

Security Council Open Debate on Working Methods

November 30th 2011, Security Council Chamber

Statement by H.E Mr. Grauls, Representative of Belgium

I have the honour to address the Council on behalf of the Netherlands and Belgium. First of all, I would like to thank Portugal, as President of the Security Council, for having convened this debate. It reminds me of a debate that I had the honour to preside over in August 2008, which was dedicated to the same theme (see S/PV.5968). We would also like to express our gratitude to Bosnia and Herzegovina and to Japan for steering this agenda in 2011 and before.

In recent years, real and encouraging improvements have been made in the working methods of the Security Council. Your concept note (S/2011/726, annex), Mr. President, makes that very clear, and rightly so. The debates on working methods have already produced results. It is good to remind ourselves that the Council today operates under new, better and more transparent working methods than before. So there has been movement, there is movement and, hopefully, there will continue to be movement, be it incremental and sometimes discreet, but definitely movement. The Netherlands and Belgium would like to commend both the permanent members and the successive elected members of the Council on their efforts in that regard.

The Netherlands and Belgium want to stress that fact, because we do not want the further development of better working methods to become hostage to a lack of progress in the wider debate on Security Council reform. In other words, we do not want the working methods debate to come to a halt because there is no movement or progress on the other chapters of the Security Council reform agenda currently being debated in the General Assembly.

In your concept note, Sir, you invite the wider membership to come up with practical suggestions aimed at enhancing transparency, efficiency and Council interaction with United Nations members at large that could make a difference in the day-to-day Security Council business. The Netherlands and Belgium would like to submit some very concrete ideas, it being understood that none of those ideas, if implemented, would encroach on the decision-making power of the Security Council. The Netherlands and Belgium wish to fully respect the powers of the Security Council and its members, permanent and elected, as set out in the Charter.

First, let us encourage the monthly presidencies of the Council to take whatever action needed, within their powers, in order to enhance the transparency, the outreach towards the wider United Nations membership and the efficiency of the Council. In recent times, inventive and creative presidencies have taken welcome steps in that direction, which deserve to become more common practice. There are now more public briefings, more public debates, more Arria Formula meetings and more informal interactive dialogues. That is much appreciated by the wider membership. That modern approach to working methods enhances not only interaction with Member States, but also the potential to increase the Council's outreach towards regional organizations, civil society and interested individuals.

Secondly, the Netherlands and Belgium see room for further improvements when it comes to country-specific debates. It is the task of the Security Council to discuss challenges in specific countries. However, sometimes, the country concerned is not included in those discussions, when their [presence

really matters.

A way to enhance the transparency and the inclusiveness of the Security Council's work would be to invite countries regarding which issues are being debated but that are not members of the Security Council to contribute to Council debates of particular importance and under a formula to be decided on an ad hoc basis. By doing so, the Security Council would give a fair and decent chance to countries to put their point of view forward. After hearing such a country, the Security Council can still discuss the issues at stake in a restricted debate among its own members without the country concerned having to be present. The same goes for the Chairs of Peacebuilding configurations, who could similarly contribute in an even more effective way to the deliberations of the Council with regard to the country on the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) agenda.

A similar reflection can be made with regard to the need for increased interaction between the Security Council, troop- and police-contributing countries and the Secretariat. That type of interaction would be particularly welcome prior to the deployment and after the return of technical assessment missions.

Thirdly, the notion of peace and security today encompasses a far broader scope than it did 65 years ago. In recent years, Security Council debates have focused on climate change, international crime, terrorism, piracy, diseases, natural resources and other so-called "new" issues that affect international peace and security. We would like to encourage the Council to consult even more broadly than it has done so far.

Fourthly, the Netherlands and Belgium strongly believe that there is potential for more inclusive and more transparent working methods in the subsidiary organs. Those organs prepare Council decisions and can thus only benefit from external advice at their level.

Let me give one example. The Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, currently under German chairmanship, has granted access to the Chairs of PBC configurations, because issues such as child soldiers and gender-based violence against children are, all too often, common practice in countries on the agenda of the PBC. That practice of granting access to a subsidiary organ should be generalized and should be adopted as a general rule by all subsidiary organs, as appropriate.

The Netherlands and Belgium have taken on an active role in the debate on wider Security Council reform. I believe that our statement of last Monday during the first exchange of views during the eighth round of intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform clearly underlined our common strong commitment to Security Council reform in all its aspects.

Improving the Security Council's working methods is clearly one aspect of the ongoing negotiations in the intergovernmental negotiations in the General Assembly, just as it is an issue under consideration by this Council. (spoke in French)

Finally, as others have done before me, I would like to congratulate the President on the way he has chaired this Council throughout November. He has handled this very heavy task with a great deal of authority and elegance.