GENERAL ASSEMBLY

ANNUAL DEBATE UNDER ITEM 119 ENTITLED
“QUESTION OF EQUITABLE REPRESENTATION ON AND
INCREASE IN THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL
AND RELATED MATTERS”.

STATEMENT
ON BEHALF OF THE UNITING FOR CONSENSUS GROUP
BY

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TO THE UNITED NATIONS

(NEW YORK, 12 NOVEMBER 2014)

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY
Mr. President,

On behalf of the Uniting for Consensus (UfC) Group, I wish to express our appreciation of your new approach to Security Council reform and of your willingness to work in close cooperation and consultation with the UN membership. The first concrete sign of this willingness was in the lead-up to the appointment of a new facilitator for the reform process. We warmly welcome Ambassador Rattray in his new capacity. We are sure he will work with the effectiveness and balance that the entire membership accredits him and wish to immediately offer our full cooperation and support in this new pivotal responsibility.

For the past 20 years now we have been working on Security Council reform, ever since the establishment of the Open-Ended Working Group in 1993. It has been a long journey during which fewer gains than expected have been made. Nonetheless we believe that much has been learned in the process.

The main lesson learned is that divisive solutions are bound to fail and that they risk creating complications and delaying the reform process. If we want to achieve meaningful progress in the intergovernmental negotiations, we need to go beyond our traditional proposals and reach out to the other sides. Only then will we be able to achieve the widest political acceptance required for such a crucial reform.

Moreover, discussions in recent years, including the last round of intergovernmental negotiations, have highlighted the principles that should lead to the reform of the Security Council. We believe that the entire membership shares the goals of a more representative, democratic, accountable and effective Council. But can we agree on how to achieve these goals?

The enlargement of the Security Council is intended to make it more representative. One could, indeed, argue that from a purely numerical perspective, over the years the Council has become less representative of the overall UN membership. But it will take more than an increase in membership to make the Council more representative. It will also require an increased possibility for all Member States to be sitting periodically in the Council. The best way to reach this objective is through an increase in the number of elected seats; a measure that would also make the Security Council more democratic and accountable towards the entire membership.

New permanent seats allocated on a national basis would not make the Council more representative. They would only allow a limited number of countries to occupy seats forever, thus perpetuating the trend by which more than one third of the entire membership has never sat in the Council. Additional permanent seats would create a more exclusive rather than more inclusive Council, and would continue to leave the need for more democracy and accountability unfulfilled.

We also need a more effective Security Council. Accountability and effectiveness go hand-in-hand as the Council's decisions must be fully endorsed by the UN membership. In addition, the UfC wishes to enable Member States that are willing to make a significant contribution to the works of the Council to serve for longer periods and with greater frequency.

We are not asking those who aspire to a greater role in the Security Council to renounce their ambitions. We are asking them, instead, to maintain their level of commitment, and rise to the challenge of a periodic accounting to the membership on their contribution to the maintenance of international peace and security. The UfC believes in a new Security Council based on merit, not privilege.

Mr. President,
For many years now, small States – who represent almost one-fourth of the UN membership – have been demanding a greater presence on the Security Council. Small States are increasingly involved in issues concerning the maintenance of international peace and security as well as old and new threats. Our work should identify ways to ensure that they have direct access to the Council. The UfC also understands the aspirations of African Countries and remains ready to continue working with Africa in promoting equal and non-discriminatory approaches for all groups with regard to their representation on the Council.

Elections, especially for smaller and developing Countries, are the primary instrument through which they can be heard, on an equal footing and with equal dignity. For this reason, we reiterate our call to these same Countries, and, of course, to all Member States to commit themselves to a modern vision of the Security Council and work together towards a Council that is accountable to the entire membership.

Mr. President,

The UfC is the only negotiating group that has already officially tabled two concrete proposals for Security Council reform for the purpose of contributing actively to the negotiating process, and it continues to work on progress and compromise.

We support a compromise solution, a model that we deem fair and equitable, that could reasonably reflect the interests of all. We are ready to discuss such solutions so that they may encompass the legitimate aspirations of the membership. We must explore the middle ground, and to reach this middle ground, we must find a “point of convergence”.

The UfC has been working on a proposal that focuses on the creation of new seats with the possibility of a longer duration on the Council and immediate re-election. In our view, this formula would allow extended periods on the Council for those who have the desire and the capacity to contribute more to its work. The length of the terms and the possibility of immediate re-election offer a broad range of alternatives that could allow us to identify the “point of convergence” that we are striving for.

The UfC remains open to considering also new ideas, in order to bridge the gap with other groups. Consistent with this position, in the past few weeks we have begun a preliminary series of informal meetings with the other negotiating groups to explore possible common ground, and we intend to continue along this path. We are indeed among the first to encourage debate, but without artificial deadlines. The Uniting for Consensus, as most likely all other negotiating groups, does not want to work in a vacuum and waste any more time.

Mr. President,

The UfC heeds, with genuine political openness, the call for text-based negotiations in your letter dated 10 November. We have never closed the door on this formula of work, in fact, we often stressed that we need to first and foremost agree on such a text. As of now, the only valid document that has the support of the whole membership is Rev2 and we are ready to work in this direction.

We are convinced that any future solution to the Security Council reform process will require willingness to compromise and bold leadership. This approach is at the heart of UfC’s commitment. In keeping with Decision 62/557, we shall continue to engage with flexibility and sincere spirit of cooperation for the sake of achieving a comprehensive reform of the Security Council that benefits the entire membership.

Thank you, Mr. President.