



Remarks

by

H.E. John W. Ashe

President of the 68th Session of the United Nations

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Please check against delivery

Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today we are here to discuss an issue that is important to each and every one of you: the question of Security Council Reform. Knowing well the interests and concerns we all share in the singular goal of making progress on this important question, and I am pleased to welcome you to this Debate.

Many of you will recall that, on my election as President of the General Assembly, I emphasized the need to reinvigorate and advance the question of Security Council Reform and I stressed that I would make it a priority.

While this commitment remains solid, the extent of the challenge is not lost on me. My team and I have been unceasingly committed to identifying how to give new life to the established intergovernmental negotiating process on this question. To this end, we held consultations with virtually every interest group on this matter, to ascertain your thoughts and, more importantly, your expectations. Based on the feedback I received, I created an Advisory Group to assist me in identifying ways by which the process could move forward.

Excellencies,

As stated in my letter of October 22 to you the member States, the Advisory Group comprises of the Permanent Representatives of Belgium, Brazil, Liechtenstein, Papua New Guinea, San Marino and Sierra Leone. I would like to clarify that its membership was NOT chosen on the basis of geographical representation. Rather, there were three primary areas of consideration: 1) size; 2) representation of the various interests in the debate; and 3) that its members, ever mindful of their individual or “group” positions, would seek to look past such interests and provide me with advice on how to move the discussions forward.

What is important to note is that the Advisory Group is NOT, nor can it be, a formal part of your established intergovernmental process.

Similarly, this Group does NOT have a negotiating mandate. That mandate belongs to you the member States, in the format of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Group. And, equally important, the Advisory Group does not have a mandate to draft any resolution or declaration or document of any kind.

Rather, drawing upon document 62/557, the discussions that have taken place in the intergovernmental framework, and the content of this debate, the Advisory Group has been tasked with providing ideas to me as President of the General Assembly to help start negotiations that will begin on or about November 15, under the auspices of the appointed Chair, Ambassador Tanin of Afghanistan. It will be my prerogative whether or not to accept the ideas of my Advisory Group and I hope that your deliberations here today will provide them with food for thought.

Excellencies,

In my time at the United Nations, I have presided over a fair number of negotiating processes. None of them can be described as easy, and some were extremely difficult. But they have all taught me valuable lessons. One of these is that when representatives come to the table in a true negotiating spirit, prepared to make the necessary compromises to create an acceptable outcome, negotiations are almost always successful.

Equally true is the fact that where there is no willingness to compromise, negotiations invariably end in failure. I therefore urge that you not let this be the case on this very important item – perhaps the most important item on this Assembly's agenda.

Our United Nations is – and must remain - a place where we reach compromise; a place of accommodation. The essence of the process of negotiations is compromise. Each and every side on this question MUST make concessions if we are to find an acceptable common ground.

Excellencies,

At the start of the our General Debate, I promised you that whenever and wherever true leadership was required, whenever deadlocks must be broken and processes advanced, I

would do my utmost to be resolute, fair, even-handed and unequivocal. The question of Security Council Reform demands that I remain true to that promise and today I wish to assure you that I will.

But I am sure you all understand that in the final analysis, the success or otherwise of your intergovernmental negotiations will ultimately depend on you. The negotiations are your process, and their success depends entirely on how you choose to carry them forward. Whenever I am called upon to assist you I am fully prepared to do so.

Ultimately, we are all stakeholders in the success of the process. I would therefore like to think that after the statements have been delivered in this Debate, and when the time for hard negotiations comes, each of you will be willing to show openness and flexibility. This is absolutely critical if we are to make progress in the negotiations and it is my challenge to you all now: stay focused on the long-term goal and be flexible in this process.

Thank you.