

18 July 2011

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Joseph Deiss,
President of the 65th Session of the General Assembly,
at the Opening of the Mexico Conference on the UN Security Council
Reform**

Ministers,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to be with you today to exchange views on the Security Council reform.

The concrete orientation of the program of this Conference, which sets out a couple of focused questions, is very relevant. I hope that while answering these questions today, elements will come out, which will be useful to advance the discussion and to feed into the process of the intergovernmental negotiations in New York.

These intergovernmental negotiations are Member States driven and let me stress that, throughout my mandate, I have been welcoming every initiative from Member States that can contribute to moving the process forward. I am therefore grateful to the Mexican government for convening this Conference.

It seems to me that we have indeed reached a point, after about two decades of discussion on the Security Council reform, where the United Nations will lose its credibility unless we find the determination to advance on this issue. This is also the reason why I have set up a Group of Friends, which is not to be seen as a parallel process to the intergovernmental negotiations, but rather as an informal exchange of views that could potentially feed into the overall intergovernmental negotiations chaired by Ambassador Tanin.

Let me turn, at this point, to the question that this first panel will address: Is the United Nations Security Council able, in its current composition, to address the new challenges of the international agenda? My answer is no, but I need to elaborate on this no. There are three main aspects in the question: the ability, the composition, and the new challenges.

I will start with the new challenges. The UN Charter is quite clear. The primary responsibility of the Security Council is the maintenance of international peace and security. I do not see any benefit for the Security Council in diluting its attention from ensuring peace and security and to address economic, social or environmental issues. These are dealt with by other multilateral bodies, such as the General Assembly, the ECOSOC and the G20, and we should avoid creating overlaps and duplications in the global governance system.

Then comes the issue of ‘being able’. As regards this fundamental aspect of global governance that is attributed to the Security Council, peace and security, the answer is yes, the Security Council is able to ensure international peace and security, provided there is willingness within the Member States to take action. Yet, efficiency does not provide for legitimacy. This is the crux of the matter.

This is here that the third aspect of the question, the composition, comes into the picture. Our global institutions need to adapt in order to adequately take into account the political, economic and demographic shift that has been taking place during the last decade, from West to East and from North to South. Many of these institutions date back to just after the Second World War. They have been instrumental in pacifying the world and in increasing prosperity and welfare. But we are now at a historic juncture and a new world order is in the making.

There is no doubt that the UN Security Council has to adapt to the changes that occurred since 1945. There is broad agreement about this. I have not heard any dissenting voices neither in New York nor in any capital or at any international conference that I have attended since the beginning of my mandate.

In fact, while there is general recognition of the need to reform and to enlarge the Council, opinions diverge when it comes to the more concrete questions such as the number of new members, their category, their geographic distribution and the Council’s working methods. To simplify, it seems to me that there are two main positions: Member States in favor of an enlargement of the Council in both categories and Member States in favor of an alternative model, which could be called an intermediate or transitional model.

Is the challenge to reform the Security Council really that daunting? Is there no way to bridge the gap between these two basic positions and to identify the common ground that could lead to a model acceptable for a broad majority of Member States?

I have consulted widely on this topic of crucial importance. I have listened carefully to all of you and I have a couple of observations that I want to share with you. I see them as helpful in reaching a solution that reflects the new realities of today. I would like to group them in five key principles that should guide us.

First: Broadest possible support.

The rules are clear, a majority of 2/3 is needed, and I do not intend to change the rules. But we should be aware that for the solution to work and to be widely ratified, we must rally the broadest possible support within the international community.

Second: Respect for the fundamental values of the United Nations.

The outcome of any reform of the Security Council has to be in conformity with the most basic values and principles of the United Nations in the field of governance. Inclusiveness, democracy, accountability, transparency and subsidiarity: these are core values that the United Nations stands for.

They must also guide our effort and constitute the backbone of institutional reform. An appropriate balance among these core values will have to be found.

Third: Simplicity.

We must seek the best possible model for all parties, but our effort to reform must be realistic and take into account what already exists. The solution has to be simple so that it can be easily understood by politicians, parliamentarians and the wider public and is neither subject to manipulations nor to hidden maneuvers.

Fourth: Efficiency.

The fact is that the Security Council has to act more and more in situations of urgency. Therefore, the reform has to aim at efficiency and the solution has to be workable in every respect.

Fifth: Flexibility.

We should also be mindful not to lock ourselves into a new structure that could soon become obsolete. The world is changing rapidly. Who knows what it will look like in a few years? Flexibility is therefore required and the system should manage to adapt to new developments smoothly and rapidly.

Ministers,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am not proposing or pleading for any specific solution. It is up to you, the Member States of the United Nations, to decide about the direction and the pace of progress. Again, let me stress that I welcome all the initiatives taken by the Member States over the last weeks. These are opportunities to discuss, to seek common ground on important issues and to advance.

The decision to forge the solution ultimately lies with you. I am available and willing to move forward with you on the reform of the Security Council until the end of my mandate. I offer you the principles that I have just mentioned as food for thought and I also offer you the Group of Friends for informally exchanging on this crucial issue.

We must now embark on real negotiations and, if they are to succeed, it is essential that all parties display a constructive, realistic and flexible attitude. I call on you to take up this responsibility. Success in reforming the UN Security Council will be an important contribution to making the global governance system more representative of the new world order and to creating a world that is safer, more democratic, more representative and more prosperous.