General Assembly

Debate on the annual report of the Security Council

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Mr. President

I wish to thank you for having organized this debate devoted solely to the Security Council annual report. The submission by the SC of the annual report to the GA, which finds its direct source in the UN Charter, is the very expression of “accountability”. It is therefore important that we use this meeting to formally discuss the work of the SC and the information provided in its report, in an exercise which, in our view, aims at strengthening the relationship between two principal organs of the UN.

We thank Australia, President of the Security Council, for the presentation of the report. As we see it, the presentation is in itself another opportunity to further underline the main aspects of the Council’s work, highlight its main achievements and also its shortcomings. For the future, we could also use the presentation of the report as a way of encouraging the focus of this debate on selected aspects related to the action of the Council or on particular areas reflected in the report.

Mr. President, as we mentioned recently at the last SC open debate on Working Methods, annual reports serve two purposes: statistical records and information. A considerable part of the report is not meant to be “read”, but, rather, consulted: that is the part of statistical data for historical record and future reference. The other part (which is basically the introduction) should be informative: that’s where there is still much work to do. And we think that it is through more “informative” monthly assessments, particularly on meetings held under consultations, that this part could be substantially enhanced.

Indeed, monthly assessments should try to highlight particularly developments occurred during consultations. We would have a clearer picture of the difficulties encountered and the motivation for action or reasons for inaction of the Council. This, without disclosing the understandable reasons for confidentiality involved. That is why we believe that “Presidents for the month” should continue to be entrusted with the leeway necessary to write their assessments, on their own responsibility, notwithstanding the courtesy practice of consulting with other Council members. A collection of more “substantive” assessments would result in a more “substantive” introduction to the report. Perhaps, even, in a “shorter” introduction, as one could dispense of the detailed information on “public meetings”, which repeats information in the annexes and on which records are publicly available.

In sum, through better assessments one could have more substantive introductions. And, in future GA debates on the report, such as this one, the Council could also suggest particular areas of discussion on which it would welcome comments and observations, while, naturally, not preventing any delegation to comment on the subjects they wish. One way of bringing such focus to the debate would be for members of the Council to raise particular areas related
to the Council's work or to the contents of the report itself, at the public meeting of Council in October, when the report is adopted. Note by the President 507 suggests indeed, in para 74, that members of the Council, who wish to do so may, at the meeting of adoption of the report, comment on the work of the Council for the period covered by the report. (In your presentation made a reference to the verbatim record of such meeting). However, until now, such opportunity has never been seized. And we hope it will, because we believe that such debate in the Council could help inform and frame the debate here in the General Assembly.

Mr. President,

Consultations, together with private meetings account for more than half of the meetings. That means that more than half of the work is done behind closed doors (not to speak of the work of subsidiary bodies). We understand that consultations are useful and they are used also across the UN. However, in an organ with restrict composition, which acts on behalf of the general membership, transparency is key.

We commend the Council for its efforts to hold more public meetings in recent years. “Public briefings”, for example, are now more frequent, or rather, such format became now “the rule” for briefings. But we would suggest that, as a next step, briefings could, usefully, evolve to the format of “debates”, because it would be important that members of the Council can speak publicly (and for the record) after the intervention of the briefer. This would not prevent the Council to hold subsequent consultations, if need be, for reasons of confidentiality in particular aspects, preparation of decisions ensuing decisions, etc.. But this approach would certainly reduce the time and, possibly, the number of consultations, and would thus contribute to increasing transparency and accountability.

We welcome also the recent efforts by the Council - which we hope would become an established trend - to promote interactivity during consultations, in line with note by the President 2012/402. We are sure that these efforts will bear fruits in terms of saving time that could be used for other important Council activities, such as conflict prevention.

Mr. President,

As we touch on conflict prevention, we welcome the fact that the report mentions the recent practice on “horizon scanning”. We think this is a commendable development which finds its reflection in this report. There is a wide consensus on the importance of “prevention” in the “maintenance of international peace and security”. Hence the need for the Council to be kept apprised on early warnings related to situations risking to become conflicts, as well as on new challenges that may threat or have serious impact on peace and security, such as climate change, illicit traffics (of persons, drugs or arms) and pandemics. We saw recently how the Council “reacted” to the Ebola outbreak, while this threat was already in the horizon for some time. So we encourage the Council to devote more time to “scanning” potential threats and new challenges, using appropriate instruments, such as the horizon scanning meetings, in whichever “informal setting” best serves the purpose, and also using relevant “subsidiary bodies” to the effect.

We note the work of the Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa, as described in the report and we commend the launch of the very useful web page with materials related to its work. And we welcome the information contained in the report on the work of the Working Group on Peacekeeping, which we commend for having organized meetings open to the participation of relevant actors and interested troop-contributors states. We believe that the Council would benefit from discussing more in depth the reports of these working groups.

We also note that the Council resorted, in some cases, to interactive dialogues, as reflected in the introduction to the report. While we encourage the use of this tool, which opens “new avenues” for the Council to amplify dialogue, we would welcome more information on these meetings. On the other side, Arria-formula meetings find no reflection at all in the report and we think they deserve mention, because of their importance as “informal and flexible open
format meetings", but also of the relevance of subjects they cover. Such information would give us a better idea of
the concerns relevant to council members and would serve to highlight important aspects related to Council activity.

Finally, let me commend again the Council for its work on improving the working methods, in particular through the
efforts of the WG on Documentation and Procedures, under the leadership of Argentina. We would welcome that the
report would contain more information on this important area. Recently, for instance, the Council adopted an
important note on penholders (Note 2014/268). This note, aimed at enhancing the participation and inclusiveness of
Council members in the decision-making process, represented a breakthrough that has yet to be fully reflected in the
SC practice, including through the establishment of "co-penholdership", which should be encouraged. We hope the
next report will contain indication on penholderships, as well as information that allows us to better understand how
the practice evolved.

In concluding Mr. President, I hope the Council may find useful the observations and inputs made by the wider
membership here today. We would encourage the President of the SC, therefore (whom we thank again for his
presence here), to use the opportunity opened by the Note by the President 2012/922 and report back to the Council
members on relevant suggestions and observations raised during this debate.

Thank you.