



Security Council

Seventy-sixth year

8798th meeting

Wednesday, 16 June 2021, 10 a.m.

New York

Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Jürgenson	(Estonia)
<i>Members:</i>	China	Mr. Geng Shuang
	France	Mr. De Rivi�re
	India	Mr. Raguttahalli
	Ireland	Ms. Byrne Nason
	Kenya	Mr. Kimani
	Mexico	Mr. De la Fuente Ram�rez
	Niger	Mr. Abarry
	Norway	Ms. Syed
	Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Ms. King
	Tunisia	Mr. Laouani
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Dame Barbara Woodward
	United States of America	Mr. DeLaurentis
	Viet Nam	Mr. Dang

Agenda

Implementation of the note by the President of the Security Council (S/2017/507)

Working methods of the Security Council

Letter dated 2 June 2021 from the Permanent Representatives of Estonia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2021/527)

* Reissued for technical reasons on 21 June 2021.

In accordance with the procedure set out in the letter by the President of the Security Council addressed to Permanent Representatives of Security Council members dated 7 May 2020 (S/2020/372), which was agreed in light of the extraordinary circumstances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, this official record of the Security Council will be supplemented by a compilation of annexes (S/2021/572) containing the statements submitted by interested non-members of the Council.



The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Tribute to the memory of Professor Edward Luck and of Ambassador Kenzo Oshima of Japan

The President: Before turning to the item on our agenda, it is fitting that we pay tribute to Professor Edward Luck and Ambassador Kenzo Oshima of Japan, who both passed on since the Security Council's previous discussion on this topic (see S/2020/418). Both of these distinguished men contributed extensively to the examination and improvement of the Council's working methods — Professor Luck through the dynamic discussions he organized in the context of the annual Hitting the Ground Running workshops and reports, and Ambassador Oshima for his important role in revitalizing the Council's Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions, leading to the first comprehensive "Note 507" document in 2006 (S/2006/507). They will both be missed by the members of the Security Council.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Implementation of the note by the President of the Security Council (S/2017/507)

Working methods of the Security Council

Letter dated 2 June 2021 from the Permanent Representatives of Estonia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2021/527)

The President: In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Ms. Loraine Sievers, co-author of the fourth edition of The Procedure of the UN Security Council, and Ms. Karin Landgren, Executive Director of Security Council Report

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2021/527, which contains the text of a letter dated 2 June 2021 from the Permanent Representatives of Estonia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to the United Nations addressed to the

Secretary-General, transmitting a concept note on the item under consideration.

At this meeting, the Council will hear briefings by Ms. Sievers, Ms. Landgren and Ambassador Inga Rhonda King, Permanent Representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, in her capacity as Chair of the Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions.

I now give the floor to Ambassador King.

Ms. King: I welcome this opportunity to brief the Security Council as Chair of the Informal Working Group of Documentation and Other Procedural Questions. Before I proceed, however, I also would like to pay tribute to Professor Edward Luck and Ambassador Kenzo Oshima of Japan, both of whom contributed extensively to the working methods of the Security Council and are no longer with us.

Over one year ago, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic resulted in a number of acute disruptions to the Security Council's sturdy mode of operation. While the centrality of the Council's mandate remained unchanged, our ability to discharge that mandate was challenged. Not only were we unable to convene in person, but our ability to interact with the wider United Nations membership was challenged. The Security Council was forced to contemplate and adopt a new mode of operation to ensure its continuous functioning, in line with the Charter of the United Nations.

Through a series of letters, beginning with the Chinese presidency in March 2020 (S/2020/253), which has been built upon by successive presidencies, the Security Council adapted its working methods to the circumstances in order to maintain its effective functioning. Over one year since the World Health Organization declared a pandemic, the Security Council continues to convene uninterruptedly, both in person and via video-teleconference (VTC), to negotiate and adopt resolutions, ensuring the timely renewal of mandates, and to maintain its engagement with other United Nations organs as well as with the wider United Nations membership, particularly through the monthly briefing on the programme of work and wrap-up sessions, and has incorporated multilingualism in its open video-teleconferences. Notwithstanding the existence of some outstanding issues, the Security Council has been able to ensure its continuous functioning, in a

manner that strives to secure transparency, efficiency and effectiveness.

The extraordinary circumstances under which we operated for the majority of the past year demonstrated a need for the Security Council to remain agile and responsive to all situations that might disrupt its functioning. The open debate on working methods in 2020 (see S/2020/418) was held on the theme “Ensuring transparency, efficiency and effectiveness”. While we emphasized the significance of those elements, the concept of agility was introduced as equally critical to the work of the Council. Contained within the statements and submissions summarized in the subsequent analytical summary were a number of proposals and views related to the issue of the Council’s working methods. In that context, the United Nations membership considered interim practices introduced during the pandemic that could be adopted during the ordinary functioning of the Council to enhance its effectiveness. This year, the open debate is being held under the appropriate theme “Agility and innovation: lessons for the future from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic”. That theme may be regarded as a sequel to last year’s open debate, as it aims to reflect on how far we have come and urges us to think ahead.

To that end, the Informal Working Group remains a critical framework, within which we can assess and improve our working methods. Accordingly, the Working Group has continued to meet virtually approximately every five weeks. Under the standing agenda item “Implementation of the note by the President of the Security Council (S/2017/507): Reflections from past presidencies and proposals for future action”, presidencies have been given the opportunity to reflect on the working methods of the Security Council during their respective months, assessing some of the best practices, challenges and areas for further movement. That agenda item facilitates reflection on the Security Council’s working methods, as well as on presidential note S/2017/507, which contains many useful provisions that are sometimes overlooked. To ensure our effective, efficient and transparent functioning, during both ordinary and extraordinary circumstances, we must continue to implement all provisions contained within the note by the President of the Security Council S/2017/507 and all subsequently adopted notes.

Allow me to recall the remarks of Professor Edward Luck during last year’s open debate, where he noted that the ultimate test was how fully and faithfully

measures were implemented. It is also worth noting that the Informal Working Group is considering the practice and procedure concerning the circulation of communications for the consideration of the Security Council in order to promote transparency and strengthen its efficiency.

The Security Council slowly made a much-welcomed gradual return to the Council Chamber, resuming in-person meetings in the Economic and Social Council Chamber under the German presidency in July 2020 and in the Security Council Chamber under the Russian presidency in October 2020. The Council has held a blend of VTCs and in-person meetings, with the latter having been the format for the majority of briefings and consultations in recent weeks. This month, the majority of the meetings are envisaged to take place in the Chamber. In that regard, this open debate is an opportunity for the Security Council to listen to the wider membership’s comments about the Council’s achievements and suggestions for the further enhancement of its working methods. The timing of this dialogue is apposite as we return to ordinary functioning.

The unforeseen COVID-19 challenges and constraints have given us much to consider for future extraordinary circumstances, such as the status of our VTCs, how to better facilitate the meaningful participation of the wider membership in VTCs, how to secure multilingualism during VTCs and produce comprehensive records of VTCs and how to undertake a procedural vote in cases where in-person meetings cannot take place. However, it has provided us with new and innovative ways to maintain our continuous functioning, including through the use of technology. I take this opportunity to recognize and emphasize the general position that modern technology can never replace interactive communication and the quality of engagement among Council members in person, including the valuable discussions that take place on the margins of normal Council meetings.

The working methods remain the foundation upon which the Security Council effectively discharges its mandate. Despite formidable challenges, the process of improving our working methods and adapting them to reflect the current circumstances must not waver. I look forward to the proposals of the membership of the United Nations as we strive towards enhancing and maintaining the Council’s effectiveness, efficiency and transparency, as well as its preparedness and agility.

I have no doubt that that is a collective endeavour to which we are all committed.

The President: I thank Ambassador King for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Sievers.

Ms. Sievers: I wish to express my appreciation for having been invited to participate as a briefer in today's open debate. I would like to add my voice to your tribute, Mr. President, and to that of the Chair of the Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions to Professor Edward Luck and Ambassador Kenzo Oshima, who both made exceptional contributions to the work of the Security Council and were wonderful people.

The theme of this year's open debate is well chosen. During this transition phase, it is important to assess how the Security Council has responded to the challenges of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) restrictions not only to discern best practices for future situations, but also to identify those pandemic working methods that may merit being carried forward into more normal times.

Ambassador King gave an insightful briefing on how the Security Council has approached business continuity during the pandemic. Last year, the most pressing issue for the Council was how to adopt resolutions. The Council was obliged to halt in-person meetings after 12 March 2020, and yet two mandates required renewal by the end of that month.

A particular difficulty faced by the Council was that, whereas, according to the Charter of the United Nations, General Assembly resolutions are recommendations, Security Council resolutions, depending on their wording, are binding decisions. For that reason, any alternative to in-person voting would have to bear up to rigorous legal scrutiny.

It was therefore essential that by the end of March 2020, the Council agreed to a written voting procedure, as set out in the letter from the President of the Security Council (S/2020/253). That procedure has perhaps been unduly time-consuming and convoluted and could benefit from further refinement. But what is most important is that it met the necessary requirements of legality and verifiability.

There are now 16 letters from the President of the Security Council on the Council's pandemic working

methods. Some have carried forward what was previously agreed, while others reflect new elements, especially evolving practice with respect to video-teleconferences (VTCs). Therefore, one question now is whether the Security Council should consolidate those working methods as a reference for the future. There are several options.

The first option would be a note by the President of the Security Council that distils into a single document the most up-to-date elements of the letters from the President of the Security Council.

A second option would be to adopt stand-alone notes by the President on individual working methods, which would apply both in times of restrictions and under regular conditions.

A third option may be to follow the model of the 1996 Wisnumurti guidelines or the 2017 Bessho letter, contained in document S/2017/93. In both cases, a Security Council representative, in his individual capacity, drafted a reference document on the process for nominating the Secretary-General.

A fourth option may be a background note by the Secretariat, similar to the one on Arria Formula meetings, which, with the agreement of the Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions, was read into the record by the Chair at a formal Council meeting and then included in the Security Council handbooks published by Japan.

Irrespective of the format followed, should the Council agree to create a record, it would seem desirable to convey that, although the pandemic working methods are a product of consensus, some Council members proposed additional or alternative modalities that have not been agreed but that may merit future consideration.

I would now like to raise an important matter relating to the return to in-person meetings. That is the fact that for all official meetings, the Council's provisional rules of procedure apply. Beneficially, under the rules procedural disagreements can be resolved through procedural votes. That contrasts to meetings not deemed official — including, to date, the VTCs held during the COVID-19 pandemic — for which virtually all procedural decisions require consensus, which occasionally has created delays or even blockages.

Operating without the rules of procedure for so many months has given Council members a new appreciation of them. Nonetheless, in recent years those

rules have been under the shadow of a misunderstanding because their title still retains the word “provisional”. I would like to take this opportunity to bring clarity to that issue.

The misunderstanding arises when people assume that the word “provisional” means “draft” and conclude that the rules of procedure have never been adopted, but rather exist as loose guidelines that can be set aside casually at the caprice of Council members. That assumption has done unnecessary damage to the Council’s reputation.

That the rules of procedure have never been adopted is not true. They were initially adopted at the Security Council’s first meeting, so that the Council could begin its official work. And then from April through June 1946, the Council adopted revisions and the rules of procedure were considered sufficiently complete to publish them under the symbol “S/96”, which is the symbol they still carry today, as document S/96/Rev.7. According to the leading legal treatises on the Charter of the United Nations, the Council’s rules therefore have the same legal standing as those of the General Assembly and the other principal organs of the United Nations.

The question then arises: Why does the word “provisional” remain in the title when that word was removed from the rules of procedure of the other principal organs after their adoption? The reason is that the Council remained stuck on one issue that did not confront the other principal organs — the unique voting arrangements set out for the Council in Article 27 of the Charter. Reflecting Cold War tensions, Council members could not agree on the extent to which the voting arrangements should be spelled out in its rules of procedure. It was for that reason that when the rules were published, the word “provisional” was retained. It was merely a political signal to indicate that although the Council had adopted the rules of procedure, it intended to revisit the outstanding voting issues.

By the 1950s, those voting issues had been resolved by practice on a case-by-case basis. But the word “provisional” remained in the title and over the years, the fact that the rules of procedure had been adopted in 1946 began to be forgotten by many.

Of course, the misunderstanding about the legal status of the rules of procedure could be set to rest if the Council were to agree to remove the word “provisional” from the title. However, reopening the

rules of procedure to do so would undoubtedly raise the issue of some rules that over the years have become outmoded. To attend to them would require a thorough and potentially divisive review. For that reason, whereas up to 1982 seven amendments were adopted in resolutions and incorporated directly into the rules of procedure, in 1993 and 2019 the Council was able to agree amendments only through the issuance of presidential notes, with the changes not yet reflected in the rules of procedure themselves.

While I think many would concur that updating the rules of procedure would be beneficial, given the number of contentious substantive issues currently before the Council I am not sure that trying to revise the rules at this time would give an optimal result. Pending such an exercise, however, the reassuring fact is that the rules in need of modernization relate mainly to documentation.

This has been a lengthy explanation, but I felt it was important to confirm that the rules of procedure that govern the conduct of official meetings — the rules of procedure that are of greatest relevance to Council members as they return to in-person meetings — are valid. Those rules of procedure can be applied and relied upon as currently written.

In conclusion, the General Assembly considered the Council’s 2020 annual report (A/75/2) on 11 June. There was a fair amount of criticism over the reduced access of non-Council Member States to the Council under its interim working methods. Yet, widespread respect was expressed for the agility with which the Council had ensured business continuity during the pandemic. I share that respect and I look forward to seeing how the Council will translate the lessons learned into the next phase of its work.

The President: I thank Ms. Sievers for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Landgren.

Ms. Landgren: It is a privilege for Security Council Report to be invited to brief the Security Council. Security Council Report’s aim is to contribute in an informed and impartial manner to the Council’s effectiveness, transparency and accountability.

Let me acknowledge the work of Ambassador Rhonda King of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines in presiding over the Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions, as well as the role of Estonia as Vice-Chair. I also want to

pay tribute to Loraine Sievers, co-author of the fourth edition of *The Procedure of the UN Security Council*.

It is a particular pleasure to be present in the Security Council Chamber in a week when all but one of the meetings of the Council and its subsidiary bodies will be held in person for the first time since mid-March 2020. That month, faced with a mounting pandemic and its brutal impact on New York City, the Security Council acted decisively in agreeing on interim working methods. By so doing, the Security Council was true to Article 28 of the Charter of the United Nations and quickly resumed meeting continuously — the first of the principal organs, aside from the Secretariat, to get back to business.

The Security Council's rapid agreement on new ways to work was historic. Those ground-breaking arrangements have now been tested for 15 months. Members have found that video-teleconference (VTC) meetings can save considerable time. More ministers and Heads of Government join and preside over Council open debates. Subsidiary body meetings are never constrained by a lack of meeting rooms. Daily agendas and draft resolutions are now circulated electronically, in a fine example of environmental awareness. Digital platforms have truly shown their value to the Council.

At the same time, coronavirus disease (COVID-19) restrictions struck at the heart of international diplomacy, leaving Council members without face-to-face negotiations and the myriad informal opportunities to explore possible ways forward, where personal relationships deepen and trust can develop. The new Council best practice may be found in hybrid working methods that balance the remote with the proximate.

At the end of March 2020, Security Council Report observed that while numerous technical difficulties had gradually been resolved, some fundamental procedural challenges had arisen. Key among them was whether VTC meetings would be considered official meetings of the Council. If they were not considered official, Security Council Report asked, how would the Council perform certain essential tasks, such as adopting resolutions to renew mandates that would otherwise expire?

The Council quickly found ways to perform its most essential tasks. It renewed mission and sanctions mandates, even establishing a new peace operation, while holding briefings and debates on its agenda items. VTCs made all that possible and at times made

it easier. Over the past year of Council VTCs, technical malfunctions have become fewer and users more proficient. The level of security risk perceived to be present in the Council's digital platforms may be ripe for reassessment.

Did the Council's innovations in any way limit its ability to deliver on its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security? During these 15 months, the Council did not add any new agenda items. The decision to designate VTC meetings as informal meetings may have imposed some unintended constraints on Council processes. Voting on resolutions, a feature of formal meetings, has been encumbered with a written procedure. The accompanying oral explanations of vote, a boon to Council transparency, have been eliminated. Closed consultations, intended to permit frank discussion and to avoid prepared statements, appear, in general, to have taken on heightened formality, and the use of press elements to keep the public informed, which had a strong start in March 2020, appears to have dwindled. Procedural votes, which require a formal meeting, have not been held during meetings held via video-teleconference. Council members may wish to give serious consideration to ways of enabling procedural votes and to treating video-teleconference meetings as official.

In March 2020, monthly letters from the President became the vehicle for communicating the Council's agreed interim working methods. These letters, in themselves a new tool, reflect the critical role the Council President can play in shaping better ways of working.

As in-person meetings and travel resume, perhaps nothing will be more pressing than live engagement with peace operations and other situations of concern. It has been 20 months since the last Council visiting mission. Some elected members are about to begin the final quarter of their Council tenures without ever having benefited from a Council field trip. Well-designed field visits can strengthen Council members' sense of ground realities, the effect of their decisions and the challenges to mandate implementation — especially important now as the United Nations seeks to strengthen the impact of Action for Peacekeeping initiative.

Still, there is scope for the Council to derive more value from its field visits. The Council might consider, where possible, consolidating its own travel schedule

and those of the heads of sanctions committees, other subsidiary organs and the Peacebuilding Commission for greater coherence and effectiveness. There could also be a fresh look at the need for full-scale Council visiting missions. These tend to be extremely costly, but also brief, with packed programmes. Late last year, one speaker at the Hitting the Ground Running workshop said that the visiting Council members “tended to be moved from the airport to conference rooms and back to the airport without adequately seeing the situation on the ground”.

In past years, the Security Council has successfully deployed mini-missions of a subset of Council members. The most recent was in November 2012, when six elected Council members went to Timor-Leste just before that United Nations operation closed, spending four days in the country. That added ground time can expand possibilities for effective diplomacy. Would this not be a useful option now, for instance with the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan, a new Mission, and perhaps for visits to a handful of situations not on the Council’s agenda? Council members remaining in New York could, at selected moments, join those missions virtually via video-teleconference. The Council also once asked a single member to travel on its behalf, when the late Ambassador Kenzo Oshima of Japan, as Chair of the Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations, visited Ethiopia and Eritrea in November 2005.

The Council has proved that it can use the provisional rules of procedure and the Charter of the United Nations to be innovative and effective. This active use of existing tools and the ready development of new ones, need not end as the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic recedes. As the Council comes back to in-person meetings, the flexibility that the institution and its members showed during the COVID-19 period is important to retain. The Council can keep existing good practices, resurrect worthwhile older initiatives and continue to break new ground.

The President: I thank Ms. Landgren for her briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements.

Mr. Geng Shuang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China thanks Estonia for its initiative to convene today’s open debate. We thank Ambassador King, Chair of the Informal Working Group on Documentation and

Other Procedural Questions, as well as Ms. Sievers and Ms. Landgren for their briefings.

The Security Council bears the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. As new challenges and threats keep cropping up, the Security Council needs to constantly improve its working methods, ensure fairness and justice, embody openness and inclusiveness, further enhance its efficiency and effectiveness, and better fulfil the critical duties entrusted to it by the Charter of the United Nations.

Since the coronavirus disease outbreak, the Council has developed its interim working methods and overcome many difficulties and inconveniences and has maintained business continuity. Looking back on the past year, we need to take stock of our experiences and good practices. We must also identify deficiencies, focus on the tasks and the future challenges facing the Council and actively improve its working methods.

In the light of what we have learned from our presidency of the Council in March 2020 and May 2021, I would like to recommend the following.

First, we stress the need for the Security Council to maintain unity, including in its decision-making. In the face of increasingly complex and formidable global challenges, the Council needs more than ever to practice and uphold true multilateralism, which is about having international affairs addressed through consultation. Council members should be mindful of maintaining the unity of the Council, respect one another and engage in consultations on an equal footing, enhance mutual trust and consolidate consensus. Unity among the 15 Council members is a show of power and strength, and is the source of its authority. We should duly enhance communication, accommodate each other’s concerns and prioritize consensus-based decision-making. In particular, we should properly manage differences and avoid resorting to a vote whenever a difference arises.

Secondly, the Security Council must focus on its duties and highlight priorities. The world today is ridden with myriad problems and challenges. It is impossible and indeed untenable for the Council to be everything to everyone. It must stay focused on tackling major and urgent issues concerning international peace and security. In recent years, the number of items addressed in the Council has gradually swelled. This is a cause for concern. The Council should maintain the continuity of its work priorities and be prudent in introducing new

topics for consideration. When it comes to cross-cutting issues, the Council should improve communication and coordination with the General Assembly and other organs so as to avoid broadening its scope of consideration, which would duplicate efforts and may lead to encroachment into the purview of the Assembly.

Thirdly, there must be extensive communication, openness and transparency. The Security Council performs its duties on behalf of all Member States. In addressing hotspot issues, it should heed the views of the wider membership, especially the countries concerned, countries of the region and regional organizations. Their unique advantages should be fully leveraged. The Council should be flexible and creative in organizing field visits and informal dialogues around relevant issues, and make good use of its Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations and other mechanisms, such as meetings with troop-contributing countries. In addition, the Council must consider and heed their views from all parties, especially those of troop-contributing countries on issues pertaining to the formulation of peacekeeping mandates and ensuring the safety and security of peacekeepers.

During its presidency in May, China consulted extensively and listened to the comments and suggestions of the countries concerned and regional organizations on hotspot issues. We communicated and coordinated with the Presidents of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, as well as the Secretary-General — with good results. We support the Council strengthening its interaction with the Peacebuilding Commission so as to leverage its positive role.

The Council should be mindful of both efficiency and transparency and strike the balance between open and closed meetings. China supports the Council in stepping up communication with the media, while Council documents subject to consultations should be kept confidential to prevent leaks and avoid compromising the work and efforts aimed at reaching consensus.

Fourthly, we must improve mechanisms and embrace fairness. The Council should be pragmatic and efficient and constantly optimize its working mechanisms. Last Friday, the General Assembly elected new non-permanent members of the Security Council. China supports the idea of facilitating newly elected members in performing their duties and, with the

assistance of the Secretariat, strengthening capacity-building, including by helping elected members familiarize themselves in advance with the work of the Council and its subsidiary organs.

The allocation of penholdership should be more rational and reflect the shared responsibilities and collective participation. China supports multiple Council members serving as co-penholders and encourages non-penholders to actively contribute to the drafting of documents.

The rotating presidency of the Council has a special role to play. Coordination should be strengthened between incoming and outgoing presidencies to maintain coherence and consistency in working priorities.

Fifthly, we must be creative, flexible and more agile. The coronavirus disease presented an unprecedented challenge to the work of the Council. In March 2020, the Council defied all odds in exploring a set of contingency work modalities with many unprecedented practices. These practices have enriched the Council's working methods. Good practices need to be upheld and carried forward, which would help the Council cope with future emergencies. There is still room for improvement, such as the stability of the video-teleconferences and the quality of remote simultaneous interpreting platforms, but admittedly the contingency modus operandi is only an interim measure, not a long-term solution; it cannot replace our normal working modalities.

We are pleased to see that since the end of May the Council has gradually resumed in-person meetings. Considering the lingering risk of infection, the Council should continue in the next stage to maintain rigorous pandemic-prevention measures, follow maintain democratic and science-based decision-making processes and make sound arrangements for in-person meetings.

Improving the Council's working methods is an ongoing process. China stands ready to work with other Council members to continuously take stock, make steady progress and keep improving the Council's working methods to enable it to better perform its duties. We also support the Informal Working Group continuing to play a major role in this regard.

Mr. Kimani (Kenya): I would like to endorse Ambassador Inga Rhonda King's tribute to Professor Edward Luck and Ambassador Kenzo Oshima for

their contributions to the working methods of the Security Council.

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the current 10 elected members of the Security Council (E-10) — Estonia, India, Ireland, Kenya, Mexico, the Niger, Norway, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Tunisia and Viet Nam .

Allow me to express our appreciation to the Estonian presidency for convening today's meeting and inviting the written participation of other members of the United Nations. This is unfortunately necessary in a period where we still need to observe a lot of caution due to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

We thank Ambassador Inga Rhonda King, Permanent Representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Chair of the Security Council's informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions, Ms. Karin Landgren, Executive Director of Security Council Report, and Ms. Loraine Sievers, co-author of the fourth edition of *The Procedure of the UN Security Council*, for their insightful briefings.

When the pandemic struck last year, no one had a grasp of the journey it would take us on, as we were not prepared for it. We should commend the Council for its quick response in formulating the COVID-19-related working methods to adapt to the situation and ensure business continuity. It is important that we reflect on these working methods and formalize those that can continue to enhance the work of the Council.

Agility has taken up a strong place in our work as a critical element for the effective functioning of the Council, particularly during this extraordinary season. The effects of this pandemic should not affect the value placed on transparency, accountability, efficiency and the building of effective bridges between the Council and other organs and agencies of the United Nations. Actually, the pandemic has clearly demanded that we deliberately pause, look back and consider how best to move forward, ensuring that the work performed during this period — and the lessons learned — are not lost to history.

On the contrary, the work of the Council must be recorded for posterity so that this unprecedented season can also serve to improve the workings of the Council. Therefore, as we emerge from the pandemic, we need to look to the future and agree on working methods that

can withstand pandemics and any other major future disruptions of the normal workings of the Council.

We may start by agreeing that video-teleconference meetings are considered formal meetings of the Council, where the same provisional rules of procedure apply, allowing for the participation of non-members, the possibility to vote in real time on procedural and substantive matters, provide fully for multilingualism and ensure the attendant record-keeping rather than developing temporary special measures again. As a first step, we will continue to engage actively as the E-10 in the work of the Informal Working Group under the Chairpersonship of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to secure the eight draft notes currently under discussion.

As we adjusted to the new reality, there was more scrutiny on how the Council would continue executing its mandate. This promoted calls for more transparency from the Council, including through the holding of more public meetings, wider representation by such stakeholders as women, civil society and youth, inter alia, and interaction with the media. This resonates with the progressively improving working methods, implementation of the note by the President of the Security Council S/2017/507 and the provisional rules of procedure.

The Council has been using video-teleconferences for meetings and consultations with increasing frequency. One of the benefits of working in a virtual format is the ability to secure the attendance of briefers from a wide range of stakeholders from across the world. Unfortunately, the year 2020 saw a significant decrease in the number of female rule 39 briefers.

The monthly presidency of the Council has a particular role to play in contributing to the promotion of transparency of the Council's work through engagement with the wider United Nations membership, the media, civil society and other stakeholders, which includes briefings on the programme of work, conducting wrap-up sessions and producing monthly assessments. We also welcome the growing practice of presidencies making and publicizing monthly commitments on the implementation of note 507 and the eight related notes of 2019, and we emphasize their key role in creating and testing new practices under their presidencies.

This journey has not been devoid of challenges. However, these challenges have also presented great opportunities for the Council to seize. One of the greatest challenges to operational continuity of work

is the technological capacity of the Secretariat and the political will to ensure that virtual open debates can include the participation of the wider membership of United Nations. Written contributions by non-Council member States are not an appropriate substitution for their participation in such debates. A progressive approach would be consideration of holding meetings that combine in person and virtual participation to attract a wide spectrum of briefers in choice events.

The Council greatly benefits from understanding the physical setting of conflicts, which is why field visits are of great importance. This important aspect of the Council's work has been greatly impeded by the precautionary travel restrictions necessitated by COVID-19 in the past year. However, with technological creativity and advancement, visits may be carried out virtually as we have already witnessed. We urge that such virtual visits be conducted only where travel is not possible and with the same frequency that in-person visits would have been conducted, so as to allow the Council to continue being more agile and responsive and to contribute to its prevention mandate.

At a time when the Council is under increased scrutiny, we should continue striving for more transparency, efficiency, effectiveness, democracy, inclusivity, accountability and balance. The Council needs to strike a healthy balance between public and private meetings, both to enhance the transparency and visibility of its work and to encourage more interactivity of discussions and consensus-building.

In that regard, for effective participation and in line with the promotion of multilingualism, the E-10 urges that efforts be invested in ensuring that interpretation is provided, including at closed meetings. We also welcome the current engagement of the Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions on analysing ways to strengthen and improve the practice and procedure concerning the circulation of communications for the consideration of the Council.

The E-10 views that those ideals would be best achievable through a more equal distribution of work among all members of the Council in the spirit of burden-sharing. We therefore urge that cooperation be fostered among the outgoing, current and incoming elected members to help maintain critically needed continuity.

To help ensure that smooth rollover of E-10 membership, capacity-building should be conducted for incoming members immediately upon their election. The envisaged capacity-building would involve chairs of subsidiary bodies helping incoming members to have a clearer understanding of what chairing subsidiary bodies entails. That should also help to demystify penholdership arrangements and create linkages among penholders and co-penholders.

In order to promote transparency and the fair and equitable distribution of work — including current penholders agreeing to co-penholdership arrangements with E-10 members who have valuable experience to contribute — the provisions of note 507 on the selection of the chairs of subsidiary bodies must be implemented. In particular, the informal process of consultations should start with incoming members as soon as possible after the elections and in conjunction with the envisaged capacity-building.

The selection process must be carried out in a transparent manner and ensure that the views of incoming members are taken into account in the allocation of roles. The expertise of elected members should be an additional factor in the process. In that regard, the consensus proposal by elected members needs to be respected. To promote efficiency and a smooth transition, the selection process should be done in a timely manner to allow incoming members, during the observation period commencing on 1 October, to monitor closely and better understand the work of the subsidiary bodies that they will chair.

Targeted sanctions are an important tool for addressing threats to international peace and security and are therefore critical to the execution of the mandate of the Council. The E-10 underscores the importance of accountability and transparency in the work of the sanctions committees. The working methods must align with international due-process standards.

We strongly believe in the need to increase the efficiency of United Nations sanctions by strengthening fair and clear procedures for sanctions regimes, including by creating review mechanisms similar to that of the Ombudsperson for the sanctions regime of the Committee established pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities.

In addition, the Council should take into account the efficacy of sanctions through evolving phases of conflicts and respond accordingly by periodically reviewing and suspending, lifting or strengthening measures, as appropriate.

With respect to the working methods of subsidiary bodies, including sanctions committees, a transparent, open and evidence-based methodology needs to be followed. Any agenda items being introduced for consideration, as well as holds placed on listing requests or other matters of the Committees' business, need to be supported in writing, with necessary justification by the requesting member, in order to promote transparency and accountability and ensure efficient record-keeping. That would also help maintain the credibility of the work of the Committees and in turn of the Council.

To satisfy the Council's efforts to be both agile and promote transparency and also to prevent conflicts, we urge continued targeted periodic engagement with regional organizations. That should not be limited only to signature events but should also include covering topical issues that arise, such as the exchange of experience in regional management of the pandemic. Engagement with regional organizations also speaks to the importance of Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations in executing the mandate of the Council.

On that note, the E-10 members recall that in the Council video-teleconference on working methods held on 15 May 2020 (see S/2020/418), the critical and urgent need for reforms in the Security Council to reflect contemporary realities was underscored. While the Council needs to be more efficient, representative, transparent, accountable and democratic, it is the only United Nations organ that has been left behind in having a truly representative composition. The use, or threat of use, of the veto also continues to prevent the Council from acting on vital topics.

We call for restraint on the use of the veto, especially on actions aimed at preventing or ending mass atrocity crimes — the very heart of the Security Council's mandate. Those imbalances should therefore be addressed.

Finally, the E-10 reassures you, Sir, of its commitment to live up to the responsibility bestowed upon us through election by the States Members of the United Nations to efficiently and effectively execute the Council's mandate and drive forward improvements in its methods of work.

Dame Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom): I join others in paying tribute to Professor Edward Luck and Ambassador Kenzo Oshima for their work.

I would first like to thank Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, as Chair of the Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions, for their excellent stewardship of the discussions on improving Council working methods and for maintaining momentum on this important topic. I also thank our briefers today for their stimulating ideas and their reflections.

Like others, the United Kingdom recognizes how far the Council has adapted to challenging circumstances in the last year. And I pay tribute to the Security Council Affairs Division for their role in enabling that. I agree that there have been some positive developments from the adoption of virtual working methods.

First, I have been struck by how easily the technology now allows us to include more diverse voices from the field — the voices of civil society, women peacebuilders and young people — as we did during our presidency of the Council in February. As our fellow 10 elected members of the Council highlighted, we should continue such practices.

Secondly, the virtual convening of leader-level debates has brought greater visibility and weight to issues of international concern, such as the impacts of climate change on security and fragility.

But we need to be honest with ourselves that there have been downsides, which have affected the Council's capacity to fulfil its mandate, including to face new challenges. Agility does not mean just being able to convene; it is also about responsiveness to emerging issues of concern and our working methods, as we have heard from others, have inhibited that responsiveness. Due to objections from a single Council member, the Council has not held formal meetings via video-teleconference since last March.

That has meant that, without the procedural mechanisms for the resolution of disagreements, we have at times not been able to discuss new or existing agenda items more substantively or to bring visibility and attention to issues in the open when needed.

Looking forward, we need to build back better. I call on all of us to work collectively towards three goals so that the Council can continue to fulfil its mandate in the face of new challenges.

First, on effectiveness, the Security Council best fulfils its mandate by solving problems through interactive debate, critical analysis, challenge, building consensus and making decisions that move issues forward. Sometimes that means more talking in private rather than in public, and sometimes that means discussing new issues that may be uncomfortable to some. But it is of overriding importance that we address risks of conflict before they escalate if the Council is to remain relevant and effective.

Secondly, on efficiency, we have all tried to make progress in bearing down on speaking times in the Council. However, lengthy meetings, using prepared statements, without moving issues forward, rarely, if ever, fulfil the Council's mandate.

Thirdly, on transparency, as we heard many times this morning, we must remain relevant and connected with the wider United Nations membership and public. We must explain ourselves where we can. We therefore support a return to using press elements regularly to help transparency and project the voice of the Council when we agree.

Engaging with a diverse set of briefers is an important way of staying connected, and we will continue to promote the participation of civil society in Council activity.

In conclusion, I welcome the chance to hear from Council and non-Council members about how else we can build back better. We have an opportunity to reset as we return to the Chamber to ensure that we can credibly fulfil our mandate in the face of twenty-first-century challenges. Let us not waste it.

Mr. De Rivière (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank the representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines for her work in leading the Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions. I would also like to thank Ms. Sievers and Ms. Landgren for their insights and proposals.

The Security Council has adapted to the health crisis, but that adaptation has come at a cost: we have departed from our rules of procedure and undermined multilingualism, which is a fundamental value of the Organization. I am therefore pleased that, with the return to the Chamber, the Council is now holding its public meetings and consultations in all the official languages. We must now return to our usual working methods. That means in particular putting an end to

virtual meetings. The return to normality can be only gradual in the current health context.

France shares the desire to reform the Security Council and its working methods, which the elected members just expressed. We are committed to reforming the Council in order to strengthen its legitimacy and effectiveness. Furthermore, together with Mexico, we proposed the voluntary and collective suspension of the use of the veto in cases of mass atrocities. We are pleased that the five new members elected last Friday support that initiative. We call on all other members, in particular the permanent members, to join it.

We worked with all our partners to ensure a transparent and predictable selection procedure for the Secretary-General. We are ready to supplement the note by the President of the Security Council S/2017507 to achieve greater efficiency, transparency and inclusiveness. The proposals of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines will help to move in that direction.

However, our work on consolidation and clarification must not be at the expense of flexibility. In particular, the freedom of any State member of the Council to submit a draft text at any time on any topic must be preserved. France is not opposed in principle to the chairing of subsidiary bodies by permanent members. In fact, we chaired the Working Group on Children in Armed Conflict for four years. But assigning subsidiary body chairpersonships to elected members allows for a regular rotation, which is useful to prevent blocks and to generate ideas.

We must implement the recommendations already agreed. France is working on that with all its partners in the Council. With my colleagues from the European Union, Estonia and Ireland, we established common working methods for our Security Council presidencies.

We are also committed to involving the countries concerned in our initiatives. We raised the issue of condemning the coup d'état in Mali with the three African members of the Security Council — the Niger, South Africa and Tunisia — as well as Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (A3+1). Yesterday, elements of the press were adopted at the initiative of the A3+1 and France on the humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo. We are working with the Niger to ensure that the Security Council supports the countries of the Sahel in their fight against terrorism, which results in many civilian victims, as was also recently the case in Burkina Faso. We continue to work with Tunisia

on the implementation of resolution 2532 (2020), on the coronavirus disease.

Apart from our working methods, our priority must be to ensure the effectiveness of the Council on a daily basis. We support convening interactive dialogues and meetings in Arria Formula format. They help to inform the Council on important issues. However, such meetings should not add to the work programme at the expense of the time needed to deal with crises. Moreover, they must remain informal.

In the same spirit, we must avoid an excess of public meetings to the detriment of decision-making. We spend too much time successively presenting our national positions and too little time working on compromises and joint actions. Public meetings are important but they tend to polarize positions. We need to find a better balance. We are still quite far from that.

We are counting on the chairmanship of the Informal Working Group and subsequent presidencies of the Security Council to align our efforts in that direction. We will strive for that during our presidency of the Security Council in July.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): At the outset, I would like to thank the briefers, Ms. Loraine Sievers and Ms. Karin Landgren, for their comprehensive briefings. We echo the colleagues who paid tribute to Professor Edward Luck and Ambassador Kenzo Oshima for their studies of the Security Council's working methods. We also thank Ms. Rhonda King and the entire delegation of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines for their statement, as well as for their able leadership of the Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions.

For several years in a row, the Security Council has discussed its working methods in an open format, with the participation of a broad representation of States Members of the United Nations. We note that for the second year running this debate has been held under the Estonian presidency.

We support the importance of enhancing coordination between the Security Council and the wider membership. We trust that today's debate, as well as the external assessment of the current state of affairs itself, will make a particular contribution to the activities of the Working Group and also help to provide it with new ideas, on the understanding, of course,

that the working methods themselves and any steps to modify them are the preserve of the Council members.

The issue of the Security Council working methods is very sensitive. Russia has consistently maintained that any changes in that regard should be aimed at really improving the effectiveness and efficiency with which the Council carries out its primary function of maintaining international peace and security. Resorting to ill-conceived initiatives that are not tailored to the specific nature of the Council's work not only does not help to achieve results but, on the contrary, is often counterproductive.

We welcome the efforts of the delegation of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to improve the working methods of the Security Council. We have taken note of its intention to amend the note by the President of the Security Council S/2017/507, which is of great importance as a compendium of Council working methods and is actively used by non-permanent members of the Council as an important primary source. We stand ready to assist the delegation of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines in that painstaking work. In our view, there should be no undue haste in doing so. Our efforts in that regard should be coordinated and focused on achieving consensus.

We note the growing interest in the procedural aspects of the Security Council's work on the part of its non-permanent members. That undoubtedly helps to develop best practices for the Council's work.

The year 2020 has been difficult for all humankind. The world has had to face a new and previously unknown challenge — the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. The ensuing sanitary and epidemiological restrictions necessarily impacted the work of the United Nations, in particular the Security Council. However, despite the difficulties, the Security Council was able to prove its ability to adapt quickly and in a timely manner to the new situation. Temporary extraordinary measures were developed to ensure the uninterrupted continuation of its work. We strictly adhered to that *modus operandi* in the months that followed.

As the situation in New York changed and the phases of reopening began, Russia advocated a swift return of Council members to the Chamber, subject to the necessary precautions. To that end, we supported the holding of the first in-person meetings of the Security Council in the Economic and Social Council Chamber during the presidency of Germany last July. That same

principle also guided our own presidency of the Council in October 2020, which was successfully carried out with the use of the newly installed plexiglass partitions in the Chamber.

The COVID-19 pandemic provided us with an excellent opportunity to assess the important role of the Council's face-to-face discussions of the international agenda. It has become clear that no alternative working methods can replace face-to-face interactions among Council members. I think all representatives will agree with me in that regard.

We are pleased to note the Council's gradual return to normal work in the Chamber. We are of the view that the video-teleconference (VTC) format used throughout 2020 and in part in 2021 worked only on a temporary basis and under extraordinary circumstances. As agreed when it was introduced, meetings held in the VTC format cannot be considered formal meetings of the Security Council procedurally, legally or logically. Accordingly, we see no need to institutionalize those temporary measures. In the event of a recurrence of a crisis similar to that of last year, we have experience and a solution, which is set out in the letters of the President of the Security Council, to which we can always return.

We do not deny that VTC meetings have their advantages and we can continue to use them to convene informal meetings. In particular, they help to significantly expand the circle of those who can provide the Council with important information for decision-making. I am referring to mechanisms in the Council's toolkit, such as the interactive dialogues and informal Arria Formula meetings. We are convinced that those formats should be used only to enhance the awareness of Security Council members about issues on the Council's agenda. At the same time, we do not support any hybrid formats, which risk introducing unpredictable and serious legal consequences for the Security Council and the United Nations as a whole.

We continue to draw attention to the Council's excessive documentation workload. Every year the Security Council produces several hundred documents. The added value of some of them is, unfortunately, questionable. The often observed excessive micromanaging of resolutions is not helpful either. We are convinced that the final products of the Security Council should be concise, clear, easy to understand and, most importantly, action-oriented.

In recent years, the practice of considering thematic subjects in the Council has become more frequent, especially those that, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, fall under the competence of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and other organs of our global Organization. That violates the well-established division of labour and distracts the Security Council from addressing its priorities, on which it can and should take concrete decisions.

In the context of an even distribution of responsibilities in the Security Council, the question of penholdership deserves particular attention. We have consistently advocated expanding the circle of penholders, first and foremost to non-permanent members. In that regard, we are guided by presidential note 507, which states that any member of the Security Council may be a penholder and more than one Council member may act as co-penholder. Individual members of the Council should not consider certain countries or even regions as their fiefdoms or act as their mentors on particular issues. We are ready for constructive interaction with Council members on that question.

We would also like to recall once again the inadmissibility of the practice of introducing artificial deadlines into the Council's work. It is no secret that the dates for the adoption of most Security Council resolutions are already known at the stage when the Council decides on its programme of work for the month. Nevertheless, many drafts continue to be received late without justification, which does not allow for a comprehensive expert assessment, let alone meaningful consultations.

One sometimes has the feeling that the penholders do that deliberately, believing that in their haste their colleagues may simply not notice problematic points in the texts. The wording of Security Council resolutions is sometimes changed a few minutes before the vote. The resulting output consists of half-baked products that do not address the concerns of Council members and provide unclear instructions to the Secretariat.

All that is unacceptable. We will continue to fight against such tactical tricks. We do not rule out the possibility that in the end we will be forced to evaluate the effectiveness of penholders' work according to those parameters.

The issue of Council visits was also raised. We support the resumption of that useful practice. Visits help Council members not only to be heard but also

to form their own impressions of what is happening on the ground and to engage with key stakeholders in any given situation on the Council's agenda. That is important to all of us without exception.

At the same time, we must also understand that the lack of representation of certain States during those visits could be construed as a political signal. That is why I believe that it would be optimal for missions to include all members. With regard to virtual and hybrid visits, they hardly allow us to achieve the goals that we set for such visits.

In conclusion, as the issue of the right of the veto was raised today, I would like to underscore that it does not pertain to Security Council working methods but rather is the cornerstone of the entire architecture of the Security Council and key to achieving balance in Council decisions and ensuring that they have a good chance of being implemented as effectively as possible.

Mr. DeLaurentis (United States of America): I thank you, Mr. President, for paying tribute to Professor Edward Luck and Ambassador Kenzo Oshima. Both made unique contributions to the United Nations. I personally knew Ed for many years and had the great honour to sit with him on panels about the work of the Security Council — mostly in front of students — where Ed would gently but firmly correct my interpretation of procedural matters. And he was always right.

I would like to thank the briefers for their thoughtful interventions. We are grateful to Ambassador King for her leadership in shepherding productive and pragmatic discussions in the Informal Working Group on Documentation and other Procedural Matters. Many thanks go to Lorraine Sievers for her insightful presentation. She literally wrote the book on Security Council procedure and we at the United States Mission frequently consult her authoritative treatise. It is lovely to see her again. We appreciate Karin Landgren's thoughtful briefing, as well as the work that she and her team undertake to provide the Security Council community with the informative Security Council Report.

The Security Council persevered during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, adapting innovative methods of maintaining continuity so that it could fulfil its vital functions. Most significantly, the Security Council adopted and implemented a written correspondence process for the adoption of its resolutions. Through that essential measure,

the Security Council ensured that it could renew peacekeeping mandates and sanctions resolutions and could respond to the crises of the day, in particular the COVID-19 pandemic itself.

The Security Council was also able to convene virtually through the video-teleconference (VTC) system. Through the utilization of VTC technologies, the world was able to see that the Security Council continued to receive briefings, engage in debates and perform its role in maintaining international peace and security.

Nonetheless, the United States is concerned that these virtual discussions have not had the status of actual meetings of the Security Council. And because they are not actual meetings of the Security Council, the Council's provisional rules of procedure do not apply to them. Thus, due to the objections of one Council member as the pandemic began, for well over a year the Security Council has not been regularly functioning pursuant to its provisional rules of procedure and has not been holding "meetings". So, for almost a year and a half, the Council has effectively been unable to take any votes whatsoever on procedural decisions, even when the vast majority of Council members may have supported the decision in question.

In rules 2 and 3, the fundamental rules requiring the President of the Council to call a meeting of the Council, have been eroded over the past year and a half. This state of affairs is not acceptable and we think that the Security Council members should address it, even after this horrible pandemic is behind us, so that we can be on a sound legal and procedural footing in the event that the Security Council is unable to meet in person again in future.

After all, the General Assembly was able to adopt a contingency decision (General Assembly decision 75/520) to enable it to vote electronically on resolutions in the event that it is unable to hold in-person meetings. The Security Council should be able to adopt a procedural decision establishing that virtual meetings are indeed meetings of the Security Council, and that the Council's provisional rules of procedure apply to them.

In conclusion, we would like to express our profound gratitude to the Secretariat, in particular the Security Council Affairs Division, the United Nations interpreters and the United Nations Technical Support Team, for their hard work throughout the pandemic.

Their tireless and crucial efforts behind the scenes enabled the Council to continue to function — and for that the international community owes them a debt of thanks.

The President: I now give the floor to Ambassador King to respond to comments and questions raised.

Ms. King: I am grateful for the opportunity to add a few comments.

First, I would like to thank Ms. Sievers and Ms. Landgren for their insightful reflections, which will no doubt inspire our working methods deliberations within Committee. I also thank my colleagues for their critical observations during this debate. It is clear that we are all committed to the optimal functioning of the Security Council.

It is worth repeating that the flagship open debate remains a critical opportunity for the Security Council to engage with the wider membership of the United Nations. Over the past year, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has challenged the quality of that engagement. However, the Council's resilience did not falter. As such, the Council was able to creatively adapt its working methods to maintain — and in some cases enhance — that engagement.

While we were not able to convene this open debate in the usual format, with the wider membership physically with us, the presidency's willingness to facilitate the Security Council's presence in the Chamber is indeed laudable. It is our hope that the next open debate on working methods will be convened with the Council and the wider membership assembled jointly in the Chamber to continue these important discussions. Until then, I look forward to reading the membership's written interventions geared towards strengthening the working methods of the Security Council.

I conclude by recalling the words of the late Professor Edward C. Luck during his last briefing to this organ in May 2020 (see S/2020/418), in which he reminded the Council — and as the Chair stated earlier — that “the ultimate test will be how fully and faithfully those measures are implemented.” He went on to say:

“As we have seen with different elements of the 507 process, putting agreed words into practice has not always been easy or quick. Some of the phrasing sounds ambiguous, imprecise or open to interpretation — in other words, diplomatic. The

first responsibility for monitoring the results lies with the members of the Council, but external observers should not take their eye off the ball in this consolidation phase.” (S/2020/418, annex 3)

In that context, I reiterate that we do welcome the written statements to be submitted by the wider membership. We will miss Professor Luck's engagement and his wisdom, but his legacy will undoubtedly live on. May he rest in eternal peace.

The President: I thank Ms. King for the clarifications she has provided.

I now give the floor to Ms. Sievers to respond to comments and questions raised.

Ms. Sievers: I wish to echo Ambassador King's statement about how important these annual working methods open debates are. I think that this time, in particular, having been through such unusual conditions over the past year, there have been a number of statements that indicate a very fresh look at how the Security Council has been conducting its work. I think we are all convinced that it is not going to be a return to business as usual from now on.

One of the things that struck me in today's comments is that the role of the President has been seen as critical during the pandemic interim period. In that connection, there were some interesting suggestions on how the role of the President can continue to be strengthened, not only individually, but in cooperation with other presidencies.

I also wish to pay tribute to the work of the Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions. At this point, with the combined operative paragraphs of S/2017/507 and the eight presidential notes that were adopted at the end of 2019, there are 154 paragraphs that need careful attention. This represents a great deal of work and is expensive. At the same time, the Informal Working Group is trying to make progress. I think we can all admit, to some extent, that the low-hanging fruit has been picked and the more difficult issues are now before the Group.

I also want to express my gratitude for the kind words offered in relation to my briefing and my book, *The Procedure of the UN Security Council*.

The President: I thank Ms. Sievers for the clarifications she has provided.

I now give the floor to Ms. Landgren to respond to comments and questions raised.

Ms. Landgren: Let me add my sentiments to the many expressed about the sad passing of Ambassador Oshima, with whom I briefed the Security Council last year.

It was very encouraging to hear the many references to the need to constantly optimize working methods as an ongoing, rather than periodic, process. One speaker talked of formalizing working methods that can withstand pandemics. Many speakers pointed to the value of both engaging with others and keeping others informed of what the Council is doing — other Member States, of course, but also the public at large. We heard several recommendations to that effect. If I could add one, it may be worth recalling the option that the Council has to meet outside New York. If this is the moment to underline the importance of multilateralism and the role the Council plays or to focus on a particular region, country or regional organizations, we might recall that the Council has done this in the past — in

Addis Ababa, Panama, Geneva and Nairobi — but not since 2004. Since we have alluded to a number of past useful working methods, this might be one to add to that list and review.

The President: I thank Ms. Landgren for the clarifications she has provided.

There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

Before concluding, I would like to thank once again all of the participants who joined us today. I would also like to thank the following Member States, which have so far submitted written statements on the subject of today's discussion: Argentina, Austria, Brazil, Chile, Cyprus, El Salvador, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Italy, Japan, Kuwait and Singapore. We look forward to receiving more. Statements that are received by the end of today will form part of the compilation of statements from this meeting.

The meeting rose at 11.30 a.m.