.

Session I

State of the Council in 2022: taking stock and looking ahead

Moderator

Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield
Permanent Representative of the United States

Commentators

Ambassador Harold Agyeman
Permanent Representative of Ghana

Ambassador Lana Nusseibeh
Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates

Ambassador Geng Shuang
Deputy Permanent Representative of China

Evaluating the Security Council's performance in 2022

Members agreed that 2022 was a challenging year for the Security Council. The resurgence of international conflict in the past year had raised questions about the Council's ability to deal with myriad global crises. Too often national interests had prevented the Council from taking collective action to address the crises, and in the words of one permanent member, "our silence has been heard around the world". Many participants said that the Council's major failure in 2022 was its inability to prevent Russia's attack on Ukraine and bring peace to the country. One participant expressed disappointment with the Council's failure to address more effectively the missile launches of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. One participant noted that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea had conducted one such launch just the previous night as Council members gathered for the present workshop. Another speaker mentioned Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Libya as cases where the Council had not fared well. There were different views about the Council's level of engagement on Ethiopia, with one member saying that it should have been more active and another maintaining that its limited engagement had allowed the parties to agree on a cessation of hostilities with support from the African Union.

Notwithstanding the difficulties faced in 2022, several participants agreed that the Council had achieved notable successes. They included the reauthorization of the cross-border aid mechanism in Syria, the establishment of the Haiti sanctions regime, the renewal of the mandates of multiple peace operations, and support for the truce in Yemen. There was still a palpable need for the Council to be effective on several files, one member observed, but in assessing its effectiveness the "degree of difficulty" of the problems faced should be taken into account, as in judging some Olympic sports.

One speaker said that it could be useful to agree on the metrics for evaluating Security Council effectiveness, which might include the percentage of unanimous adoptions and mandate extensions, the implementation of mandates on the ground, or

encouraging the Secretariat to be more innovative and creative in addressing challenges. In the speaker's view, the Council did best when its members approached issues with a sense of obligation and purpose, helping them to compartmentalize divisions and be effective in negotiations.

Another speaker added that members wanted a Council that built consensus, solved problems and benefited from responsible and reliable penholders who helped to pilot resolutions to adoption. The level of activity – such as the number of meetings or outcomes adopted – was not the same as productivity. Some participants concurred that the most important metric was the Council's impact on the ground, such as its support for the truce in Yemen or the reauthorization of cross-border aid to Syria.

Effects of aggression against Ukraine on the Security Council's work

Ukraine was a significant focus of discussion. One member described the attack on Ukraine as having “cast a huge shadow on the work of the Council”; for another, the war had created a “crisis of confidence” in the Security Council's abilities. A third called Russia's aggression “the greatest challenge to global peace and security in decades”, adding that the Charter “has been violated in a way that is unprecedented”. That speaker argued that the war needed to end in Ukraine not just to end the suffering in the country but to safeguard the Charter. One member also suggested that Council reform should be considered so that the world would not have to wait in desperation for the Council to respond in similar future situations.

Some speakers noted the adverse effect of the war in Ukraine on relationships among Security Council members. It had deepened existing distrust and divisions, according to one member. That distrust had spilled over into other issues; as a result, the Council had failed to adopt some important outcomes during the year. The member argued that the Council Chamber had been abused by members venting their grievances and anger over Ukraine in meetings on unrelated agenda items in March and April.

Two speakers expressed disapproval of the personal attacks and name-calling in meetings on Ukraine, one noting that such behaviour was not conducive to reducing tensions in the Council, the other saying that such behaviour was disrespectful to the Council, negatively affected perceptions of it and turned the organ into political theatre. The first speaker encouraged members to exercise restraint and to place guard rails on their conduct. The second argued that some presidencies, particularly of Western countries, were permissive of rude behaviour.

One member argued that the Security Council had been unable to act or had been blind to the situation in Ukraine, failing in its prevention role. The member contended that for several years Ukraine had not fulfilled its obligations under the Minsk agreements. Another participant disagreed with that assessment of the Minsk agreements' implementation.

Notwithstanding the detrimental effects of the war in Ukraine on the Security Council's work, some believed that those effects should not be exaggerated. One speaker noted that the attack on Ukraine had not stalled engagement on other files and that the Council had continued to perform its core functions. Although the Council was not hostage to the issue and divisions had not yet reached a breaking point, the Council needed to be more collaborative and less combative, the speaker said.

Putting Council engagement on Ukraine into historical perspective, one participant found a tendency for the media to say that the Council was stuck, without accounting for the gridlock from 1945 to 1990. In this regard, it was noted that in 1959 the Council had gone for four months without meeting and adopted only one

resolution. Since 1990, the Council had been able to act on several issues and its record was not that bad, one speaker suggested.

The speaker emphasized the need to be realistic about what the Security Council could do on Ukraine. While the Council should not be blamed for the absence of peace in Ukraine, it should be ready to contribute to a peaceful solution. Until then, the Council should continue to express its concerns about the fighting, urge the concerned parties to move towards a political solution, and address the consequences of the war, including in relation to the protection of civilians, food security, humanitarian concerns and nuclear threats.

It was also noted that the Security Council's inability to reach agreement on some situations on its agenda had nothing to do with divisions over the war in Ukraine; one speaker included the civil war in Syria and the weapons programme of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea among such issues. The representative observed that the war in Syria, and the Council's divisions over it, had been going on for several years, and well before the start of the war in Ukraine. Likewise, it was argued that the war in Ukraine did not affect members' approaches to the situation on the Korean Peninsula.

One speaker emphasized that Ukraine would continue to be a key focus of the Security Council's work in 2023. Incoming members were advised to have reasonable programmes of work, without too many discretionary events during their Council presidencies, as they would need time to discuss hotspots such as Ukraine.

Relationship between the permanent and the elected members

The role of the 10 elected members in building bridges among the 5 permanent members was discussed. One speaker observed that unity among the elected members could help to mitigate disunity among the permanent members, noting as an example the collective support of the former for the Syria humanitarian aid mechanism. The speaker underscored that, at the same time, the elected members were mindful of not creating false distinctions between themselves and the permanent members, viewing themselves as responsible players in the 15-member Council. One permanent member expressed the view that the Council was most effective when the unified elected members put pressure on the permanent members, urging them to find solutions.

An elected member said that bridge-building was difficult for elected members. At present, it was a laborious and politically risky proposition. Countries attempting to build bridges were sometimes criticized for their positions, and many elected members tended to "lean towards one side". If a majority of elected members maintained "a balanced position, not leaning towards a particular side", they could play a constructive role, the speaker said.

Another elected member noted that both permanent and elected members could block outcomes. While permanent members could veto resolutions, every member had a de facto veto on statements by the President of the Security Council and statements to the press, because those documents required Council unanimity for adoption. The Council was a platform for action, and disagreements prevented the Council from acting, that elected member said, adding that permanent members tended to prevent the adoption of proposed outcomes more frequently than elected members, in support of which the speaker shared data on failed Council outcomes between January 2021 and November 2022.

One permanent member countered that the data, while interesting, did not account for the fact that some draft outcomes were proposed in order to provoke and isolate members, rather than to find solutions. While noting that there would always be different positions among Council members, the representative argued that the veto

was not a privilege but a right that was intended to be a stimulus for finding solutions. That point had been forgotten, undermining the performance of the Council. Another permanent member concurred that the veto should be a stimulus for solving problems.

One permanent member argued against overemphasizing the divisions between the elected members and the permanent members, noting that there were also divisions among members of both groups. What was important was how all members, permanent and elected alike, worked together to make decisions.

A permanent member likened the Council to a company in which permanent and elected members were shareholders. When the company stock dropped, all the shareholders lost. Similarly, when the Council was viewed as ineffective and divided and issues were moved to the General Assembly, it was problematic for all Council members. As a result, Council members should strive to strike agreements and build consensus when possible.

Relationship between the Security Council and regional organizations

One member said that the Security Council's efforts and regional efforts should complement and support each other. The Council could learn and benefit from the leverage and pressure exerted at the regional level. While there was no uniform approach to the relationship between regional organizations and the Council, another member argued that the Council should remain humble and not impose solutions. Instead, it should allow regional organizations to play a greater role, as actors from the region understood the situation best.

In contrast, another member emphasized that chapter VIII of the Charter gave the Security Council authority over regional organizations. While the Council interacted with several regional organizations, including the African Union, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, it should not be held hostage to the failure of regional organizations to act. The Council could not "abdicate" its role to regional organizations, according to the member. Another speaker said that the relationship between the Council and regional organizations could be structured or fluid, adding that even though the Council followed developments in regional consultations, the lines of communication were not systematic, and discussions at the regional level did not necessarily trickle back to the Council.

Contrasting views were expressed about the respective roles of the Security Council and the African Union regarding the crisis in Ethiopia. One member said that the Council could help by not being actively involved in some cases and that, in Ethiopia, without much Council engagement, the African Union had been able to mediate a cessation of hostilities between the parties. Another member said that the situation in Ethiopia would not have improved even if the Council had acted immediately.

Others, however, disagreed with that perspective. One member argued that the African Union had been slow to act and insufficiently proactive with regard to Ethiopia. The member noted that, even though the Security Council was not holding public meetings on the issue, it was pushing the African Union to become more actively engaged. Another participant stated that the Council could not "franchise out" its responsibility; in the end, a peace agreement had been reached, but it had come after two years, and many people had died during that time.

Making better use of the Security Council

Some members pointed to limited substantive engagement among Security Council members, who talked "at" one another rather than "to" one another. One

participant said that it was unclear how the Council could survive and make decisions on behalf of the world if its members did not learn to listen to one another.

According to another member, as an executive body, the Security Council needed to act more and talk less. It should become more operational and less deliberative. Speeches were made for the benefit of domestic audiences and the media. While they promoted transparency, it was argued that the more public meetings the Council held, the fewer decisions it made. One representative felt like “a parrot” reading the same statements at the frequent meetings on such issues as Libya, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen, in which substantive interaction with United Nations officials was lacking. The speaker called for more direct involvement of ambassadors in negotiations, as they had more flexibility than experts, who could only compare their Governments’ red lines in such discussions.

One speaker said that, at times, the Security Council held meetings for the sake of holding meetings, creating the impression that it discussed the situation in some countries frequently to punish them, rather than to solve problems. The speaker maintained that members repeated the same things in closed consultations as in the open chamber, forgetting that, in the former, they were not acting for the cameras, criticizing those with opposing views rather than using the consultations as an opportunity to understand different positions. Another speaker argued that, although closed consultations were not perfect, with members reading from scripts, they nonetheless allowed for better interaction between Council members and United Nations officials than an open format.

It was agreed that better-quality exchanges of information were needed. The monthly lunches with the Secretary-General, “sofa talks” and the “mini Oslo forum” held during the presidency of Norway, in January 2022, were cited as positive examples in this regard. Private meetings on Myanmar were also referred to as promoting constructive Security Council engagement with ASEAN.

The importance of discussing emerging risks without stigmatizing the countries concerned was underlined. Reference was also made to the Security Council’s work on climate change and security. One participant argued that, while the Council discussed the issue frequently, the speeches were very similar. Rather than holding debates, members should focus on what the Council could concretely do on climate change in regions where it was a problem, such as the Horn of Africa and the Lake Chad basin.

Session II

Working methods and subsidiary bodies

Moderator

Ambassador Ferit Hoxha
Permanent Representative of Albania

Commentators

Ambassador Ronaldo Costa Filho
Permanent Representative of Brazil

Ambassador Dmitry Polyanskiy
Deputy Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation

Penholdership

It was argued that the penholdership system reflected the undemocratic nature of the Security Council, as the permanent members held a quasi-monopoly on the

practice. One speaker quipped that the Council was divided between “demigods” (the permanent members) and “mortals” (the elected members), adding that it was demeaning to be told that elected members lacked the “institutional memory” to hold the pen, and that argument was not used in the sanctions committees, chaired by the elected members. Two elected members asserted that the chairs of sanctions committees should have the opportunity to co-hold the pen on the issues corresponding to the committees that they chaired. Another member argued that any Council member should be able to produce a draft outcome on a particular issue, not just the penholder.

Other speakers emphasized that there had been progress on co-penholdership, with elected members sharing the pen with permanent members on several files in 2022. One elected member said that their country had had a productive and positive experience as a co-penholder, and that the practice of co-penholdership should be continued. Another member argued that mandatory co-penholdership would promote new ideas and burden-sharing in the Security Council’s work. Others maintained that it would be useful for elected members to serve as co-penholders on issues in their home regions. One member added that incoming members could benefit from capacity development that prepared them for participating as co-penholders.

Penholders’ stewardship of negotiations was discussed. Two speakers argued that affected countries needed to be actively consulted in the negotiating process; they were interested parties and not merely an object of the Security Council’s work. Penholders should not circulate “half-baked” products that did not reflect the situation on the ground. Concerns were also expressed that penholders sometimes circulated texts only 24 to 48 hours before a mandate expiration, without leaving appropriate time for members to give input to the texts.

In contrast, as a penholder, one permanent member argued that it shared draft texts two weeks before mandate expirations, provided ample time for comments from Security Council members and strove to work with host countries. However, the participant argued that members were not acting in a spirit of compromise when they submitted new ideas only days before a mandate expiration and then expressed dissatisfaction with the process.

Subsidiary bodies: allocation of chairmanship

One participant argued for greater transparency in the allocation of subsidiary body chairmanship. Some speakers called for the permanent members to honour the proposals of elected members, including incoming members, regarding the distribution of the chairmanships. One speaker noted that the incoming and the current elected members had invested significant effort in agreeing on their preferences for 2023, and that the delay by the permanent members in confirming those positions had made it difficult for incoming chairs to prepare for their new responsibilities.

It was observed that all members, not just the chairs, played an active role in the work of the subsidiary bodies. It was also noted that not all elected members were required to chair committees. A permanent member said that having the elected members chair committees was a practice that worked and that the existing divisions among the permanent members would be amplified if they chaired committees.

Reflections on different meeting formats

One participant maintained that more closed consultations could be beneficial to genuine communication among members. That meeting format could also be used to receive information from special representatives of the Secretary-General and others who were able to participate. If there was no progress in closed consultations,

it was because of the different positions of the members, rather than the format. Another member said that the Security Council was most productive when it met in closed consultations; however, the level of participation was important, as the meetings were more productive when ambassadors took part.

Another member said that closed consultations should be more interactive and lamented that members were “addicted to the simplicity of reading prepared statements”. Some members argued that prohibiting laptops or phones in the consultations room would enhance interactivity; however, another participant thought that it would not be practical or make a difference.

Concern was raised that the Security Council was often unable to express itself following closed consultations. One member pointed to the members’ difficulty in agreeing on press elements to reflect the substance of such meetings, leaving Presidents of the Security Council unable to speak on behalf of the organ following consultations.

While members emphasized the need for the more discreet conversations offered by closed consultations, they also underscored the importance of open meetings. One participant highlighted the political value of allowing members to convey their positions publicly. Another similarly noted that elected members needed to make the most of the opportunity to express their views in the open, as they only served two-year terms.

Another speaker argued that rule 37 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council was being abused.² There should be clear criteria for determining which countries were affected by a situation and thus allowed to participate in open meetings. The participant said that routine Council meetings were turning into debates, owing to broadened participation.

Arria-formula meetings³ had been usually held in an open manner in recent years. One participant expressed concern about the proliferation of such meetings and the way in which they were being conducted, suggesting that it would be helpful to return such meetings to their original closed format, to help to promote direct dialogue among members. According to one speaker, a “traditional” closed Arria-formula meeting on Afghanistan held by Norway in October 2022 had been constructive.

The need for informal “situational awareness” sessions from the United Nations Secretariat was raised. One member said that one such session had recently been held for the elected members and hoped that the practice would continue.

Visiting missions

Some members lamented the lack of any Security Council visiting missions in 2022, with only one such mission having taken place in the past two years. While the COVID-19 pandemic had made travel difficult, one participant said that more effort should now be made to go on site, so that members could see the impact of their decisions, citing the Council’s visit to Mali and the Niger in 2021 as extremely useful. Another participant added that field visits were necessary because they gave members a better understanding of the issues with which the Council was grappling.

² According to provisional rule 37, the Security Council may invite any Member of the United Nations that is not a *member* of the Council to participate, without vote, in the discussion of any question brought before the Council when the Council considers that the interests of that Member are specially affected.

³ Arria-formula meetings are informal meetings convened at the initiative of one or more members of the Security Council and designed to gather information from individuals or organizations with knowledge of a particular issue or situation.

Women and peace and security

Several members noted the importance of the women and peace and security agenda to the Security Council's work. One member emphasized that the commitments made by several presidencies in that regard, beginning with the women and peace and security "trio initiative" of Ireland, Kenya and Mexico during their respective Council presidencies in September, October and November 2021, was an example of innovative thinking that had advanced the agenda. Another participant said that joint initiatives involving several members, such as that on women and peace and security, were a shining example of how members could promote common priorities. One speaker said that Presidents of the Security Council could advance women and peace and security issues without joining the commitments, for example, by ensuring the participation of several female briefers during their presidencies.

While maintaining that women and peace and security was an important issue, another Security Council member argued that it should not be pushed to the point of "absurdity". The participant suggested that meetings on women and peace and security-related issues were too widespread, to the point of making the agenda irrelevant; in this regard, the speaker observed that the First Committee of the General Assembly was promoting discussion on the role of women and girls in disarmament and questioned whether that was a salient issue.

Contingency plans for unusual circumstances

One speaker argued that the Security Council needed to be prepared to conduct its work in the event of unexpected circumstances. In 2020, the Council had been unable to operate for two weeks because of the COVID-19 pandemic; it would be naive to believe that there would be no other crisis in the future. Another speaker suggested that the Council had all the tools that it needed to work in such circumstances and that those procedures did not need to be codified. The speaker noted that many expert-level meetings were still held by videoconference, implying that it continued the frequent virtual interactions during the height of the pandemic. However, some discussants cautioned that there were limits to the remote format. All members should have a right to be physically present at United Nations meetings, and "digital diplomacy" should not overshadow in-person interaction.

Session III**Lessons learned: reflections of the class of 2022****Moderator**

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

Commentators

Ambassador Mona Juul
Permanent Representative of Norway

Ambassador Fergal Mythen
Permanent Representative of Ireland

Ambassador Ravindra Raguttahalli
Deputy Permanent Representative of India

Ambassador Michael Kiboino
Deputy Permanent Representative of Kenya

Minister Counsellor Enrique Ochoa
Political Coordinator of Mexico

Making a difference in a difficult geopolitical environment

As they had during the first session, participants agreed that the past two years had been a challenging time for the United Nations in general and the Security Council in particular. The war in Ukraine, which one discussant called a “landmark event” in their two-year tenure, had further complicated the already difficult geopolitical landscape and had had a spillover effect on the Council’s work on other files. For the first six months of its term, the class of 2022 had interacted virtually because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Those constraints had contributed to a less collaborative environment, resulting in less unanimity.

Despite grim predictions, the Security Council continued to meet, talk and deliver products. Discussants recalled important steps taken by the Council that had also been mentioned in the previous sessions, such as agreeing on a robust mandate for the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, reauthorizing the cross-border aid mechanism in the Syrian Arab Republic and establishing a sanctions regime on Haiti. A speaker noted that those were all noteworthy achievements under difficult circumstances, adding that the Council’s work on the mandates of United Nations peace missions felt rewarding, as those mandates had a tangible impact on the ground.

The Security Council had however failed to make progress on many issues. It had been unable to move the needle on matters that had been on its agenda for more than a decade, including the Palestinian question and the Syrian Arab Republic, and the situation in countries such as Afghanistan and Haiti had deteriorated rapidly. The Council’s performance in conflict prevention, often highlighted as a priority, had faltered.

A speaker warned that members should have extremely conservative expectations about what the Security Council could achieve. Members sought to advance national interests through the Council, which was a political body, not an ethical one. The Council would therefore only succeed when members’ interests converged; the 15 members would necessarily achieve the “lowest common denominator” on some issues, whereas, on others, such as Ukraine, views were so divergent that the Council would not be able to find a solution. The Council should not be blamed for alleged failures, the speaker argued, since there was a basic flaw in its design. Nor should it be blamed for failing to resolve situations when the actors themselves were unable to agree on a way forward, as in Libya and the Syrian Arab Republic, or where actors appeared disinterested in dialogue, as in Ukraine. The speaker asserted that the difficult Council dynamics were reflective of the “less collaborative world in which we live”.

In contrast to that view, another participant said that the wider United Nations membership had entrusted Security Council members with a mandate to be brave. The Council must therefore engage on difficult issues, even if it came at a cost; over Ethiopia, for example, while some members had faced diplomatic backlash for trying to bring the issue to the Council’s attention, it was important for them to take a principled position on the matter. The participant noted that they were pleased with the ceasefire brokered by the African Union in Ethiopia, adding that there was a role there for the Council in the future. Another discussant said that there was “absolutely” room for elected members to be active and to fight for policies that they were passionate about.

Several speakers said that Security Council membership helped to elevate a country’s profile, constituting “currency to transact”, according to one speaker, and

an opportunity to advance national agendas. One of the speakers said that, to leave a lasting impression, members should strive to make memorable public statements and seek unique themes to address during their term, noting in this regard that outgoing member Mexico would be remembered for its focus on issues related to mental health.

Participants recounted the priorities of their terms, such as maritime security, countering the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, enhancing the representation of African views and interests and representing the global South. It was stressed that strategic cooperation among Security Council members was key to achieving progress on such goals. One speaker emphasized the need to engage with all members and build coalitions, cautioning against assumptions about other members' positions and against fixating on such terms as "like-minded". Although members had different perspectives and backgrounds, it was possible to build a sense of engagement and cooperation. One representative noted that it helped to build coalitions among elected members, adding that this was not done in opposition to the permanent members.

Discussants reflected on the merits of partnerships with members that brought regional expertise, citing such joint products as resolution [2601 \(2021\)](#) of 29 October 2021 on the protection of education (initiated by the Niger and Norway), resolution [2634 \(2022\)](#) of 31 May 2022 on piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea (co-authored by Ghana and Norway) and the draft resolution from Ireland and the Niger on climate and security, which had failed to be adopted on 13 December 2021 because of a veto cast by the Russian Federation.

A participant said that the Security Council should avoid discussing thematic issues such as climate change, arguing that, by so doing, the Council was going beyond its mandate and encroaching on the role of other United Nations organs. The participant noted with displeasure that the tendency to discuss thematic issues in the Council had grown in recent years, owing to the desire of some elected members to become the "flag bearers" of new issues.

Security Council dynamics and quality of products

In discussing Security Council dynamics, speakers reflected on the insufficiency of interactions between permanent and elected members, as a result of products that often lacked ambition and of Council members spending too much time on procedural matters instead of focusing on substance.

Many speakers commented on the effects of the veto power on the Security Council's work, one describing it as a challenge to the Council's performance, which, if not regulated, would render the Council "completely useless". Another participant noted that the veto created an imbalance between permanent and elected members; for the permanent members to block something, all they needed to do was raise a hand, whereas the 10 elected members needed seven votes.

Several speakers again lamented the Security Council's inability to agree on such products as press elements, statements to the press and statements by the President. The Council's failure to agree on a product expressing support for the talks held in South Africa aimed at resolving the crisis in Ethiopia was, according to one speaker, "the ultimate expression of failure". Several participants highlighted the importance of communicating with the media, especially in situations where there was no agreement on a Council product. One speaker noted that this was especially important for informing domestic audiences, while another member described the strategic partnership that it had built with the media, saying that members of the press had never violated its confidence.

Several discussants replied in the affirmative to the question of whether there was value to a thematic product that was eventually vetoed or was adopted non-unanimously. One speaker noted that, although a resolution on small arms and light weapons had not been adopted unanimously, language from the text was already being used in other products. Another participant posited that tabling the draft resolution on climate and security for a vote was a worthwhile attempt; 113 Member States had co-sponsored the draft text, and it had brought discussion of the matter in the Security Council to another level. Members should not censor themselves because of the veto threat, the participant added.

The quality of Security Council meetings was another topic of discussion. Some outgoing members regretted the fact that they had not held more closed consultations. One representative argued that it was important to have platforms for members to interact informally and have more frank discussions. In reflecting on the Council's failure on the Ukraine file, one speaker observed that Council members had not held any closed consultations on the issue.

One discussant commented that, when Security Council members convened for closed consultations, the meetings often turned into a question-and-answer session with the briefer. Members should talk more with one another, the discussant said, expressing hope that the incoming members would be able to "break the inertia" around the way in which that meeting format had been used.

Penholdership

Penholdership, an issue raised in the second session, on working methods and subsidiary bodies, was discussed further. One participant described it as a "rewarding" learning experience, noting that there was room to "grab the pen". Another speaker pointed out that it was possible to contribute to a certain file or product even if a member was not the official penholder; once a member's suggestions were taken on board, the member became a de facto penholder. However, penholdership could create a turf mentality in which "everything has to belong to somebody", the discussant warned; members should promote issues that mattered to them, without claiming exclusive ownership. For example, 13 members had co-hosted an Arria-formula meeting concerning the threat posed to United Nations peace operations by improvised explosive devices, but none had proclaimed itself the lead on those devices.

Learning opportunities

An outgoing member said that it had benefited from the advice of the Security Council Affairs Division, noting that the Division had provided valuable guidance on options available to members. The member said that it was impossible to master working methods in one day, but members should not let it paralyze them. An incoming member expressed appreciation for the guidance that they had received as they prepared for their term from other Council members, the Division and Security Council Report. The annual "Hitting the ground running" workshop was an excellent opportunity to learn more about the Council's work, it added. The member said that from reading the report of the workshop from 20 years ago, it might seem as though nothing had changed, but that if one looked closely, it was possible to see differences and advancements.

Conclusion

At the workshop's conclusion, a speaker observed that, despite all the challenges outlined in the three sessions, the peace and security environment would be worse without the Security Council. It was a necessary, important institution, and all its

members had the responsibility to ensure that the Council worked effectively. The collective interest should trump national interests, because, at the end of the day, the members' responsibility was to the Charter. The speaker implored incoming members to help the Council to renew itself, even if it clashed with the way in which the organ had traditionally worked.

Enclosure

Prior to the workshop, the following questions were suggested:

Session I

- How would you evaluate the Security Council's performance in maintaining international peace and security this year, and how can major challenges be addressed? What is the global perception of the relevance of the Council as the primary body responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security?
- How have the tensions created by the aggression against Ukraine affected Security Council engagement on other files, and how can the Council most effectively fulfil its mandate in the light of the current divisions?
- What scope is there for elected members to serve as bridge-builders among a divided permanent membership?
- How can the Security Council better support the political transitions under way and support stability and counter-terrorism actions in several countries on its agenda?
- How well have sanctions regimes been able to support political and peacebuilding goals, and what room exists for improvement in this regard?

Session II

- What can be done to promote a more equitable distribution of work and should the practice of co-penholdership be encouraged?
- When does promoting the transparency of the Security Council's work enhance its effectiveness, and when does it diminish it?
- What lessons can be learned from the approach taken by presidencies collaborating to uphold women and peace and security commitments during the past year?
- How can the process of selecting chairs for subsidiary bodies and preparing them for their responsibilities be improved?
- How can the Security Council make the most effective use of visiting missions, and could the Council develop a more systematic way of deciding on such field visits?