



## Calls for Reform as the 62nd GA Session Ends and the 63rd Opens

by Emanuel Evans

6 October 2008

*On Monday, 15 September 2008, the 62nd Session of the General Assembly formally ended. In his final speech as General Assembly President, Srgjan Kerim especially noted positive developments within the efforts to reform the Security Council, on management reform and on the process of System-wide Coherence. The following day, incoming president, Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann of Nicaragua, opened the 63rd General Assembly session by underscoring to Member states the need for increased democratization of the United Nations, and he outlined an ambitious plan to hold three high-level meetings on the issue during the coming session. 'Democratization of the UN' would also be one of the main themes of the general debate as world leaders met from 23 September to 29 September at the United Nations Headquarters, with many countries especially highlighting the ongoing efforts to reform the Security Council, revitalize the General Assembly and increase coherence of the UN system.*

On 15 September 2008, Srgjan Kerim, in his final remarks as President of the General Assembly, touched on several reform topics. On the issue of management reform, he said that there must be a greater effort to make the UN faster, more flexible, and more mobile, and that more must be done at UN headquarters on the issue of System-Wide Coherence, especially relating to governance, funding, and gender. He also noted that, despite tremendous difficulties, consensus has been reached on the issue of Security Council reform. Finally, recalling some of the events of the 62nd session, he noted cooperation between the General Assembly, the Security Council, and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) on issues such as the Peacebuilding Commission, saying that the Assembly is “performing, that it is more responsive and more action-oriented.”

President Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, in his speech accepting the presidency of the General Assembly on 16 September 2008, said that a central and overarching objective of the 63rd session is to democratize the United Nations. He said that one of the root causes of the current global food crisis is the lack of democracy at the UN, as manifested by the growing tendency to deprive the General Assembly of an real power, the reduction of ECOSOC to a peripheral body, and the transfer of ever more power to the Security Council and International Financial Institutions (IFIs).

In order to find solutions to these problems, the Assembly will discuss the democratization of the UN in three high-level sessions. The first session will discuss the coordination of the Bretton Woods Institutions with ECOSOC, in order to prevent their use as “instruments of domination”; d'Escoto called for democratization of the Institutions through changes in their share systems and methods of board selection. The second session will discuss the revitalization and empowerment of the General Assembly by transferring “wrongful power” from the Security Council, the Bretton Woods Institutions, and the UN bureaucracy to the Assembly; d'Escoto decried the fact that the opinions of 95 percent of Member States are often ignored, saying that the Assembly should become more proactive and that its resolutions must be binding. The third session will concentrate on Security Council reform. Noting the “addiction to war” of some permanent members and saying that veto power has “gone to their heads,” d'Escoto stressed that merely expanding the membership of the Council would not address its core issues, and said that the Assembly must try to rectify the Council’s “anomalies.”

### **The General Assembly Opens - 23 September 2008**

Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon opened the general debate of the 63rd session of the General Assembly with a speech titled “A Call to Global Leadership,” which focused on facing the numerous challenges of the current world through global leadership. On the topic of UN reform, the Secretary-

General recalled the themes of his speech last year, “A Stronger United Nations for a Better World.” He noted that the foundation for all UN work is accountability, saying that “We need to change the UN culture” and stressing the need for the UN to become faster, more flexible, more effective, and more modern. Specifically, he urged the adoption of his proposal for a new human resources framework, saying that the current system is dysfunctional and demoralizing while the new framework would promote mobility, career training, flexibility, and dynamism. He also stressed that Member States are also accountable to each other and to the UN, saying that mandates are meaningless without material support and that “We cannot reform this vital Organization without providing the required resources.”

GA President Miguel d’Escoto Brockmann noted numerous large-scale crises that the world is currently facing, including poverty, climate change, arms buildup, terrorism, human trafficking, the Palestinian situation, and gender inequality. He said of these problems, “All of them are man-made, and all can be traced in large part to the lack of democracy at the United Nations.” He noted with dismay that the important decisions at the UN are made by a small group of states with selfish motives while the will of 95 percent of Member States, as expressed through the General Assembly, is casually ignored.

Democratization of the UN was one of the themes of the General Debate, and many Member States took the opportunity to state their positions on a variety of UN reforms in the debate that followed.

Brazil, saying that only efficient and effective instruments can assure collective security, discussed reform of the Security Council. Brazil said that the current structure has been frozen for six decades and does not relate to the challenges of today’s world, but that the decision to launch negotiations on the issue in the near future is encouraging.

The United States focused on the issue of management reform, saying that the UN should “build on its successes and improve its performance.” The U.S. said that inefficiency and corruption must be corrected, bloated bureaucracies must be streamlined, and failure of Member States to uphold their obligations must be met with strong action. The U.S. also called for the immediate review of the Human Rights Council, which has “routinely protected violators of human rights.” Finally, the U.S. called for a new age of “transparency, accountability, and seriousness of purpose” in the UN.

France, speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that “The 21st century world cannot be governed with the institutions of the 20th century” and called for the enlargement of the Security Council and the G8. Saying that “We cannot wait any longer,” France proposed to include China, India, South Africa, Mexico, and Brazil in the G8 and stressed that Africa would have a place in an enlarged Security Council and G8. France also urged action for making international institutions more coherent, more representative, stronger, and more respected.

Turkey stressed the utmost importance of reforming and strengthening the UN, and announced its candidacy for a non-permanent seat in the Security Council.

Argentina requested the reform of multilateral institutions, including the UN and IFIs. Stressing the need to recreate lost multilateralism, Argentina said that the UN needs to be reformulated to deliver better results, and offered Latin America as a model of multilateral cooperation despite national differences.

Tanzania, speaking on behalf of the African Union, stressed that reform of the UN would be incomplete without reform of the Security Council. Tanzania said that while the African Union is negotiating with all parties, it stands by its position of demanding two new permanent seats with veto

power and two additional non-permanent seats on the Security Council from African countries, noting that Africa is the only continent without permanent representation in the Council. On the topic of System-Wide Coherence within the UN, Tanzania, one of eight pilot countries in the One UN initiative, said that Delivering as One is possible and urged the General Assembly to follow up on the project.

Gabon, welcoming the creation of the Human Rights Council and the Peacebuilding Commission, stressed the need for the UN to complete the reform process. Gabon urged the revitalization of the General Assembly, noted the successes of the Delivering as One initiative, and commended the reform process of the Security Council, particularly welcoming intergovernmental negotiations on the subject.

Finland aligned itself with the statement of the European Union, saying that it is “committed to building a more secure, fair, and just world through a reformed and credible UN.”

Lithuania said that the UN needs to reform and to assume a greater role in areas that will “determine the future of the 21st century.”

Kenya stressed the need for Security Council reform, saying that Africa deserves permanent representation in order to reflect equitable geographical distribution. Kenya also urged reform of ECOSOC in order to promote greater coherence and coordination with IFIs, the World Trade Organization, and other UN bodies.

Guyana discussed reform of IFIs, saying that they should become more democratic and that reform has to be driven by the need for improvement in the lives of all the peoples of the world. They also called for “a more democratic and reformed United Nations.”

Namibia, calling for the acceleration of UN reform, reiterated Africa’s common position demanding the permanent representation of Africa in the Security Council. Namibia stated that intergovernmental negotiations on the issue should commence without any further delay.

Benin also reiterated Africa’s position on Security Council reform, which has remained “hopelessly stuck,” and called for democratization and redefinition of the mandates of IFIs.

## **24 September 2008**

Paraguay called for the strengthening of the General Assembly, saying that it must become a true Parliament of the World, and that important issues should not be decided by bodies where the decisions are made by a small number of states.

Portugal expressed support of the position of the European Union and called for the Security Council to reform its working methods and to expand its permanent membership to include Brazil, India, and Africa. Portugal also called upon Member States to ensure that the UN has the resources it needs to fulfill its mandates.

Chile expressed its support for reforming the UN to make it more representative and more democratic.

Slovenia stated that reform of the Security Council is long overdue and that the incremental improvements of its working methods have been far from sufficient. Slovenia proposed that Security

Council membership should be expanded to twenty-five, with six additional permanent members, six new non-permanent members that would alternate every second two-year term, and eight non-permanent members elected according to equitable geographic distribution.

Mexico proposed the creation of a Green Fund within the framework of the UN to create incentives for states to redouble their environmental efforts and announced its candidacy for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for the 2009-2010 term.

Mozambique stressed that structural reforms are needed to raise the UN capability to the level of current challenges and expressed support for the continuing reform process.

Estonia said that it is imperative to improve the UN's capacity to resolve conflicts and to proceed with reforming the Security Council.

Latvia stated that Security Council reform is long overdue and welcomed the decision to prepare intergovernmental negotiations on the issue. Latvia also stressed the need to make more effective use of existing Security Council capacity and expressed support for UN management reform to ensure transparency, accountability, and budget discipline, noting that there has been some progress, but not enough.

Suriname expressed support for the UN restructuring process, saying that the UN should be given the tools and instruments to address global challenges, and noted its involvement in the One UN project.

Poland expressed support for the principle of democracy at the UN, stressing that the General Assembly remains the most important forum for democratic debate. Poland advocating a quicker pace for Security Council reform, saying that the number of non-permanent members should be increased to reflect the true image of today's world.

Central African Republic discussed the need to democratize the UN System, including the Security Council, ECOSOC, the Bretton Woods Institutions, and the General Assembly.

Cape Verde affirmed the need to reform and improve the UN system in general, and to expand and strengthen the Security Council in particular.

Albania noted its involvement in and support for the One UN Program.

Mongolia stated that the UN needs to be reformed and adapted to the evolving international realities, noting the progress in several areas and welcoming the decision to begin intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform. Mongolia welcomed the commitment to democratize the UN and stated that small states should be the driving force behind the democratization process.

## **25 September 2008**

Marshall Islands stated that the Security Council should be enlarged to reflect the current reality, and supported Japan's aspirations for a permanent seat on the Council.

Equatorial Guinea was pleased that the issues of democratization and reform of the Security Council and the Bretton Woods Institutions are on the agenda for the 63rd session of the General Assembly.

Sierra Leone reiterated Africa's common position that Africa deserves permanent representation in the Security Council, but stressed that Africa will negotiate in good faith and expects others to do the same.

Iraq expressed support for Security Council enlargement, saying that it needs to become more representative, and stressed the need for improving the operations of the Council.

Micronesia expressed support for expanding both permanent and non-permanent membership of the Security Council, and expressed support for Japan, India, and Germany as candidates for new permanent seats.

While Japan did not specifically mention reform during its official statement, it later stated, in reply to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, that its position on Security Council reform has been stated repeatedly and is well known.

Kuwait called for reform of the Security Council by increasing its transparency and enlarging its membership, stressing the need to take into consideration the demands of Arab and Islamic countries and small states.

The Republic of Korea expressed its support for reform efforts in general, and the Secretary-General's proposals for Secretariat reforms in specific. On the issue of the Security Council, Korea expressed the need for more representativeness, accountability, and efficiency, stressing the importance of acquiring general agreement across all Member States in steering the direction of the reform.

Australia expressed support for expansion of Security Council permanent membership and announced its candidacy for a non-permanent seat for the 2013-2014 term.

San Marino expressed support for UN reform in general and revitalization and strengthening of the General Assembly specifically. San Marino said that greater efficiency would make the General Assembly more complementary to the other main bodies of the UN and would help prevent duplication of activities. San Marino also stressed that the process of democratization within the UN would assume fundamental importance for small states and called for cooperation between small states to achieve common goals.

## **26 September 2008**

Montenegro expressed support for pragmatically-oriented reform processes at the UN, particularly in strengthening the authority of the General Assembly. Montenegro also expressed support for the decision to undergo intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform, stressing that that the Council should have greater equitable regional representation, transparency, and improvement in working methods.

Haiti expressed support for reforms to make the UN more effective, more transparent, and genuinely democratic, saying that if such reforms do not come about, the UN "risks being resented by the small and derided by the big."

Vanuatu emphasized the need for democratic reform in the Security Council and expressed its support for permanent membership for Japan, India, and a representative from Africa on the Council.

Jamaica welcomed the decision to commence intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform, saying that UN structural reform is an imperative whose time has long come.

Bulgaria welcomed the creation of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council and expressed support for continuing to follow the course of reforms initiated by the 2005 World Summit.

Samoa expressed support for the secretary-general's proposed career service reforms and stressed the need for the UN to deliver as one entity. Samoa also called for revitalization of the General Assembly and the expansion of permanent and non-permanent membership of the Security Council, emphasizing the need for members to reach out to each other and to gain the approval of the current permanent members.

The Bahamas reaffirmed its support for intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform, noting the need to expand permanent and non-permanent membership and improve its working methods.

Nicaragua noted with dismay that important decisions are often made by a small number of stakeholders while ignoring the vast majority of mankind, and called for the democratization of the UN and the strengthening of international law.

Malta expressed its support for several reform areas, including System-Wide Coherence, reviewing of all mandates originating from the General Assembly, management reform, General Assembly revitalization, and greater equitability in Security Council representation.

India expressed concern that there has been little progress on the core elements of the 2005 World Summit reform agenda and affirmed the need for General Assembly revitalization and changing the composition of the Security Council to reflect contemporary realities.

Tuvalu affirmed the need to reform the process of graduation from Least Developed Country status, noting that nearly all recent graduation cases have been small island states that remain economically vulnerable. Tuvalu also affirmed the need for Security Council membership to properly reflect regional balance, and suggested that a non-permanent seat should be allocated for Small Island Developing States.

Barbados stated its belief that the current financial crisis is rooted in the international community's failure to reform international economic governance and said that ECOSOC must be empowered to play a more meaningful role in global economic decision-making. Barbados also called for the Security Council to be reformed to reflect the current realities of international politics.

Iceland expressed its support for revitalizing the UN through better technology, better communications, and more efficient management. Iceland also announced its candidacy for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council.

Germany stated that Security Council reform is overdue and that the Council's composition must reflect the realities of world politics today. Germany welcomed the decision to begin negotiations on the subject.

Italy called for "comprehensive and consensual" reform of the UN system, including a more central role for the General Assembly, strengthening of connections between the UN and other international

and regional organizations, and Security Council reform. Italy stressed the importance of reaching consensus in matters of reform.

Slovakia emphasized UN reform as among its key priorities, stressing the need for cooperation between UN bodies, management reform of the UN Secretariat, and Security Council reform. Slovakia supported the ambitions of Germany, Japan, Brazil, India, and Africa for permanent representation on the Council and called for at least one additional non-permanent seat for the regional group of Eastern European States. Slovakia also emphasized the need to make the Security Council more open and transparent, and welcomed the decision for intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform.

## **27 September 2008**

Viet Nam called for democratic and comprehensive reform of the UN, including the General Assembly, the Security Council, ECOSOC, and specialized agencies. Viet Nam noted its involvement in the One UN initiative.

Mali called for following up on the creation of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council and for strengthening ECOSOC. Mali also reiterated Africa's joint position on Security Council enlargement.

Azerbaijan called for enhancing the role of the General Assembly as the supreme policy-making organ of the UN, as well as for general reforms of the Security Council.

Algeria urged reform of the Security Council, including equitable expansion of membership, democratization of its decision-making process, and improvements to its working methods.

Bahrain expressed its support for reforming, renewing, and reinvigorating the UN and its organs.

Gambia said that the stalling of Security Council reform throws its legitimacy into question and that the aspiration of Africa for adequate representation on the Council is legitimate and justified.

Romania expressed its support for General Assembly revitalization, System-Wide Coherence initiatives, reform of the Security Council, and reform of the Department of Political Affairs, saying that Member States must fulfill their duties to the UN by providing it with the necessary resources. Romania said that Security Council reform must take into account the legitimate aspirations of all regional groups.

Niger stated that UN reform would be incomplete without Security Council reform, including fair representation and improvement of working methods. Niger also expressed support for System-Wide Coherence initiatives.

Russia stated that they were satisfied by the progress of the overall reform process, including with the Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council, and that they welcome proposals for the expansion of Security Council membership that do not divide Member States but rather facilitate mutually acceptable compromises. Russia also proposed establishing a consultative Council of Religions within the UN system.

Tunisia expressed its support for general UN reform.

Hungary noted the progress made in all areas of UN reform, and welcomed the decision to commence intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform.

Zambia reiterated Africa's call for two permanent seats with veto power and two additional non-permanent seats on the Security Council, saying that this would address historical injustices against Africa and help to democratize the Security Council. Zambia also called for reform of Security Council working methods.

Lesotho said that Member States must work together towards Security Council reform that will help preserve its integrity and credibility.

Trinidad and Tobago stressed that Security Council reform must include equity of access for small states and the representation of all regions of the world in its permanent membership. Trinidad and Tobago also emphasized the need for System-Wide Coherence and Delivering as One.

Uruguay expressed its support for expanding Security Council membership with new permanent and non-permanent members, but stated that it will not support the creation of new members with veto powers and expressed its concern over the idea of veto power in general. Uruguay also noted its involvement in the One UN pilot program, saying it conceived the project as both a way to reform the operational activities of the UN System and as an exercise for cooperation with the Uruguayan Government.

The Czech Republic affirmed the need for a more representative and transparent Security Council and welcomed the decision to launch intergovernmental negotiations on the topic.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea affirmed the need to strengthen the General Assembly, where all Member States have equal voice, and stated that Japan should never be allowed to obtain a permanent seat on the Security Council.

## **29 September 2008**

Lao PDR affirmed the need to revitalize and strengthen the role and authority of the General Assembly, including in questions related to international peace and security, and to add new permanent and non-permanent members to the Security Council. Lao PDR also affirmed the need to reinforce the development pillars of the UN, including the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, UNCTAD, the Regional Commissions, and the Development Account.

Moldova expressed its desire to strengthen ECOSOC's coordinating role in developing global economic and social policies and welcomed the decision to launch intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform.

Liechtenstein said that quick progress is necessary on a number of management reform issues, including human resource management, accountability, and internal justice, and stated its support for creating a more legitimate and effective Security Council through efforts to enhance involvement and access of those who are not members of the Council. Liechtenstein also expressed concern over current practices in the Council on sanctions listing and delisting.

Singapore called for reforms of international institutions that take into account the changes in the world since the end of the Second World War, such as bringing China and India into the G8, making the IMF and World Bank more representative of the current global economy, and strengthening partnerships with regional institutions.

Yemen stressed the need and importance of reform, particularly of Security Council reform. Yemen said that Security Council reform meant more than just enlargement of membership, and said veto power should not be used to override the opinion of the vast majority of Member States.

Jordan stated that it is essential to revitalize the role of the General Assembly so that international decision-making processes are conducted in a democratic way.

Myanmar affirmed that the Security Council should reform its working methods, should increase its permanent and non-permanent membership, and should not initiate discussions on situations that do not constitute a threat to international peace and security.

Chad called for just and equitable reforms that take into account the legitimate aspirations of the African continent.

Kyrgyzstan stated that the most important issue in UN reform is strengthening the Security Council by expanding its membership and enhancing its working methods. Kyrgyzstan also announced its candidacy for a non-permanent seat on the Council for the 2012-2013 term.

Libya stated that genuine UN reform would put the decision-making power into the hands of the General Assembly while turning the Security Council into an executive instrument that would carry out the Assembly's decisions, thereby overcoming the obstacle of veto power. Libya called for a High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly on reform issues to be held in a European country. Libya also said that Africa deserves permanent membership on the Council on equal footing with other geographical regions, but that the representation should be given to the African Union, rather than any individual country.

Ecuador welcomed the resolution of a general framework to advance negotiations on Security Council reform and stressed the need to increase the Council's membership and to make its working methods more transparent and inclusive. Ecuador also affirmed that the General Assembly, the UN's most democratic and representative body, should be strengthened and called for the democratization of intergovernmental organizations that are part of the UN system.

Denmark stressed the need to continue the progress made on System-Wide Coherence and Delivering as One and welcomed the agreement to initiate intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform.

Ireland affirmed its support for reforming the UN and improving its operations, noting its own role in facilitating consultations on System-Wide Coherence.

Ethiopia stated that it remains committed to UN reform and revitalization.

Belize stressed the need to make multilateral trade institutions and IFIs more representative, transparent, and democratic and stated that the UN must be strengthened so as to better serve to monitor the implementation of globally agreed commitments.

South Africa stressed the need to make fundamental reforms to the UN and the Bretton Woods Institutions. South Africa welcomed the decision to launch intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform and noted with dismay that Africa does not have permanent representation on the Council.

Canada urged continued progress on management reforms, especially in the areas of oversight, accountability, and human resources management.

Switzerland called on the Security Council to adapt to the realities of the twenty-first century and stressed the need for the Council to improve its working methods by increasing transparency and by incorporating the opinions of non-members into the decision-making process.

Mauritius called for the expansion of the Security Council in both permanent and non-permanent categories and improvement of its working methods, reiterating Africa's request for two permanent seats and five non-permanent seats on the Council. Mauritius also expressed unequivocal support for a permanent seat for India and for a Latin American and Caribbean country and welcomed the ongoing discussion on revitalization of the General Assembly, System-Wide Coherence, mandate review, and management reform.

Maldives welcomed the decision to launch intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform.

Mauritania stressed the importance of Security Council reform and called for permanent representation for Africa. Mauritania also supported the aspirations of Japan and Germany for permanent seats on the Council.

Sweden called on the UN to bolster its capacity to handle peace operations through cooperation with regional organizations, such as the EU, NATO, and AU, and said that reforms should enable the UN to work more effectively with gender issues.

### **Closing Remarks**

In his closing remarks, President Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann noted the enthusiasm showed by delegates for entering into serious negotiations about the makeup of the Security Council, saying that "This discussion is central to the future of the UN." The president noted that the General Assembly had agreed to hold three thematic debates on the importance of democratization of the Security Council and IFIs. He also said that the UN must restore the authority of the General Assembly, "the most representative body in the world," through the principle of sovereign equality of all Member States.

*\* This article is meant as an 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.*