

5 February 2001

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Harri Holkeri,
President of the 55th Session of the General Assembly,
at the Second Meeting of the Open-ended Working Group
on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increasing the
Membership of Security Council and other Matters Related to the
Security Council**

At the outset I should like to welcome all delegations to our first meeting for the year 2001 and to welcome the presence here of the two Vice-Chairmen appointed at our first meeting: Ambassador John de Saram of Sri Lanka and Ambassador Thorsteinn Ingolfsson of Iceland.

I should like to take this opportunity to assure the distinguished delegates gathered here this morning that I shall make every effort to ensure that the work of this Working Group on Security Council reform shall continue to be open and transparent. I look forward to working closely with all of you on this very important subject.

The recommendation contained in last year's Report of this Working Group to the Assembly "welcomed the progress so far achieved in the consideration of the issues dealing with the working methods of the Security Council as provisional agreement has been recorded on a large number of issues".

The Assembly also urged "the Open-ended Working Group to continue exerting efforts during the fifty-fifth session to achieve progress in the consideration of all aspects of the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters related to the Security Council".

The Assembly "further decided that the Working Group should continue its work, taking into account the progress achieved during the forty-eighth through fifty-fourth session...".

The issue of Security Council reform and the need for its composition to reflect the realities of today, in order to make the Council 'more representative and more legitimate', was a theme repeated by many in the Summit and the General debate.

I recall also very vividly the wide ranging views expressed during the General Assembly's debate on this item in November last year and that the commitment to reform was confirmed in the debate.

Furthermore in the Summit Declaration the Member States resolved to intensify efforts to achieve a comprehensive reform of the Security Council in all its aspects.

In my view the Summit Declaration and statements made mean, that there is a renewed willingness by the membership to move forward on this issue.

The Reform of the Council has now been discussed for seven years. While there have been some improvements in the working methods of the Security Council (dealt with in Cluster II issues), a lot still remains to be accomplished.

In the above mentioned debates it was clearly shown that there was a desire to continue our deliberations. The need for reform is still very much a current matter and we need to continue our efforts to attain results. That is, indeed, the task of this Working Group this year.

As in previous years, we shall continue to deal with both Cluster I and Cluster II issues in a similar and balanced manner. The Bureau will do its best to make these discussions as results-oriented as possible. We shall be using conference room papers from the Bureau as one basis for discussion as the need may be.

It is my intention to guide our discussions in such a manner that we can work in a focused and productive manner. This will require that we all come to this Working Group well prepared. Furthermore, I hope that Member States would participate in the discussion at the highest possible level, and I am encouraged to see so many Ambassadors taking part in today's meeting.

At this juncture I should like to deal with the first order of business - to adopt a programme of work. In light of the fact that last year's Programme of Work was acceptable to all and useful in its scope the Provisional Programme of Work the Bureau is proposing for your consideration is identical to that adopted by this Working Group in the last two years. It is a programme of work that will allow us to discuss all issues related to the mandate of this Working Group.

In proposing this programme of work, adopted by consensus last year it is also my hope that we could avoid lengthy procedural discussion on this item.

I should now like to inform you about the scheduling of our future sessions so that delegations can plan and prepare their participation in order to use the time available in an efficient manner.

After this session, we shall also meet on Tuesday and Wednesday afternoons. Furthermore, at this time we envisage our work shall take place during four other sessions. Tentatively those dates are scheduled for 12 to 16 March; 7 to 11 May; 11 to 15 June; and 16 to 20 July. However, this does not preclude the possibility of changes to that tentative schedule.

Now that we have agreed on a programme of work, we can proceed to a general exchange of views. May I just make one remark before I give the floor to the first speaker on my list.

I would like to urge delegations to focus on issues that might help us to bring the reform discussion forward, rather than repeating their earlier statements. I look forward to a fruitful exchange of views.

(Note : The Working Group decided to adopt the Provisional Programme of Work as proposed by the Bureau)

Programme of work

1. Working methods of the Security Council and transparency of its work.
2. Decision-making in the Security Council, including the veto.
3. Expansion of the Security Council:
 - (a) Total size of the enlarged Security Council;
 - (b) Increase in the permanent membership (including issues of extension of the veto to the new permanent membership and permanent regional representation);
 - (c) Increase in the non-permanent membership (including the possibility of an increase, for the time being, only in this category of membership).
4. Periodic review of the enlarged Security Council.
5. Other matters.
6. Report of the Open-ended Working Group to the General Assembly.