

## Security Council Reform Debate Heats up as Member States Negotiate Final Drafts

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11 September 2008

*After almost unanimously rejecting last week's draft report on the achievements and future of the Open-ended Working Group on Security Council Reform, Member States met again on Monday, 8 September 2008, in a session aimed at reaching a compromise solution. The session resulted in a new document, but in a subsequent meeting on 10 September 2008, the new draft was once more met with heavy criticism, especially from members of the Uniting for Consensus group and India, and the GA President was sent back to redraft. The Open-ended Working Group will meet again tomorrow, Friday, to continue discussions.*

Following last week's negative reception of General Assembly President Sgrjan Kerim's draft report on the work and future of the Open-ended Working Group on Security Council Reform, Member States met again on Monday, 8 September 2008, to engage in an informal redrafting exercise based on a revised paper submitted by the GA President on 5 September 2008. Among others, the report now suggested to use the GA President's "seven principles" as "guiding principles" only; the "five key issues" of Security Council reform - 1. categories of membership, 2. the question of the veto, 3. regional representation, 4. the size of the Council, and 5. the relationship between the Council and the GA - would be eliminated as a basis for intergovernmental negotiations; the recommendations would include an October deadline for the commencement of intergovernmental negotiations (although the membership would first have to agree on the framework and modalities for these negotiations as the first agenda item of the next session).

However, the exercise was seriously handicapped as India - a major player in the reform process - decided not to attend. The Indian delegation had apparently serious objections about Kerim's management of the Working Group. As Ambassador Nirupam Sen explained two days later "We are dismayed that, except for one open-ended meeting on September 8, 2009, the entire process of consultations on the draft report before us has been shrouded in secrecy and selective participation." The immediate outcome of Monday's meeting was a new draft report submitted to the membership on 9 September 2008 by the GA President.

### Wednesday

The new report was discussed by Member States on Wednesday, 10 September 2008. Several changes were made: the "seven principles" would only act as guiding principles (not as a basis), framework and modalities would be "addressed" at the outset of the next GA session (and not as the first agenda item), any solution should seek to garner the "widest possible" agreement (not a general agreement) in the General Assembly, and a specific reference to article 108 of the Charter (governing the Charter ratification process) had been inserted.

Nevertheless, the draft met fierce resistance from different interest groups. Several members (South Korea, Pakistan and Italy) of the Uniting for Consensus bloc vocally defended the use of the GA President's "seven principles" as a basis for negotiations, objected to attempts to move the process to a plenary of the General Assembly, called for the need of a "general agreement," stressed their opposition to any "artificial" deadline, while underscoring that the first step in any process must be a general agreement on a framework and modalities for intergovernmental negotiations.



India voiced their disappointment over the entire consultation process, while noting its overall reservations with the shortcomings of the draft report. These included serious objections to the use of the “seven principles” in the draft as well as a need to urgently commence intergovernmental negotiations. “...within a defined timeframe, in an informal GA plenary, without preconditions.” Finally, the Indian Ambassador ended by stating that if their concerns were not reflected in a new draft “...we would not be able to accept this draft report.”

### **New Meeting Friday**

Reports indicate that Member States are currently waiting for what could be the last draft report by the GA President. The Open-ended Working Group will convene again tomorrow, Friday 12 September 2008, to continue discussions; however, with the 62nd General Assembly ending on Monday, 15 September 2008, time is definitely of the essence if the membership is to come to an agreement on a report and a continuation of the Open-ended Working Group.

*\*This article is meant as an analysis and update of some of the main ideas discussed during the meetings and does not represent a complete and official account of all positions expressed by Member States. Unless attributed to a specific source, all expressions of opinion in this analysis are those of the author. The Center for UN Reform Education does not endorse any particular reform proposals. This analysis explores the premise that there is a governance crisis in the Fifth Committee (Budgetary and Administrative) and is based on conversations with a number of key delegates from the EU, Group of 77, and the US as well as other insiders. In addition, significant dynamics taking place between Member States are described and the issues that will be under discussion in the May session of the Fifth Committee are outlined*