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Statement by H.E. Mr. Yukio Takasu
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At the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on
and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and
Other Matters Related to the Security Council
19 January 2008, New York

Mr. Chairman,

Thank you for convening the fifth meeting of the Open-ended Working Group. We are grateful to you and Ambassador Tanin for devoting a great amount of time and energy to advance the Security Council reform agenda.

(Objective of Security Council reform)

In the last OEWG meeting on 5 December 2008, I underlined that the objective of Security Council reform was clearly defined in the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document. The objective of reform – to make the Security Council more broadly representative, efficient and transparent and to further enhance its effectiveness and the legitimacy and implementation of its decisions – was agreed upon by world leaders after intensive negotiations.

We cannot accept attempts to modify or redefine this objective of Security Council reform. I stress that we should refrain from reopening the consensus definition of the objective or prolonging the start of negotiations (with conceptual discussion), or even prejudging the course of substantive negotiations at this stage. Rather, we should concentrate now on beginning substantive negotiations as soon as possible and honor the commitment of all Member States reflected in GA decision 62/557.

(Guiding principles)

GA decision 62/557 includes the consensus guiding principles for intergovernmental negotiations. We cannot accept any proposals to modify those agreements or bring up again these issues that have already been settled through negotiations, prior to the adoption of the decision without a vote at the General Assembly on 15 September 2008.

Having said that, let me touch upon the agenda of today's meeting, which is the "modalities" of intergovernmental negotiations in the informal plenary of the General Assembly.

Modalities may refer to the decision-making process, how to organize negotiations, or how to conduct negotiations.

(Decision-making process)

With regard to the decision-making process of intergovernmental negotiations in the informal plenary, there is no question that the general rules of procedure of the GA will apply. If any clarifications on issues of negotiation procedure are required, these will be worked out as part of the negotiating process in the informal plenary, as has been the case with other informal negotiations in the General Assembly. The objective of the negotiations is to seek a solution that can garner the widest possible political acceptance by Member States, as clearly stated in decision 62/557.

As I indicated, we cannot support any proposal that would reopen this question and impose additional requirements for decision-making. Many such proposals were already rejected in the process of adopting decision 62/557, for instance, the proposal to revise the words "a solution" to read "a negotiated solution", the proposal to add "well above a two-third majority" after "the widest possible political acceptance", and the proposal to insert "not to table any resolution for vote".

(How to organize negotiations)

Regarding how to organize negotiations, some suggestion was made to create subcommittees under the informal plenary, corresponding to the five key issues. These key issues, such as categories of membership, size of an enlarged Council, the question of the veto, etc., are closely interrelated. Therefore, discussing each of all of the key issues in an orderly sequence but in the single venue of an informal plenary would be more practical and beneficial. Only in this way could all Member States participate in all negotiations of the key issues, fully reflecting the interconnected nature of each element of reform.

(How to conduct negotiations: a composite paper for negotiations)

Concerning how to conduct negotiations, it should be emphasized that all the positions and proposals made so far by the Member States and five key issues should form the basis for negotiations at the start of the negotiations, in accordance with GA decision 62/557, paragraph (c) and (d). The basis for negotiations must take into account Japan's position that the Security Council must be reformed with expansion of the number of both permanent and non-permanent members.

We are all fully aware of proposals made by Member States as summarized in the Report of the OEWG of the 62nd session of the General Assembly (A/62/47). Now, we have to be clear about which paper or papers should be used as the basis for intergovernmental negotiations.

As I suggested in the last OEWG meeting, the Office of the President and Ambassador Tanin are in the best position to prepare a concise composite paper containing options for the five clusters of key issues, incorporating all of the positions of and proposals by Member States.

On the basis of such a paper, serious negotiations will commence and a genuine search for narrowing differences through flexibility will take place in order to seek a solution that can garner the widest possible support of Member States.

To demonstrate the commitment to start intergovernmental negotiations no later than by the end of February 2009, we should no longer waste time on procedural debate over who should or should not provide a composite paper for negotiations. If the President and Vice-President, for whatever reason, are not in a position to produce such a paper, we should come up with other Member States-driven ways to produce it.

Mr. Chairman,

I would like to urge you to conclude the consultations of the OEWG on the framework and modalities of intergovernmental negotiations in time and to present the results of the consultations in a succinct manner to the informal plenary prior to 1 February 2009.

Japan looks forward to your continued leadership in moving to the next stage of Security Council reform and starting intergovernmental negotiations smoothly in the next month.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman