



First Security Council Reform Meeting on Substantive Issue Begins

6 March 2009

Member States met on 4 March and 5 March to discuss the first of five key issues related to Security Council reform. During the meeting, a large number of countries presented their perspectives on what new categories of membership should be added to a reformed Council.

After having completed several lengthy meetings on the format, procedures and rules of the intergovernmental negotiations during November, December, January and February, Member States finally met on 4 and 5 March to discuss the substantive issues related to an eventual reform of the Security Council. According to a previously released work plan by the President of the General Assembly, Miguel D'Escoto Brockmann and the Chairman of the intergovernmental negotiations, Ambassador Zahir Tanin of Afghanistan, countries would begin with discussing the different options for new categories of membership, followed by meetings on the veto, regional representation, size of an enlarged Council and its working methods and lastly, the relationship between the Council and the General Assembly.

As stated by Chairman Tanin at a press conference in February, the five meetings signal a significant break as they are not “negotiations on negotiations anymore, but the start of negotiations on substance.” As such, the Chairman had urged countries to use the five meetings to focus strictly on the issues at hand. “For all five, it is about providing more detail and where possible showing flexibility on your position, including through new proposals, he told the membership on 19 February. The meetings would thus be an opportunity for all states to present their respective views and perspectives. The meetings are expected to end by April with a second round of more focused talks slated to begin some time in May 2009.

During the two-day long meeting, Member States reportedly first delivered their statements in an opening round, with the option of presenting further views or comments in a second round. The format allowed for an open and at times even heated debate, as one insider noted. While few statements escaped from the hermetically closed conference room, it did appear that the debate largely remained focused on the issue of categories of membership.

Available statements: Italy, Senegal - on behalf of Africa, Costa Rica, Guatemala and Slovenia (more statements will be added as they are released).

The next meeting on the veto is scheduled for mid-March.