

Security Council President Convenes First-ever Meeting to Discuss Annual Council Report to the GA

by Nicolas Christiansen
30 July 2008

Member States met on 25 July 2008 to share their views on the content of the 2007 draft annual report of the Security Council to the General Assembly. The meeting took place at the initiative of Viet Nam which holds the Presidency of the Security Council for the month of July, and was the first of its kind. During the deliberations, 11 countries delivered statements, with many calling for more analytical and in-depth reports on substantive Council discussions and decisions.

According to Presidential Note S/2007/749, the country holding the Presidency of the Security Council for the month of July is in charge of drafting the introduction of the annual report of the Security Council to the General Assembly. The report is typically a factual and concise overview of meetings held and resolutions adopted by the Council, and usually omits any reference to actual discussions (please see annual report 2006/2007 for further reference).

Viet Nam - as Ambassador and Council President Le Luong Minh explained - sees greater transparency as an important step towards reforming the working methods of the Security Council. In this regard, the Ambassador suggested that it was useful to hear non-Council Member States' suggestions on what the report should include before the draft would be completed.

Member States' Statements

Overall, Member States given the floor (Costa Rica, Cuba, Egypt, Ethiopia, Italy, Jordan, Malaysia, Mexico, the Philippines, Slovakia, and Switzerland) congratulated Viet Nam for its initiative and asked for this kind of meeting to be institutionalized in the future. Furthermore, Member States asked for the report not just to contain the basic facts about Security Council resolutions and meetings, but to provide more analytical information as well.

Switzerland, speaking on behalf of the Small 5 (Costa Rica, Jordan, Liechtenstein, Singapore and Switzerland), asked that Member States first and foremost clarify what they mean exactly by analytical – a point later reaffirmed by Egypt, Costa Rica and Slovakia. Switzerland continued by stating that the report should provide information on key issues that were discussed – not only in regard to issues where decisions were reached, but also in those instances where deliberations did not result in any decisions. Reflecting on why Member States need more transparency and analysis, Switzerland stressed that “...we [Member States] are troop- and financial contributors and we owe transparency to our constituency.”

Costa Rica added that Member States should be clear on what they are demanding from the Security Council, and asked “...what do we mean by an analytical report - it is a catchphrase.”

Cuba said that the debate was a step in the right direction, but noted that for future reference the draft report should be issued in advance. Cuba also remarked that the president of the Security Council should make sure that monthly reports are issued in a timely fashion.

Italy noted that the report should clarify the main reasons as to why decisions were not reached, without specifying individual country positions. Italy also said that “...the Member States of the United Nations are the consumers of the output of the Security Council and they want to know what they are consuming.”

Slovakia went further by requesting that the report should contain information on all decisions and deliberations, and not just on key issues, made in the Security Council, including on those in which the Council failed to act, and on the work of all the subsidiary bodies of the Council. Slovakia substantiated this claim by saying that the work of the Security Council has consequences for all Member States.

Jordan asked the Security Council to clarify the process of creating mandates for peacekeeping operations: the political, strategic, and analytical reasons why operations are “stopped or started.” “We would like to see a summary of challenges that are facing peacekeeping operations,” the representative said, while adding that the report should adequately reflect the valid concerns of troops-contributing countries.

Ethiopia, talking on behalf of the Africa Group, stated that the report should be seen in the context of the reform of the Security Council itself.

Final Remarks

In his closing remarks, the Vietnamese Ambassador said that Viet Nam would present the views expressed in this meeting in a report to the Security Council, assuring Member States that their suggestions and comments would be taken into account. He further noted that the Security Council plans to organize an open meeting on the issue of reform of the working methods of the Security Council later this year.

The final 2007 annual report is expected to be published on 1 August 2008..

** This article is meant as an update of some of the main ideas discussed during the meeting 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.*