

17 June 2008

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Srgjan Kerim,
President of the 62nd Session of the General Assembly,
at the 5th Meeting of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question
of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of
the Security Council and other Matters related to the Security
Council**

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates

Let me begin by commending all Member States for your cooperative and committed approach to the intensive consultations on the reform of the Security Council that have taken place in various formats, including at meetings of the Open-Ended Working Group, since the beginning of the 62nd session of the General Assembly.

As you are aware, as a result of these consultations I received a number of documents reflecting the various positions of groups of Member States on the reform of the Security Council. These documents were discussed in the Open Ended Working Group without reaching agreement.

Excellencies,

An in-depth consultation process has been necessary and essential to identify the negotiables and the framework that will eventually allow intergovernmental negotiations to begin.

This is why I have asked the Task Force to carry out intensive and all-inclusive consultations with Member States and to prepare the document that we are discussing today.

Taking into account all the positions and views expressed by Member States, the Task Force has set out options and recommendations for the way forward on Security Council reform.

In this context however, I would like to mention that after the document was circulated to Member States, I received a letter from the League of Arab States clarifying their position.

I would like to use this opportunity to thank the members of the Task Force for their commendable work on an extremely difficult and complex challenge as well as the open, inclusive and transparent manner in which they conducted the consultations.

Excellencies,

Today, we must consider the comprehensive and all-encompassing assessment contained in “The Report of the Vice-Chairpersons to the President of the General Assembly on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council”, to move the process to the next stage.

I have realized that the seven principles that I introduced at the beginning of this process have helped to shape a common framework, accepted by all, which can assist intergovernmental negotiations in the future.

In retrospect, when considering the progress achieved during the 62nd session, one can say that member states regard these principles as not only providing guidance for moving the process forward but also as a warranty ensuring that, whichever formula may be chosen for Security Council reform, it garners the widest possible political acceptance among the membership.

Allow me therefore to make few comments concerning the implementation of the seven principles.

First, the consultation process has reaffirmed that Security Council reform remains a joint venture among all Member States.

Second, going forward, our consultations towards intergovernmental negotiations should continue to proceed in a spirit of mutual cooperation and good faith.

Third, Member States should also continue to refrain from steps, which could undermine the current momentum and the necessary agreement to reach a timely resolution of this important issue.

Fourth, the consultation process has also reaffirmed that Security Council reform is an integral element of the overall strengthening of the United Nations. In this context, I would like to emphasize that we continue to make progress on Management reform, Mandate Review, System-wide Coherence and in other areas related to the institutional reform of the United Nations.

Fifth, our meeting today reaffirms that the Open-ended Working Group remains the principal body through which our consultations are taking place.

Sixth, it is my belief that the report of the Task Force has achieved the goal of identifying the negotiables through an objective and transparent process, thus paving the way to the next stage of the reform.

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

The report of the Task Force clearly indicates that all Member States, “have expressed their disposition to enter intergovernmental negotiations, some expressing that their preferred positions could lead to compromise options but as an outcome of the eventual negotiations”.

In terms of the options and next steps, many Member States reaffirmed their original positions. However, some have modified and refined their positions to take into account the growing expression of interest to enter into intergovernmental negotiations on a realistic basis.

In addition, there is also a growing recognition of the possibility of pursuing an intermediary approach as the highest common denominator option at this stage of the Security Council reform process.

The report also makes clear that there is a risk of a “no reform” option. However, this would run contrary to the agreement reached by our Heads of State at the 2005 World Summit.

Ultimately, we should not allow the process to plunge into apathy, frustration or impasse.

This is why I would like to reiterate the significance of the report of the Task Force as a general agreement which outlines the negotiables and options that Member States should consider, in order to commence intergovernmental negotiations.

Excellencies,

We can now move forward towards agreement on what is achievable in the near term without excluding any preferred option, to be revisited in the future, at an agreed time, through a mandatory review.

I also believe that while we may continue with the work of the Open Ended Working Group during this session of the General Assembly, this does not preclude the commencement of negotiations.

Furthermore, with the presentation of the report of the Task Force, and in line with the subparagraphs (c) and (d) of General Assembly decision 61/561, we have now achieved the necessary preconditions to begin intergovernmental negotiations during this session once the Report of the Task Force is accepted as a general agreement.

To this end, by mid July, I intend to present the report of the Open Ended Working Group to Member States, including a draft decision to be adopted by the General Assembly.

I would therefore like to call on all Member States to continue to work closely with the Task Force and demonstrate the flexibility necessary in order to adopt such a decision.

Distinguished colleagues,

In concluding, I would like to stress again that I very much count on your continued support and cooperation and look forward to your comments and proposals today.

I thank you.