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President: Mr. Razali Ismail (Malaysia)

*In the absence of the President, Mr. Erwa (Sudan),
 Vice-President, took the Chair.*

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 47 (continued)

Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters

Mr. Baumanis (Latvia): We are considering today the report and the addendum thereto 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 (A/50/47 and Add.1), which contain 15 reform proposals by Member States, as well as a description of measures already adopted by the Security Council to enhance its working methods and procedures. The two documents together constitute a very useful summary of the current status of the debate on the reform of the Security Council.

The Chairman of the Working Group, President Freitas do Amaral, and especially the two Vice-Chairmen, Mr. Breitenstein and Mr. Jayanama, deserve our deep gratitude for their competent, patient and untiring leadership of the Working Group.

Although initiatives to reform the Security Council have a history as long as the history of the United Nations

itself, the current effort to reform the Security Council is the result of the end of the cold war.

The Working Group has made rather limited progress during the three years of its existence. During the fiftieth session of the General Assembly the Working Group reaffirmed the preliminary agreement reached in the previous session that the Security Council had to be expanded. The Group also agreed on the reasons why the expansion was needed. Views continued to differ on other matters, such as the size and composition of the Council and the right to veto.

The delegation of Latvia believes that the Member States have a collective responsibility to explore all possibilities for using the current partial agreement to reach consensus. When the Group resumes its work next year the time may be ripe to begin a systematic discussion of the procedure for implementing reform, since, in our view, the possibilities for debate on the controversial subjects were essentially exhausted during the preceding session.

One procedural possibility that appears promising to our delegation is a long-term, multi-stage procedure for expanding and changing the composition of the Security Council. The Group could, for example, explore a procedure that would make no changes with regard to the right to veto during the first stage of expansion, but would respond to the new situation created by the many, mostly small, States that have recently joined the United Nations.

Two observations should be made with regard to the proposal for gradual reform. First, a long-term, multi-stage approach is generally recognized as practical with regard to other controversial and complex processes, for example, general nuclear disarmament. Secondly, to arrive at consensus it would be most essential that during the first stage Member States would not need to make permanent and irreversible commitments on the controversial issues — the composition of the Security Council, the use of the veto, and also the ultimate size of the Council.

Our delegation would also like to draw the attention of the General Assembly to the fact that the end of the cold war led to an increase in the number of Member States in the Eastern European Group of States. However, the number of seats allocated to the Group in many United Nations bodies has not changed. In this regard, we support the view of the delegation of Ukraine that

“any expansion of the Security Council should take into account the legitimate interests of the Eastern European regional group, which has more than doubled its membership in recent years”. (*Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-first Session, Plenary Meetings, 44th meeting, p. 2*)

My delegation offers its modest proposals for serious consideration by other delegations and is ready to cooperate with them.

Mr. Abdellah (Tunisia) (*interpretation from French*): Allow me first to pay a tribute to Ambassador Breitenstein of Finland and Ambassador Jayanama of Thailand for their tireless efforts at the head 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. Their perseverance has enabled the Group to overcome many of the difficulties it faced during the past year and to submit to us a report that is, in substance, different from earlier reports.

I also wish to endorse the statement made by the Ambassador of Colombia on behalf of the members of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

The report stresses that the discussions held this year have made it possible better to understand and clarify the questions before the Group. It is also clear that agreement was reached on many points but that on other points major differences remain.

In fact, there is agreement on the need to review the membership of the Security Council in the light of the considerable increase in the membership of the Organization, in particular of the developing countries, in order to make it a more representative body. There is also a need to review the Council’s functioning and its working methods in order to make them more effective and more transparent. There is further agreement on the principles that should guide the reform process, namely, the sovereign equality of States, equitable geographical representation and contribution to the maintenance of international peace and security. In addition to those principles there are also the principles of democracy, legitimacy, effectiveness and transparency.

However, there is also a majority trend that rejects any increase in the membership of the Security Council that would exclude the non-aligned countries. That trend holds that if there is no agreement on the other categories of membership, the increase should affect only the non-permanent members. But let us make no mistake: this does not mean that there is a dominant trend in favour of increasing only the non-permanent membership. It merely means that if the increase in the number of permanent members were to involve only the developed countries, such an increase would be unacceptable.

Of course differences remain, and they have to do in particular with the basic question of the veto. Here again, there is a majority for whom the veto should be, if not eliminated, at least regulated in such a way as to restrict its use.

The report notes the progress made with regard to the second part of the reform, that is, the working methods of the Council. At the urging of the Group, the Security Council has adopted certain measures to improve transparency in its work. However, to make those measures effective they must be institutionalized and backed up by further, bolder steps. Proposals have been made by the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, by the Czech Republic, by Argentina and by New Zealand. We hope that when the Group resumes its work it will give them all due attention.

The high quality of the discussions and the contributions by various States attest to the fact that after three years of intensive, in-depth deliberations ideas have matured. We are convinced that the time has come to move on to a new stage, that of concretization.

Although, owing to what we view as an exaggerated — to say the least — regard for balance, the report gives the same weight to all the proposals submitted during the course of the Group's work, we feel that among them there are some that deserve special attention. I refer to the notion of rotating permanent regional seats. That proposal is not only supported by its sponsors and the countries members of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), which are using it as a basis for claiming two permanent seats for Africa, but by many other countries as well. It is at the origin of other proposals along the same lines, which gives it a more generalized scope that affects other regions. Many believe that this proposal affords a real opportunity for the participation, for the first time, of the developing countries in a club that has heretofore been closed to them.

While we support the accession of Germany and Japan to permanent membership in the Security Council, given their economic and political importance, we believe that Africa, Asia and Latin America, which are under-represented in the Council, should be given seats in the same category as well as in the non-permanent category. That is the whole *raison d'être* of the reform process.

Those who are against an increase in the number of permanent members maintain that it would merely be tantamount to an extension of the privileges of permanent membership. However, by advocating the status quo, are we not attempting to perpetuate the existing imbalance in the Council to the disadvantage of the developing countries?

The concept of rotating permanent regional representation, as developed by Tunisia over the past three years, seems to us best to respond to the new realities of our world, a feature of which is the emergence of regional groupings. The Charter of the United Nations itself encourages regional efforts in the context of the peaceful settlement of disputes. Let us not forget that the Security Council acts on behalf of the Members of the United Nations. In other words, in their decisions the members of the Security Council must take into account the collective interest. We believe that this interest would be better served by the formula that we advocate. The system of periodic elections of the permanent members that this proposal would establish — the candidate being first selected by its region and then endorsed by the General Assembly — would make the decisions of the Council less dependent on the strictly national interests of those members. Looking further forward, all permanent members should be nominated by their respective regions and elected by the General Assembly.

It is difficult for us to imagine a more democratic system, which would involve the participation of all, without any kind of discrimination. Our approach is an important stage in the attainment of the ultimate goal, which remains the establishment of a Security Council that is totally representative and democratic.

Mr. Owada (Japan): At the outset, I wish to offer my congratulations to the President of the General Assembly, Ambassador Razali, on his recent assumption of the chairmanship of the Open-ended Working Group. I should like also to pay high tribute to its two co-Vice-Chairmen, Ambassador Breitenstein of Finland and Ambassador Jayanama of Thailand, for their unflinching commitment and inspired leadership throughout the year.

For the last three years, the entire United Nations membership has been engaged in a soul-searching exercise on how to make the United Nations stronger, more effective, and more responsive to the new international environment born out of the demise of the cold war. The reform of the Security Council, one of the most important items on the agenda for strengthening the United Nations, is vital in this context to the long-range viability of the Organization.

With the end of the cold war, the United Nations has appeared on centre stage as the single most important international institution with the potential for pursuing the interrelated and mutually dependent goals of peace and prosperity throughout the globe. With the dissolution of the bipolar structure of international relations and the proliferation of local and regional conflicts, countries in various parts of the world are turning increasingly to the United Nations — and particularly to the Security Council — for their own security. The question is whether this Organization can live up to this expectation of the world. Unless the Council is thoroughly reformed and reconstituted, it will be unable to meet the challenges that lie ahead. All of us as Members of the United Nations should realize that the Organization is truly at a major crossroads in its 50-year history. If through reforming and revitalizing the Organization, we succeed in realizing the potential that it possesses, the United Nations can truly play a central role in the international order in this new international environment. Thus Japan believes that this is a crucial moment for the future destiny of the United Nations and that we must reject an attempt to indulge in power games based on narrow parochial interests of individual States. If the United Nations simply engages in repetitious debate and proves incapable of reforming itself to adapt to the changing

times, its very credibility could be severely undermined. It is thus incumbent upon the membership as a whole to be tenacious in its efforts to achieve reform.

While the position of the Government of Japan on the question of Security Council reform has been elaborated on previous occasions, I believe it is useful to mention several salient points to which it attaches particular importance. At the outset, let me state once again that our ultimate objective in reforming the Security Council is to create a stronger, more credible Council by enhancing its legitimacy and effectiveness. A package of reforms must therefore be devised which includes the following elements.

First, in order to ensure the Council's effectiveness, a limited increase in its permanent membership should be realized through the inclusion of countries — both developed and developing — which have both the capacity and the willingness to assume global responsibilities for the maintenance of international peace and security. As to the modality for the permanent representation of the developing regions of Asia, Africa, and Latin America and the Caribbean, I am of the view that this might be left to the regions themselves to determine. A rotational representation system might, as an interim arrangement, provide a realistic solution.

Secondly, in view of the dramatically expanded membership of the United Nations as a whole, it is necessary to enhance the representativeness of the Security Council by adding an appropriate number of non-permanent seats. I would emphasize that, in expanding the Council, utmost care should be taken so as to ensure that a balance is maintained between the need for enhanced legitimacy and the need for greater effectiveness.

Thirdly, taking into account the newly created balance in the geographical distribution of States in the world, the geographical imbalance that now exists in the Council as a whole should be redressed, with particular attention given to the regions that are currently under-represented.

Japan wishes to make clear its position that a reform plan must include all three of these elements. Anything less would not lead to our goal of recreating a United Nations capable of carrying out its expected role in the new world. For that reason, the proposal that has been made to increase only the Council's non-permanent membership category would not be acceptable. Japan calls upon Member States to recognize that the reform must be both genuine and comprehensive, and to commit themselves to achieving that objective.

Throughout the four decades of its membership, Japan has consistently committed itself to the United Nations as one of the pillars of Japan's diplomacy. Japan has faithfully provided major financial support to the Organization and has been increasingly active in its participation in the peace efforts of the United Nations in various parts of the world. It has been second to none in the promotion of disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. What is even more important in the present state of the world, Japan is proud to be at the forefront of the initiative to promote prosperity through a new strategy for development, which Japan regards as the number one priority issue that the world faces as we move into the twenty-first century.

Against this background, Japan is grateful for its recent election to a two-year term on the Security Council, and welcomes its membership as an opportunity to enhance its contributions to the work of the Organization. In order to engage more fully in efforts to secure world peace and prosperity, Japan, with the endorsement of many countries, is resolved to work for the United Nations by discharging its responsibilities as a permanent member of the Security Council. I should like on this occasion to express once again my appreciation to those countries that have endorsed Japan in its resolve to assume such responsibilities.

Another important goal of Security Council reform is the improvement of its working methods, particularly in terms of greater transparency and efficiency. Japan believes that this is an endeavour on which the members of the Council and the wider United Nations membership should work together, inasmuch as improved working methods will redound to the benefit of the Council itself as well as to the United Nations membership as a whole. I am pleased to note that the Security Council has in fact introduced helpful changes in this regard. More needs to be done, however. Improving the two-way flow of communication between the Security Council and countries that are not members but wish to be kept informed of or wish to have an input into the work of the Council is an especially important element. It is a task to which Japan intends to devote its energies when it joins the Council next January.

The Open-ended Working Group on the Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Related Matters has been engaged in its task for three full years. Its efforts gained considerable momentum last year during the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations. As indicated in the

report of the Working Group, its discussions during the fiftieth session were

“useful in contributing to a better understanding and increased clarity of many issues involved.” (A/50/47, para. 18)

The fundamental objectives of Security Council reform were reaffirmed and the groundwork was laid for the continuation of its work during the current session.

However, it would be well to remember that we have already been engaged in this exercise for three years. Over this long period of time we have identified the issues, digested them and negotiated on them. We are now in a race with time in our attempt to bring about a genuine reform of the United Nations to match the demands of the new era. In any serious exercise for reform, there comes a moment when we have to move toward a conclusion on the basis of political will. Japan is determined to work with other Member States to maintain the momentum in our work and to build on the progress that has been made thus far in order to reach agreement on the major elements of reform. At the same time, I should like to stress that the Working Group should think seriously about how to come to a conclusion to our exercise. After such a long and elaborate discussion on the many salient issues involved, my delegation believes that the moment of truth is approaching when we, as a collectivity representing this Organization, will have to take a political decision.

The reform of the Security Council is but one part of the threefold effort to revitalize the United Nations; reforms are also called for in the administrative and financial as well as the economic and social areas.

The importance which Japan attaches to the work and purposes of the United Nations is amply demonstrated, I believe, in both the level as well as the substance of its contributions. As such, Japan has been closely involved in efforts to reform the administration and financing of the Organization. Moreover, as the largest donor of development assistance, Japan is taking creative initiatives for the development of developing countries, which represent two thirds of the United Nations membership.

Japan's involvement in the full range of United Nations activities may be expected to increase in the coming years. It is for this reason that my Government attaches such profound importance to genuine and comprehensive reform of the entire system. Only by carrying out reforms in a balanced and organic manner can

the legitimacy and effectiveness of the Organization be strengthened. If we settle for merely a partial reform of the Security Council, we will not achieve our goal of enhancing the legitimacy and effectiveness of the United Nations. This would be most unfortunate for the Organization and, indeed, for all its Member States, including Japan. It would also make it extremely difficult to sustain public support for Japan's increasing level of involvement in United Nations activities. Thus it is my Government's earnest hope that Member States will rededicate themselves to the task at hand, so as to ensure that this unique and precious Organization remains both relevant and vibrant well into the next century.

Mr. Azwai (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Our discussion of the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council comes in the midst of other similar discussions inside and outside this Assembly. The active participation in the debate on this item confirms the fact that this is one of the most important questions for Member States, convinced as they are that any genuine reform of the United Nations would be incomplete unless accompanied by changes in the composition of the Security Council that reflect the realities of today's world.

We are now on the threshold of a new round of negotiations and we are gravely concerned at the major obstacles that have hampered the realization of any concrete progress in this process, in which Member States have been engaged for approximately three years. We are hopeful that the coming consultations will overcome these obstacles and embody the political will expressed by the leaders of the world during the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, as well as their affirmation that the expansion of the Security Council is a basic condition for making its membership more representative and its working methods more transparent.

The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya has explained its position on this item in previous debates here in the Assembly and in the consultations held in the Open-ended Working Group. However, the importance of this question requires us to restate our views once again.

In this context, my delegation believes that the increase in the membership of the Security Council should reflect the considerable increase in the membership of the United Nations. In our view, the principle of equitable geographical distribution should be given priority in this respect, since the current situation reflects an overrepresentation of certain regions while others are

under-represented. This runs counter to provisions of the Charter, in particular Article 23.

In my delegation's view, however, the increase must be limited to the non-permanent category of membership. There is no need for more permanent members, which would only perpetuate the continued discrimination among members of the United Nations. If there is indeed a need for an increase in the number of permanent members, this increase should not be decided in advance because it might limit that category to the rich and the powerful. The right thing to do is to apply to the permanent membership the same principle of equitable geographical distribution, taking into consideration, first, the situation of the under-represented region — Asia — and the regions that are not represented at all among the permanent members: Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean. Once again, my delegation reaffirms the need to select any new permanent members on the basis of a regional perspective and in accordance with arrangements to be agreed upon within each region.

The increase in the membership of the Security Council is dictated by many factors, the most important of which is the large increase in the membership of the United Nations since the last expansion of the Council. In addition, my delegation once again stresses its view that mere change in the composition of the Council will not be sufficient unless it is coupled with drastic changes in the Council's methods of work. Many proposals have been submitted on this matter, some of which have been implemented by the Security Council. However, our impression is that the Security Council continues to be discriminatory in its dealings with Member States. For example, it now holds regular consultations with countries contributing troops to peacekeeping operations, but does not consult with others directly interested in questions under consideration in the Council. This method can only be described as a rejection of transparency and a contradiction of the spirit and provisions of the Charter, and in particular Article 31.

Informal consultations remain the rule, not the exception. Despite the fact that the Security Council has increasingly resorted to open, formal meetings, the discussions in such meetings are not usefully organized. Since the format of the debates in these meetings is determined in advance in most cases, consultations are limited to a small number of countries in a manner tending to confirm the impression that one country, or a few permanent member States exercise exclusive control over decision-making in the Council.

My delegation is fully convinced that many delegations, including those of countries represented in the Security Council, share our concerns. Some have already expressed their views in this respect, calling for the establishment of a rule to guarantee the holding of consultations with countries affected by any question being considered by the Council. In drafting its resolutions, the Council should take into consideration the views of Member States expressed in open formal debates. In our opinion, the Council can implement the improvements suggested. The problem, however, is that certain members of the Council do not want any reform. Their only concern is to maintain the status quo because of the influence it affords them.

Despite all the obstacles set up by those countries in the face of any attempt at reform, we are extremely hopeful that the will of the majority will prevail and that the Security Council will implement measures allowing it to work in a democratic, transparent manner and to establish stronger relations with the other organs of the United Nations, especially the General Assembly, to which it is accountable as the sole organ in which all Member States are equally represented.

The reform process should also include, in my delegation's opinion, total neutrality in the Council's work. The Council should not exercise double standards in the performance of its functions. It should always keep in mind the fact that it acts on behalf of all Members of the United Nations and that it is not the trustee of these Members. The Security Council has to carry out its mandate in conformity with the provisions of the Charter and should not encroach on the functions of other organs, such as the International Court of Justice.

Members of the Council should be cautious and not allow any country to manoeuvre it into approving its own plans and designs. They should remain alert, lest such a country exploit the Council for achieving its own purposes and preconceived objectives. One such country has already done so, having succeeded on several occasions in using the Council as a tool to punish several peoples, including the Libyan people. It prompted the Council to impose sanctions on the Libyan people before exhausting the options for the peaceful settlement of disputes and without resorting to the means provided for in the United Nations Charter for resolving disputes among nations. The United States has acknowledged that its Administration has used the Security Council as an instrument of its foreign policy. This is a clear demonstration of what we have just stated.

A review of the veto power is one of the basic elements of Security Council reform since it has a direct bearing on the decision-making process. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya has always expressed its firm objection to the veto, which invalidates the principle of the equality of States guaranteed by the Charter. It also contradicts values of justice and undermines the principles of democracy. Moreover, it is being abused in the service of selfish interests. Over the years, a few individual countries have adduced many arguments to justify the maintenance of the veto power. We have been told that bearing a bigger share in the budget of the Organization is one of the criteria for permanent membership in the Security Council, and consequently, the enjoyment of the veto power.

This criterion does not stand scrutiny, either logically or factually. There are many countries that could pay more in order to enjoy that privilege. Even if we accepted the validity of this criterion for argument's sake, we might ask how this criterion could be valid for a country whose arrears in its assessments to the budget of the Organization are close to \$1 billion. We are also told that the veto power was granted to countries that bear greater responsibilities for the maintenance of international peace and security. Once again, we ask if this does not run counter to the actions of a certain country that enjoys the veto power and used it to shield itself against condemnation when it committed its treacherous aggression against my country, which had never threatened anybody or acted in a manner to jeopardize international peace and security.

Furthermore, how can we accept the justifications for maintaining this privilege, which is being intentionally used in the service of selfish interest? The same country that depended on the power of veto 10 years ago to protect it from condemnation now relies on it in rejecting, together with another permanent member, all proposals aimed at settling their dispute with my country over what has become known as the Lockerbie crisis. If the granting of the veto power was truly based on greater responsibilities for maintaining international security, the two countries should have accepted the resolution of this crisis through the proper channels by resorting to international agreements and conventions instead of politicizing the dispute then seeking to escalate it by opposing any attempt to lift the sanctions imposed on the Libyan people. They even insist on extending the duration of these sanctions as long as possible. They are trying to punish the Libyan people for nothing more than its decision to live freely on its land, under the sun, and to reject policies of humiliation and attempts at subjugation.

The fact is that the victors of 1945 gave themselves special privileges. However, today's United Nations is different from the that of 50 years ago. One of the most important manifestations of a changed United Nations is that most States represented in this Assembly today were not members of the Organization at its inception and had no say in the privileges granted to five countries. All of this leads us to one conclusion, which my country proclaimed a quarter of a century ago and reaffirms today: The veto power must be repealed. It is no longer acceptable for a few countries to wield a privilege that they use to impose their hegemony on the destiny of the world and to control international decisions, making of this privilege an eternal right similar to the divine rights of monarchs in the Middle Ages.

At the last session, the General Assembly's Open-ended Working Group played an important role. On this occasion, my delegation would like to thank the Chairman and the two Vice-Chairmen of the Group for their contributions to the contents of the report, published in document A/50/47. The Open-ended Working Group will continue its work at this session under the wise chairmanship of the Assembly's President, assisted by his two able Vice-Chairmen. We hope that the Group will benefit from the views expressed during this debate and that its future consultations will lead to a consensus on the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters quickly, successfully and democratically.

In conclusion, we believe that the Italian proposal must be seriously considered, because it contains many noteworthy ideas.

Mr. Ho (Singapore): At the outset, I would like to thank the Co-Vice-Chairmen 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, the Permanent Representative of Thailand, Ambassador Jayanama, and the Permanent Representative of Finland, Ambassador Breitenstein, for their leadership and skill in guiding the discussions in the Working Group.

Singapore's consistent position on Security Council reform was most recently and clearly reiterated in the speech of my Foreign Minister during the general debate on 26 September 1996. I will not repeat what he said at that time; I will instead elaborate on some points arising from this year's report of the Working Group.

Some delegations have expressed concern about the pace of progress in the Working Group. They have expressed disappointment that more has not been achieved. Of course, we all wish that more could have been done. But in fact, while progress has been gradual, it has not been inconsiderable. There is nothing unusual about the length of our discussions or about the fact that there has not yet been consensus on many issues. The Charter was drafted at the end of the Second World War, when its outcome was already clear. War brings a terrifyingly simple clarity to even the most complex political matters. Nevertheless, two of the major victors, the Soviet Union and the United Kingdom, were sceptical of Roosevelt's view of China's ability to play a major role in the post-war world. Churchill's insistence on including France among the permanent members was met with the same scepticism by Roosevelt and Stalin. Today, in a world fraught with post-cold-war ambiguity and complexity, and because the cold war ended without the clarity of the Second World War, it is not surprising that we have not found it easy to decide who should belong to the new elite.

The only previous reform of the Security Council began at the 1956 session of the General Assembly. At stake then was a relatively simple issue: an increase in non-permanent seats. It took seven years to reach agreement in 1963 on this relatively straightforward point and two more years before the agreement came into force, almost a decade after the process began. The lapse of time reflects the political sensitivity of even a relatively straightforward change. This is understandable, because the Security Council is the most important organ of the United Nations, evoking the vital national interests of all members.

It is only by placing this Working Group's discussions in their proper historical context that we are able properly to evaluate the current state of play. Three years is not a long time. The issues that we are discussing today are far more complex than those previously discussed. The international situation in which we operate is also far more complex. Three years is too soon for us to lose patience with the progress made in the Working Group, especially since the first one-and-a-half years were spent in a necessary process of defining the problems and positioning ourselves for a more substantive discussion.

That substantive discussion has only just begun this year. Nevertheless, we have moved forward. This year's report contains broad outlines of what the reform of the Security Council should be. There is broad agreement that reform should be a comprehensive package, including permanent and non-permanent members and developed and

developing countries alike, as well as substantive improvements in the Security Council's working methods.

Moreover, many specific proposals are now on the table, among them the Non-Aligned Movement proposals, the Czech proposal and the Italian proposal, to name just a few examples. To make further progress, our task now is to separate the proposals which are viable from those which may have unintended or less than obvious consequences. We must also clearly identify the political obstacles that lie ahead.

Several Member States, including some of the permanent members, have identified Germany and Japan as among the most qualified candidates in the event there is agreement on expansion of permanent members. At the same time, most of the major Powers, again including the permanent members, have been much less forthcoming on whether Germany and Japan should have the veto. This makes it all the more difficult to imagine that the major Powers would agree to give any developing country the veto, even though there is general agreement that an expansion of permanent membership by only two industrialized countries would be insufficient.

The same stubborn defence of the status quo has also been evident in our discussions on the Security Council's working methods. All but the most superficial and cosmetic changes have been resisted, even though the most interesting and useful proposals would not require any Charter amendment or in any way compromise the authority of the permanent members. This attitude casts a chilling shadow over the Working Group. Changes to the working methods of the Security Council being considered by the Working Group are the most vital issues to the small State majority of the United Nations.

In singling out the positions of the major Powers, my delegation means no more than to emphasize the political complexity and sensitivity of our effort. Our progress is real. Unfortunately, so are the obstacles. These obstacles are real and serious. There are major States and great Powers that have yet to be convinced of the need for real and comprehensive reform. They cannot be ignored or brushed aside.

My delegation's support for a comprehensive reform of the Security Council is on record. We have also maintained that we should make progress where progress is possible. Long-awaited improvements in one area should not be held hostage by lack of agreement in another. One way out of the quandary may be, if there is

no agreement for the time being on the more complex questions, to consider the non-aligned proposal as an intermediate fallback position, bearing in mind that the final outcome of this exercise should be a comprehensive package of reforms encompassing all aspects of Security Council reform. This is one of the reasons my delegation has supported proposals for a periodic review clause. Unfortunately, this is another one of the proposals that have not found favour among the major Powers.

When looking for an interim solution, we should also consider only those proposals that are viable. The proposal for regional rotational permanent representation, for instance, is not viable. Regional rotational representation may work in Africa, but no other region enjoys an established tradition of rotating regional candidatures or possesses a regional organization akin to the Organization of African Unity that encompasses the entire continent. Even the European Union, which professes to share a common foreign and security policy, would not agree to a single rotating representative in the Security Council. My delegation certainly cannot see how regional rotation can work in Asia, where it will almost certainly engender or exacerbate serious regional tensions.

Many delegations, including my own, have raised practical and conceptual questions about the proposal. These have yet to be satisfactorily answered. My delegation continues to have serious questions about the motivations of some non-African countries — and let me stress here that I fully understand the position of the African group. I am referring now only to some members of other regional groups that are pushing strongly for regional rotational permanent representation. Let us beware of the “quick fix” in another guise.

As I have stressed, we have made relatively good progress in a historically short period of time. Let us not be stampeded into hasty or ill-conceived action by an artificial sense of failure. We have not failed.

It is clear that there is a need for a comprehensive reform of the Security Council to prepare it for the twenty-first century. At the same time, we should guard against attempts to force an artificial consensus. Consensus is not unanimity. But to try and rush an artificial consensus on a politically sensitive subject will be immensely divisive and may even permanently hamstring the United Nations. I urge all delegations to continue discussions in a spirit of compromise and patience and to strive for the broadest possible agreement on the reform of the Security Council. Only through this sometimes difficult process of consensus-

building can we build a truly democratic Security Council capable of meeting the challenges of the twenty-first century.

Mr. Baali (Algeria): I would like at the outset to express my most sincere appreciation to the two Vice-Chairmen of the 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, Ambassadors Breitenstein of Finland and Jayanama of Thailand, for the extremely competent manner in which they conducted our deliberations.

I would also like fully to endorse the statement of Colombia as Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement.

These debates provide us today with an excellent opportunity to assess the progress made over the past three years and to reflect upon the prospects for reaching solutions that represent a real breakthrough in our quest for a more democratic, representative and efficient Security Council.

This objective is, alas, still very far away. Instead of making a bold movement towards general agreement on the nature and scope of the reform of the Security Council, our deliberations have in fact revealed irreconcilable differences and insuperable obstacles.

The very fact that the Working Group has limited its report this year to a mere recapitulation of the facts and a recalling of its mandate is quite illustrative of the magnitude of the divergences which have, over the years, become further exacerbated due to the contradictory and sometimes conflicting objectives that the concerned countries have been and still are pursuing.

Mr. Turnquest (Bahamas), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Furthermore, the unanimous and determined opposition of the permanent members of the Security Council to any initiative that might question in one way or another the privilege inherent to their status, as well as their rejection of any change in the use of the veto — despite the wishes of the overwhelming majority of Members States — have led to a situation in which no opening of the Council to new permanent members can be seriously envisaged, at least for the time being, especially since this enlargement is firmly opposed in principle by many delegations.

The discussions within the Working Group have demonstrated in the most evident way that the very idea of creating new permanent seats in the Security Council, with all their ensuing privileges, including the veto, for the benefit of some industrialized countries — which are already overrepresented — was unacceptable and contrary to the mandate of the Group itself.

In this respect, some objections — very valid ones for the most part — have been made in a very determined way against this proposal. Some delegations have rightly argued that the status of permanent member coupled with the veto was fundamentally incompatible with the principle of the sovereign equality of States as enshrined in the United Nations Charter.

Moreover the criterion of economic might, on which some formulas advocating this status are based, unfairly puts aside other valid criteria, such as contribution to international peace and security and promotion of the United Nations objectives.

In other words, accepting this as the sole parameter would be tantamount to recognizing the domination of the Security Council by a small group of rich and mighty countries and would be contrary to the profound aspiration of the international community to establishing a system of collective security in which a reformed, modernized and more democratic Security Council would fully take into account, with efficiency and transparency, the preoccupations and needs of all States, regardless of their size, level of development or economic conditions.

Along with the controversial issue of the possible opening of the Security Council to new permanent members, there is another essential question which raises very important political and practical problems: the veto or the rule of unanimity of the five permanent members. In fact, the question of veto is the core issue, which the Working Group has to address properly if it really wishes to make progress when dealing with the different proposals for enlargement of the Security Council on the basis of respect for the principle of equitable representation and the sovereign equality of States.

Indeed, the important qualitative changes that have occurred in international relations, together with the irreversible move made by the international community towards democracy and the achievement of consensus in multilateral forums, underline with particular emphasis the anachronistic, anti-democratic and unacceptable character of the veto.

It must also be clearly stated that the veto, a tool that was frequently resorted to during the cold war, can by no means be invested with legitimacy after the cold war through its attribution to new permanent members.

Finally, a simple reading of the provisions of the Charter, in particular Article 24, makes clear beyond any doubt that the common will of the international community represented in the United Nations cannot be defeated by a formal or disguised veto.

This means that, since the veto is the core issue, it has to be separated from the status of permanent member if we wish seriously to consider the various proposals aimed at allowing certain States or groups of States to enter the Security Council for a period of variable length and at varying frequencies.

Regarding the use of the veto, it should be recalled that the Non-Aligned Movement has made a reasonable and interesting proposal which represents a moderate and constructive translation of the position constantly reiterated at the various Non-Aligned Movement summits over the last 20 years.

By proposing that, as a first step, the use of the veto should be limited to Chapter VII of the Charter, the Movement has made the abolition of the veto the final objective. It is therefore unfortunate that this proposal, which enjoys the support of a great number of countries, including some that are not members of the Non-Aligned Movement, and which could shown the way for the modernization and democratization of the Council, has not met with approval from permanent members of the Council.

One of the objectives that we are pursuing in the Working Group is the promotion of equitable representation in the Security Council and improvement in its working methods in order to achieve greater transparency and efficiency. The very mandate of the Working Group implies that there is a common understanding on the need to adopt a set of measures that would increase the representative nature, efficiency, transparency and credibility of the Security Council. This means that the real matter on which reform of the Security Council is based is the democratization of that body.

In this respect, the more that countries take part in the conception and creation of reform, the more the viability of these reforms will be ensured. It is therefore

of the utmost importance that from now on the Working Group focus its attention on the concrete proposals made by various delegations or groups of delegations. Between the extreme positions, there is certainly room for some intermediary positions that could be acceptable to many of us. The idea of rotation — contained in the position of the Organization of African Unity, and illustrated in particular in the very attractive Italian proposal and, in a slightly different way, in the proposal of Belize — could, in this regard, be viewed with an open mind.

In this context, the idea, which appeared for the first time in last year's report, that, in case of non-agreement on an increase in other categories of membership, expansion should for the time being take place only in the non-permanent category, represents a pleasing and promising development in the sense that it could give our debates the new impetus that they so badly need.

Mr. Insanally (Guyana): I am once again honoured to address the Assembly, on the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters, on behalf of the member States of the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) that are Members of this Organization.

This item is engaging our attention for a fourth consecutive year. While the pace of the Working Group over that time has occasioned many comments — some not very flattering — CARICOM States remain of the view that the process has been both necessary and useful. For one thing, it has clarified many complex issues and revealed the interlinkages that exist between some of them. The positions of many Member States have also risen closer to the surface and are now much more clearly defined.

As a result of the arduous but substantive discussions we have had throughout the past year, we are now beginning our deliberations on this item with a much better understanding of the task before us. As we continue to seek agreement on the many outstanding issues, we welcome the new President of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session as Chairman of the Working Group for the present session with the certainty that he will guide and inspire us in the search for a positive outcome. At the same time, we would like to place on record our appreciation of the work done by the President of the General Assembly and Chairman of the Open-ended Working Group during the fiftieth session, His Excellency Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral. We are extremely grateful also to our two Vice-Chairmen, Ambassador Breitenstein of Finland and Ambassador Jayanama of Thailand, for their strong

dedication and guidance throughout the past year, and for their preparation, with the assistance of the Secretariat, of the Working Group's report and annexes as contained in documents A/50/47 and A/50/47/Add.1. We are pleased to note that both of these excellent men have agreed to continue as Vice-Chairmen for this session. Their combined leadership will be fully supported by all CARICOM member States.

As observed in the report of the Open-ended Working Group, broad consensus now exists on the need to reform and revitalize the Council. There is wide, if not universal, agreement on the need to expand the membership of the Security Council as well as to further improve its working methods. What we must do now is decide upon the modalities for enlargement to provide for equitable representation without sacrificing the efficiency of the Council.

Such expansion must be based on the principle of the sovereign equality of all States Members of the United Nations, and take fully into account the interests of all Members. As small States in our region, we will insist on our right to sit on the Council and to make our contribution to the cause of peace and security. Several of our members have served in the past with distinction and we believe that we can play an even greater role in the future.

Given the prevailing mood to democratize the Council, it is not surprising that a substantial majority of Member States, constituted largely by the Non-Aligned Movement and including CARICOM countries, would prefer to see an increase only in the category of non-permanent membership. Nor is it strange that many countries dislike the discrimination that permanent membership and its privileged right to the veto represent. Ideally, and understandably, we would prefer to see, as in 1965, an enlargement of the non-permanent membership to make it adequately representative of the Assembly today and make the work of the Council more open and legitimate. At the same time — this has also been called for by the Non-Aligned Movement — we would hope for the use of the offensive veto to be severely restricted and eventually abolished.

A sense of realism tells us, however, that this may not be acceptable to everyone at this stage, and that some compromise may be necessary if we are to move forward. We therefore remain open to proposals that may bring about consensus without flouting the basic purpose of resolution 48/26. In this spirit of cooperation, we think

that the Working Group would do well to turn its attention more closely to those documents before it that record the many ideas that have been generated in the process. We ourselves consider that several of the suggestions that have emanated from Member States, such as Italy's proposal for rotation and the thoughts of Belize on shared seats, are of considerable interest. These States have taken the trouble to research the issues, and the least we in the Working Group can do is make a proper evaluation of their ideas. The proposals for rotation and shared seats may yet hold the answer to the problem of ensuring democratic representation without creating an unwieldy and ineffective Council.

That, in essence, is our thinking on the procedure that in our view is likely to advance our progress in the months ahead. It is one that allows us the freedom to reflect further — in strict fashion, of course — on proposals already made, as well as to consider new ideas that may emerge as the process continues. I hasten to add that this process need not detain us unduly if we adopt a thematic approach — dealing with the problem issue by issue, with each one as compartmentalized as possible — rather than following a seriatim approach, dealing with each proposal in turn. Of course, we are prepared to consider any other route that can command consensus. Our paramount concern is that we should act with an urgent sense of responsibility to reform the body that is so important to global peace and security in the post-cold-war era. Admittedly, this is a task that we cannot hurry, since it requires profound and serious consideration. At the same time, the circumstances of the world today do not, in our view, allow for much delay in restructuring the United Nations to fulfil the requirements of its membership at this particular time.

The CARICOM countries are persuaded that these two approaches must be reconciled and a middle course found that would satisfy all our underlying concerns. Perhaps, as has been suggested before, this could prove acceptable if some form of periodic review could be provided for in any agreement that is eventually reached. Any such negotiated arrangement would therefore be a temporary and transitional measure, subject perhaps to readjustment after a reasonable period of time, say by the year 2015. In this fashion, Member States may be reassured that they will not be forever locked into a position of compromise, but will have the opportunity to revisit the issue at a later stage. In this regard, it is our fervent hope that this provision — or something similar — will give us the courage to break out of the current impasse and to reform the Council in the not too distant future.

Mr. Westendorp (Spain) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I would like to begin by expressing my delegation's appreciation to Mr. Freitas do Amaral for the commitment, skill and tenacity with which, as President, he guided the previous session, as well as the work of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council.

I would also like to extend my appreciation to the two Vice-Chairmen of the Working Group, Ambassador Wilhelm Breitenstein of Finland and Ambassador Asda Jayanama of Thailand, who have jointly presided over our work with great efficiency, thus helping us make progress.

In the past year the Working Group has held a host of meetings, and Member States have made many contributions and submitted many proposals. We thus have solid and varied documentation that provides a very useful basis for the continuation of our work during the current session. Now we must discuss these proposals in greater depth and try to move towards compromises that allow us to reach conclusions enjoying very broad consensus among Member States.

On various occasions Spain has pointed out that Security Council reform is a very complex matter that needs to be thought out carefully and carried out on the basis of dialogue conducive to understanding among all Member States. In such an important and serious matter, it is crucial to seek consensus.

This is the only way we can ensure that the reform enjoys the legitimacy it needs. A reform built by a mechanical majority that leaves aside a significant minority of Member States could seriously harm the Organization.

Spain believes that in addition to the principle of legitimacy to which I have just referred, it is important that this reform also reflect two fundamental principles: efficiency and representativity. Some proposals that have been put forward are flawed by overemphasis on one principle or the other. We must therefore incorporate as much as possible of both. We believe that the proposals submitted by Spain meet this aim.

I would like to recall that my country favours a moderate increase in the membership of the Security Council. This would undoubtedly make the Council more representative, more balanced and more democratic, while

at the same time preserving a composition in line with the Council's need to respond efficiently and swiftly in its deliberations and decision-making process.

Spain believes that such an increase would allow for a more frequent presence in the Council of States that have a legitimate aspiration to participate more frequently in the work of the Council, as well as of other States that, because of their importance and influence in international relations and their ability and will to contribute significantly to the maintenance of international peace and security, could make an even greater contribution to that end.

During the Working Group's meetings this year, Spain put forward a concrete proposal on some objective criteria, based on the principles established by Article 23 of the Charter, as a basis for a possible system to allow for the more frequent presence of a group of States in the Security Council. These criteria, which do not preclude others that might be proposed, have to do with contributions of military, police and civilian personnel to United Nations peacekeeping operations; financial contributions effectively paid to the Organization's budgets; and population levels. Logically, the criterion of equitable geographical distribution set out in Article 23, paragraph 1, of the Charter, would also be maintained. This would help bring about greater participation in the Council by all Member States and would establish a more equitable system than the one we have now and would make the Council more efficient. It would also be objective, and thus acceptable to all Member States.

At the same time, Spain introduced a specific proposal on the question of adapting the decision-making system in the Security Council. This proposal tried to combine the swiftness and flexibility needed in taking decisions that directly affect solutions to problems under consideration and the need to avoid taking hasty decisions with insufficient information or support from the parties concerned or the international community.

For these reasons, on the basis of the distinctions established in Article 27 of the Charter, Council decisions could be divided into three categories: procedural matters, which would be decided by an absolute majority; substantive matters not relating to Chapter VII, which would require a special majority, with no exercise of the right of veto; and substantive matters relating to Chapter VII, which would require the same special majority, but with the possibility of exercise of what is known as the right of veto.

In conclusion, the Working Group already has ample documentation and concrete proposals. We cannot yet say that there are areas on which decisions can be made, as the report before us shows.

However, the Working Group's report also shows wide support for certain proposals, such as the institutionalization of measures to improve the Council's working methods and transparency in its activities; the modification of the decision-making process; and the proposal by the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries that, in the absence of agreement on the increase of other categories of membership, expansion should take place only, for the time being, in the non-permanent category.

My delegation believes that the Working Group should continue its deliberations during this session to try to identify points of consensus, especially on those issues that have shown the greatest progress. In this context, I would like to assure the Assembly that the Spanish delegation will continue to participate actively in the work of the Working Group and will lend all necessary cooperation to the presidency so that we can move ahead towards consensus with the joint efforts of the entire international community.

I would like to reiterate that this process must seek the broadest possible support of Member States. This is the only way to guarantee the legitimacy of this reform. In my view, this objective is more important than mere haste. In a classic Spanish play, the main character says to his valet: "Dress me slowly. I'm in a hurry", which brings to mind the Latin proverb: "*Festina lente*" — hasten slowly. Some have compared this process to a moving train that we cannot miss. I agree, but it is equally important not to leave behind on the platform the passengers who wish to continue participating in this common venture of all nations.

Mr. Rovenský (Czech Republic): The Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters has been active for the past three years. Its deliberations have attracted the wide attention of the Member States. Its discussions have been far-reaching and detailed. They have encompassed all aspects of Security Council work.

Many interesting proposals have emerged from this lively debate with regard to the future composition and working methods of the Council. They offer a rich selection to choose from and, as a next step, the Group

should do just that. It should begin with the selection process. It is clear that many proposals, especially those aimed at improving the Security Council's working methods and transparency, have received wide support in the Working Group and, with the goodwill of all concerned, their adoption should not pose a major difficulty.

For practical reasons, let us separate proposals that would require Charter amendments from those that would not. Numerous delegations have voiced the view that many of the proposals aimed at improving the Security Council's working methods and transparency and its relationship with non-members of the Council and with other principal organs of the United Nations — proposals that have, by the way, enjoyed overwhelming support — could be implemented by means other than Charter amendments. They could therefore be adopted without unnecessary delay.

It is, in our view, desirable that the Open-ended Working Group submit recommendations concerning changes in the composition and working methods of the Security Council before the end of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. This is an achievable goal.

Let me now briefly recapitulate the salient features of the Czech position on the reform of the Security Council. We support an increase in both permanent and non-permanent seats, while insisting on safeguarding rapid and effective Security Council action. We recognize that an inordinate increase in the number of permanent and non-permanent members would hinder the effectiveness of the Council. Therefore we advocate a modest expansion in both categories. We oppose new categories of Security Council membership under whatever guise they may be proposed.

The criteria for new permanent members of the Security Council should include, *inter alia*, their level of commitment to maintaining international peace, promoting development and meeting financial obligations towards the United Nations. We believe that Germany and Japan are suitable candidates and support expanded representation of Africa, Latin America and Asia.

As far as the reform of Security Council working methods is concerned, several proposals have been submitted, including the Czech proposal for a broader interpretation of Articles 31 and 32 of the Charter that would enable non-members of the Council to participate in its discussions. This proposal was elaborated further, especially by Argentina and New Zealand, and has received wide support from Member States. We hope that it will be included in the recommendations that the Open-ended

Working Group will eventually submit to the General Assembly.

Finally, let me express my delegation's support for the report of the Open-ended Working Group, which we find to be a concise and accurate description of the activities of the Group at the fiftieth session of the General Assembly. We endorse the recommendations contained therein. We thank Ambassador Breitenstein of Finland and Ambassador Jayanama of Thailand for their excellent work as co-Vice-Chairmen and assure them of our continued support.

Mr. Nobilo (Croatia): At the outset, I would like to take this opportunity to convey my delegations's deep appreciation to the Vice-Chairmen 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, Ambassador Breitenstein of Finland and Ambassador Jayanama of Thailand. They have steered the discussions of the Working Group in an excellent manner. Additionally, I would like to express my gratitude for the wise guidance of the previous Chairman of the Working Group, Ambassador Diogo Freitas do Amaral, and to wish Mr. Razali good luck in presiding over the deliberations of the Working Group.

Since the Security Council has primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, discussion of the composition and working methods of the Council is a matter of extreme importance and gravity. Therefore, any recommendation or decision on this subject should only be made after careful and extensive deliberations that take into account the opinions and suggestions of the widest spectrum of United Nations Member States.

However, after some three years of deliberation on this matter in 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, we have come to a crossroads, at which we had to decide whether these deliberations are to bear fruit or whether they have largely been for naught. We have to date heard a wide variety of opinion; further discussion without concrete proposals would be counter-productive and would only serve to shut the window of opportunity for carrying out meaningful reform. We must now look beyond narrow State interests and seize this opportunity to present concrete proposals

and to try to build the necessary consensus in order to put them into effect.

In this regard my delegation believes that if agreement on all the issues concerning Security Council reform cannot be reached, then we should try to take action on those matters on which there is agreement. This relates especially to issues regarding the working methods of the Council. These issues should not be held hostage to other issues on which there is no wide-spread agreement. Matters regarding the working methods of the Council on which there is agreement should be presented as recommendations to the Security Council with a view to having them institutionalized.

There is almost unanimous opinion that the transparency of the Security Council needs to be increased. It should be noted that there have been recent improvements which have increased the transparency of the Council, such as the Council President's regular briefings to non-members of the Council. We wish to commend this initiative; however, it is our firm opinion that much more can be done in this regard.

My delegation is of the opinion that countries which host United Nations peacekeeping troops should participate in the meetings that the Security Council holds with troop-contributing countries. Croatia, as a troop-hosting country, believes that mutual benefit would be derived from such a policy. The Republic of Croatia also shares the view expressed by many States that Article 31 of the Charter of the United Nations should be interpreted in such a way as to allow United Nations Member States which are not members of the Security Council to participate in discussions during informal consultations of the Council on questions which directly affect them.

It would seem to us only fair that States which are directly affected by Security Council decisions should be able to present their positions at relevant meetings of the Council. In addition to that, an exchange of views between these States and members of the Security Council in the early phases of the decision-making process should lead to better mutual assessment of the situation in question. This would help the Council make better-informed decisions and would facilitate the implementation of those decisions.

In terms of the composition of the Security Council, the Republic of Croatia wishes to state once again that it favours an increase in both the permanent and the non-permanent categories of membership of the Council. The increase in size of the Council should not be such as to

affect negatively the efficiency of the work of that body. Therefore, we are of the opinion that the total membership of the Council should not exceed 25, although we do not view this number as a non-negotiable limit, but rather as a general target.

Croatia believes that Germany and Japan, due to their firm adherence to democratic principles and to their active and valuable involvement in the interest of maintaining international peace and security, deserve to be permanent members of the Security Council.

My delegation also views favourably proposals that countries from Africa, Asia and Latin America should be among the permanent members of the Security Council, with possibly one permanent member from each of these three regions. Permanent membership for these regions should be considered not only in order to ensure equitable geographical distribution, but also because countries from these regions have significant political and economic influence and have played a constructive role in international affairs, including peacekeeping. Croatia would, of course, respect the decision reached by States from these regions as to how they would prefer to be better represented in the Council.

With regard to the duration of the terms of both new and present permanent members, my delegation believes that the adjective permanent should not be taken literally. We support the view that there should be a review mechanism, whereby the status of permanent members would be considered every 10 to 15 years.

It is difficult to discuss an increase in the permanent membership of the Security Council without at the same time reflecting on the power of the veto which the permanent members enjoy. The Republic of Croatia wishes to reiterate its general position that there should be a limitation of the right and exercise of the veto. However, since it is highly unlikely that the power of the veto will soon be abolished, the Republic of Croatia believes that the proposal to require at least two vetoes to be cast in order to nullify a Security Council resolution deserves serious consideration. This proposal would be even more appropriate in a Security Council with an increased number of permanent members. Additionally, it is our opinion that the scope of the veto should be limited only to enforcement measures under Chapter VII of the Charter.

My delegation also wishes to reiterate the need to keep the interests of small States in mind when

considering the enlargement of the Security Council. We are of the opinion that a mechanism should be established by which small States would be guaranteed a voice in the Council through a balanced rotation of non-permanent seats, in keeping with the principle of the sovereign equality of States.

I wish to stress, in conclusion, that the time has come for us to formalize those recommendations on Security Council reform that have wide support among States Members of the United Nations. Future meetings of the Working Group dealing with the reform of the Security Council need to focus on this matter. We are at the point where the repetition by Member States of established and well-known positions serves no useful purpose. Rather, the time has come to act, lest we risk losing the present opportunity.

Sir John Weston (United Kingdom): It is three years since we started this present exercise of enlarging the Security Council: three years during which we have discussed the issues fully, clarified the key concepts, and developed innovative proposals to enhance the Council. It is three years also in which the Council, partly in response to the suggestions of the General Assembly and the Working Group, has improved its own working methods, enhanced its transparency to the benefit of non-members, and strengthened its links to troop contributors. It is also three years in which, despite our agreement on the need for enlargement, and despite the commitments made at the fiftieth anniversary celebrations, we have yet to enlarge the Security Council, an enlargement which is, after all, the objective of the Working Group's mandate.

The positions of Member States on the issues before us are now clear. We have before us many interesting proposals, including those of Tunisia and Norway, which could be developed further. As the British Foreign Secretary, Malcolm Rifkind, indicated in the general debate, the time has come to move from the discussion of principles to the discussion of proposals, and from repetition of well-known points to serious negotiations. Another year of general debate will not help us; nor will it help the United Nations.

I venture to assert that we already have a wide measure of agreement in the General Assembly on the manner in which we should enlarge the Council: first, certain countries, by virtue of their political, economic and diplomatic weight, deserve to be offered permanent membership of the Council. We welcome the wide support

offered in this respect to Japan and Germany, here in the Assembly debate and also in the Working Group.

Secondly, there is agreement that the representation of developing countries in the Council should be enhanced.

Thirdly, there is agreement that the process of organic, evolutionary change in the Council's working methods, which has enhanced its transparency, should continue.

Above all, the Council must remain effective and efficient, able to react quickly and decisively to threats to international peace and security. That, for us at least, means that the Council must remain of a workable size, and that any enlargement must be kept modest to, say, 20 or 21 seats. The Council is and must continue to be an action-orientated body, not a debating club, not a parliament, not a recreation of the General Assembly.

In closing, I pay tribute to the work of Ambassador Breitenstein and Ambassador Jayanama, the co-Vice-Chairmen of the Working Group, and to their efforts, both formal and informal, to move our discussions forward. We also pay tribute to the President of the General Assembly and to his own personal commitment to the cause of reform. We pledge to work with him and with the co-Vice-Chairmen for an early and successful conclusion to our work to give us a modern, effective Security Council fit for the new millennium.

I would end with a footnote. While we should not judge countries' contributions to the United Nations solely by their budgetary contributions, it is important that we stick to the facts. Therefore, despite what one of my colleagues suggested yesterday in this debate, let me place again on record that the United Kingdom is and expects to remain the fifth largest financial contributor to the assessed budgets of this Organization, currently paying 5.32 per cent on the regular budget and 6.6 per cent on the peacekeeping budget scale. Any delegation requiring confirmation of this can easily obtain it from our colleagues in the Secretariat.

Mr. Gnehm (United States of America): The United States is very pleased to contribute to today's debate on agenda item 47, "Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters".

Discussion in the Open-ended Working Group, under the guidance of our two very able co-Vice-Chairmen, has proven very useful. Although final consensus continues to elude the Working Group, there have been some important accomplishments this year. In its report to the General Assembly, the Working Group reaffirmed its agreement to explore ways of reforming the Security Council in a manner which

“strengthens its capacity and effectiveness, enhances its representative character and improves its working efficiency”. (A/50/47, para. 16)

In this vein, discussions in the Working Group again demonstrated that many delegations share the United States view that permanent membership for Germany and Japan is a *sine qua non* of Security Council reform. The overwhelming support Japan received in the vote for a non-permanent seat for the 1997-1998 term clearly underscores the appreciation of the international community for Japan’s record of constructive global influence and its capacity to sustain heavy global responsibilities. Germany has demonstrated similarly impressive global leadership during the time it has served on the Security Council. Japan and Germany would both be valuable new permanent members whose contributions would strengthen the Council; indeed, I must emphasize that the United States could not agree to a Council enlargement that did not entail their permanent membership.

The United States would also accept a modest expansion of the Council beyond permanent seats for Germany and Japan, while keeping firmly in mind the need to maintain the Council’s working efficiency. We do not wish to destroy the Council in the process of attempting to enhance it. Beyond Germany and Japan, additional membership remains a substantial question. While the United States takes no position on how other seats might be apportioned, we believe the total size of the Council should not exceed about 20 members.

Moreover, we would not agree to any change in the status, powers and obligations of the current permanent members, all of which are countries with global political and economic influence and a capacity to contribute to peace and security through concrete measures on a global basis.

Discussion in the Working Group has touched upon broadening participation in the Council by developing countries. A new and interesting element in the discussion this year was the introduction of creative proposals by a

number of delegations concerning the concept of permanent regional rotational seats. This concept, in our opinion, is both positive and constructive, and deserves careful consideration; we certainly hope the Working Group will explore it further.

We remain committed to openness, transparency, responsiveness and dialogue between the Council and non-members. In fact, the Council has shown itself to be more flexible in adapting its working methods to achieving these goals than perhaps any other United Nations body. This year, many more open debates were held on issues of wide interest prior to Security Council consideration of the respective subjects. The daily Council agenda was published with greater detail than ever before. Troop contributors’ meetings continued to be held, with special emphasis on doing so before Council consideration of actions on peacekeeping mandates. The Presidents of the Council have also sought regularly to brief Member States on Council deliberations, and we certainly did so quite frequently during our presidency. We remain open, as the need arises, to consideration of further procedural changes to enhance the Council’s transparency and efficiency.

We welcome the strong interest which the President of the General Assembly has demonstrated in the issue of Council expansion and reform, and we also welcome his stewardship as the Working Group’s Chairman.

Mr. Erwa (Sudan) (*interpretation from Arabic*): At the outset, I should like to thank the officers 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 for their efforts, which are reflected in the report before us. We should also like to thank the Secretariat for facilitating the work of the Working Group.

Reform of our international Organization, and specifically the Security Council and its working methods, is an issue on which all the States Members of the United Nations agree, because the Security Council continues to play a role that affects many matters of interest to the international community and peoples throughout the world. My delegation therefore believes that the efforts to reform the Council should proceed from the principles of the United Nations Charter, most important among them the principle of the sovereign equality of States.

Mr. Azwai (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The Charter is the standard by which all calls to reform the Council should be measured. In its work, the Council should conform to the principles of the Charter.

All previous speakers have reaffirmed the need for the Security Council to work in a more transparent and equitable manner. They have said that its membership should truly reflect the principle of democracy. The Charter states that the Security Council acts on behalf of the Members of the United Nations, and they in turn expect this to be reflected in the resolutions the Council adopts. It is regrettable that the actual situation in the Council is otherwise. The activities of the Security Council have been characterized by cloaks and daggers, and by secret meetings. Its resolutions lack justice and objectivity, and have become a battleground for the settling of accounts between some Council members and other States. The Security Council has been exploited. It has become an instrument to punish States and peoples, even though the Charter provides that the Security Council should be used to settle disputes by peaceful means.

My delegation believes that the first priority in reforming the Council is to make it more representative of the world's current reality. The Security Council was set up in 1945, when the United Nations had 51 Members. At that time, the Council numbered 11 members. The reality of the world situation in 1963 — with the membership of the United Nations reaching 112 States — dictated an increase in the size of the Council to 15 members. Today the membership of our Organization is 185. Therefore, the membership of the Council should be increased in a just manner which takes into consideration that all previously colonized States are now independent, fully sovereign States with the right to participate in decision-making and in the maintenance of international peace and security.

In this regard my delegation agrees with the Malaysian proposal for an increase in the membership of the Council on a regional basis, with each region choosing its representative according to set criteria. In this way, the primary role of those States would be to represent their regions. Such a proposal, which would put an end to the practices of some States, which seem to believe that their membership in the Council is an honour attaching to them alone, and which do not even bother to consult with other States of the region they represent.

In seeking to obtain greater transparency in the Council's activities, we should review the Council's tendency to hold many informal meetings during which items are considered and draft resolutions formulated, and then to take these draft resolutions to formal meetings which are merely official occasions to read out the previously agreed-upon decisions. My delegation would support the proposal to apply Article 31 of the Charter to informal meetings of the Security Council, in order to allow States concerned with an issue before the Council to participate in informal meetings of the Council on that issue — thereby achieving justice and equality for all parties to the dispute.

My delegation also reaffirms the need for further and wider consultation between members of the Security Council and all the other Members of the United Nations, in particular when the Council is considering action under Chapter VII of the Charter. Such expanded consultations are needed because resolutions involving such action have effects that go far beyond the States concerned, affecting entire regions and sometimes areas beyond them as well.

My delegation believes that, as part of the reform of the Security Council, there is a need to promote and improve the relationship between the Security Council and the General Assembly, especially when Chapter VII is involved. This is because the General Assembly has wider representation, and because many aspects of Chapter VII fall within its purview.

My delegation also calls for promoting better relations between the Security Council and regional organizations. We believe that the Council should expand its efforts to seek the opinions of both the General Assembly and regional organizations, in particular on matters involving Chapter VI and when peaceful solutions to disputes are being sought as a way of maintaining international peace and security.

My delegation believes that the Security Council should limit itself to political and security issues. It should not take up legal issues, which fall under the purview and mandate of the International Court of Justice.

The veto power was dictated by conditions which no longer prevail in our world. It is no secret that the veto runs counter to the Charter principle of equality among States. It runs counter to the principle of a democratic organization. Proceeding from this, my delegation calls for the abolition of the veto. This would be a means for

achieving justice and equality in the activities of the Organization and of the Security Council in particular.

Calls for democracy must not be used to impose double standards and selectivity. If our intentions in this regard are genuine, we must all commit ourselves to serving, in deeds and in words, the principles of democracy.

In conclusion, my delegation believes that the Working Group has not achieved the desired progress because some countries insisted on maintaining their privileges. We call on the Working Group to accelerate its activities to achieve its objectives so that the Council can no longer be used as an instrument in the hands of some to punish others, to impose double standards and to be selective in the drafting and implementation of resolutions.

Mr. Wisnumurti (Indonesia): The Indonesian delegation looks forward to working closely with Mr. Razali, when, as President of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly, he will preside over the deliberations 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. We would also like to avail ourselves of this opportunity to extend our felicitations to the two Vice-Chairmen of the Working Group on their re-election.

At the outset, my delegation wishes to associate itself fully with the statement delivered by Colombia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, which stressed the importance attached to this question and the urgent need for democracy and transparency in the Council's functioning.

To the credit of Member States, it must be said that since the initiation of deliberations in the Working Group mandated to consider the question of an expansion of the Security Council and related matters, earnest endeavours have been made to resolve the large number of contentious issues. This was made possible to a great extent by the submission of proposals which have contributed to a better appreciation of the diverse positions that prevail among us. In turn, this has laid a solid basis for further work towards the reform and revitalization of the Security Council, which we all agree is long overdue and cannot be postponed indefinitely. Yet our future direction is far from clear and self-evident, due primarily to the interplay of a complex set of factors and policies that have not always been conducive or responsive to the legitimate demands and expectations of our times.

It is therefore pertinent to ask how long the international community can countenance the present untenable status quo; what the reasoning is behind the stated preference of some Members for the present state of affairs over changes in the composition of the Security Council and its decision-making processes; and whether we are genuinely committed to a Council that would reflect the undeniable realities of the contemporary world.

It is clear that success in our endeavours to revamp and to revitalize the Security Council will be elusive if the key issue of an increase in permanent membership is not accorded the consideration that it warrants. Regrettably, this question has often been portrayed, erroneously in our view, as leading to the expansion of an exclusive club and to the creation of new centres of power and new regimes of privilege without responsibility. However, new permanent members from developing countries would be committed to dispelling such misperceptions by assuming the onerous obligations inherent in such a status, especially in respect of maintaining international peace and security. Thus, insulated from power politics, they would be committed to safeguarding the collective interests of the global community. They would accord priority to resolving conflicts through dialogue and negotiations — the use of force being the last resort. They would seek a democratic process of decision-making through consultations with the parties involved in disputes and other interested countries, and would thereby enhance channels of communication. They would act impartially and objectively to ensure that the Council's decisions were based on fairness, equity and consistency. And they would endeavour to establish a joint working relationship with the General Assembly and other bodies, and would seek to involve the membership at large more closely in the work of the Council.

It should also be acknowledged that some of the developing countries seeking permanent membership have earned their rightful place through manifold contributions to the purposes and objectives of the United Nations, especially in the field of security and peacekeeping, and because of political and economic realities, proven competence in conflict prevention and resolution, the promotion of regional harmony and the building of an edifice of confidence and concord.

In our view, the Security Council can no longer remain stagnant and unresponsive to the changed and changing milieu of the contemporary era. The time has therefore come to move away from anachronisms inherited from the past, to seek changes in conformity

with the passage of time and the evolution of events, and to introduce a new balance in the composition of the Council.

In this regard, Indonesia believes that an increase in the permanent category should reflect the will and interests of the developing countries in conformity with the present realities and the changed international context. Consequently, an increase that failed to include non-aligned and developing countries would be inequitable, would further widen the chasm between these States and the developed nations, and would not redress the geographical imbalance that already exists. It is pertinent to note that, contrary to some assertions, none of the developed States seeking permanent membership can be said to have received endorsement at both the regional and the global levels.

My delegation deems it essential that concerted efforts should continue towards resolving the question of new permanent members under a comprehensive expansion package that would also include non-permanent members. A partial solution to this question in utter disregard of the need for a comprehensive package would seriously undermine our endeavours for a more balanced, representative and legitimate Security Council, and would hence be unacceptable.

My delegation is already on record as having expressed its doubts and reservations concerning new types or categories of membership in the Security Council for the ostensible purpose of providing increased opportunities for an undefined group of States. These proposals are fraught with serious ambiguities, are of doubtful efficacy and practicability, and would unduly restrict the scope and dimension of the reform process.

The concept of regionalism in particular would deprive the General Assembly of its jurisdiction in electing members. The credentials of candidates should be open for scrutiny by the wider membership. Regional representation would fuel irritants that have so far been submerged in the broader interests of regional amity. It might even sharpen regional animosities where they exist. Further compounding the problem is the question of reconciling national and regional interests and the practicability of designating one or two countries, given the diversity and plurality of organizations in some regions in terms of capabilities, political inclinations, and economic and social factors. We should not confuse the concept of regionalism enshrined in Chapter VIII of the Charter with the concept of regional representation in the Security Council, as they have distinct

characteristics and implications. Hence, the regional approach would not substantively ameliorate the current inequities and imbalances in the Security Council.

Indonesia has consistently supported an appropriate increase in the non-permanent category in view of the dramatically expanded membership of the United Nations. Such an increase, based on the guiding principle of equitable geographical representation, has become imperative as under-representation is incompatible with the ongoing process of democratization.

With regard to the working methods and practices of the Security Council, the changes that have been introduced have had the beneficial impact of enhancing the relationship between the Council and the general membership. We have noted in particular the briefings by the President of the Security Council to non-members of the Council; meetings between the members of the Council and troop-contributing countries; consultations between the President of the Council and Member States interested in disputes which are under consideration by the Council; and more frequent formal meetings of the Security Council to address specific situations or issues of importance to the international community.

While many of these procedures and practices constitute encouraging developments, their importance has been magnified; they are far from meeting the requirements of transparency, accountability and democratization. Thus, what it has been possible to achieve are improvements of a marginal nature that do not address the core issues. Hence, there is still a long road to travel. Much more needs to be done, particularly in institutionalizing many of these procedures and practices.

An adequate working relationship between permanent and non-permanent members has long been acknowledged to be an essential prerequisite for the Council's effectiveness. In both formal sessions and informal consultations, non-permanent members have made positive contributions in promoting the peaceful resolution of conflicts. Thus, the permanent and the non-permanent members collectively share a sacred trust and act on behalf of the other Members of the Organization. This should be buttressed by a constructive search for consensus on difficult and controversial issues.

Finally, as regards the question of veto, Indonesia has associated itself with the position of the Non-Aligned Movement, as submitted by Egypt in March 1996. Its

retention would erode the trust and confidence of the Member States in the integrity and objectivity of the Security Council. The principles of equity, equality and legitimacy also call for its elimination. Its exercise, which ensures an exclusive and dominant role for a few powerful nations, is also incompatible with the ongoing endeavours to reform the decision-making processes of the Security Council.

In conclusion, Indonesia deems it essential for the Working Group to continue its endeavours in fulfilling the task entrusted to it by the General Assembly. We therefore support the recommendation contained in its report for a continuation of its work during the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. Considering the critical issues that impinge on the vital interests of all Member States, my delegation urges caution rather than hasty decisions, in view of the ramifications for the future of the Security Council.

Mr. Didi (Maldives): Our Foreign Minister has conveyed to His Excellency Mr. Razali Ismail the formal congratulations of the delegation of Maldives on his election to the post of President of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session. However, as this is the first time that I am speaking in plenary, I wish to add my own congratulations on his well-deserved election to this high post. Speaking for the Maldives delegation, I am happy to assure the President of our full cooperation. We extend our wholehearted support to the effective manner in which our proceedings are being conducted.

The Maldives is glad to have been among the 10 Member States whose request in 1979 led to the original inclusion in the agenda of the General Assembly of the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council. Seventeen years have passed since its introduction. However, it was only in 1992 that the General Assembly decided to initiate action under this item. Since then, many different views have been expressed by States Members of this Organization under this roof as well as by interested individuals elsewhere. Today, the question of increase in the membership of the Security Council has gained the momentum it deserves.

We fully realize that any change in the composition of the Security Council will also necessitate the consideration of several other matters, including the necessary amendments to the Charter, the role of the veto as at present and the decision-making process of the Council. Similarly, the issues relating to permanent membership, transparency in the work of the Council and the relationship between the Council and the General Assembly are equally

important areas that concern the membership of this Organization — viewed, perhaps, from different angles by various countries and groups of countries. How to achieve “equitable representation” itself is a delicate issue because its interpretation is likely to be different among Members, even in the same geographical group.

The task is a formidable one. The Maldives delegation appreciates deeply the untiring efforts of the Open-ended Working Group since its establishment in 1993 to put together all the components that make up the issue. We would like to see the process result in reform that would make the Security Council more representative, democratic and transparent. We would be reluctant to see the United Nations become a corporate body in which only the rich and powerful decide issues. The world has changed, opening up numerous opportunities and formidable challenges. The time is propitious to enhance and to reinvigorate the principles of sovereign equality and fair participation enshrined in the Charter.

Many heads of delegations have expressed their views on this subject during the general debate. Some have endorsed, or aligned themselves with, the proposals put forward by others. None of them seem to disagree that there is an urgent need today to reform the Security Council. However, as the General Assembly took up consideration of this item more than a decade since its inscription on the agenda, we do not feel that its urgency should now cause it to be dealt with hastily, at the cost of the intended results. Nevertheless, my delegation does not wish to see the discussions on reform prolonged, for the momentum of the reform process cannot be maintained indefinitely. While what reality dictates cannot be ignored, discussions must be continued until consensus has been reached on all important aspects. These should include the basis of rotation of non-permanent members and fair representation of all Members of this Organization, taking into account in particular the interests of less advantaged and small States such as my own. It is we who have to turn to the Security Council for our security. It is for countries such as ours, for whom, if I may quote our Foreign Minister,

“the United Nations is extremely important in safeguarding our sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity”. (*Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-first Session, Plenary Meetings, 27th Meeting, p. 7*)

In conclusion, my delegation would like to stress that although we have not been able to actively participate in the proceedings of the Working Group, we would like to commend the Chairman and the two Vice-Chairmen for their perseverance and dedication towards producing a formula acceptable to all. We would also like to appeal to them, and to those Members that are most active in the Working Group, to be mindful of the concerns of all States, including smaller ones, as the Group proceeds with the reform discussions in the spirit of enhancing legitimacy and democratic values within the United Nations in general and within the Security Council in particular.

Mr. Buallay (Bahrain) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Since the creation 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, as provided for in resolution 48/26 of the General Assembly of 3 December 1993, many positive steps have been taken that can guide us in defining the main parameters of this important issue. Many opinions and proposals have been deliberated upon during the Working Group's meetings. We also note that the Security Council itself has taken many steps to improve its working methods and procedures.

The stated views of States during the past period indicate near unanimity on the need to improve United Nations bodies, including the Security Council, the Organization's nerve centre, in order to increase their effectiveness and representative character. These opinions were crystallized in the historic Declaration on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations adopted on 24 October 1995, when Member States and observers committed themselves to a United Nations for the twenty-first century, equipped and financed to enable it to render effective service to the peoples on whose behalf it was established. The Declaration stated that:

“The Security Council should, *inter alia*, be expanded and its working methods continue to be reviewed in a way that will further strengthen its capacity and effectiveness, enhance its representative character and improve its working efficiency and transparency.”
(*resolution 50/6*)

The Declaration reflected the desire of the international community to review the activities of the Security Council 50 years after the birth of the international Organization. All issues that have arisen and events that have taken place on the international scene since the creation of the United Nations must be taken into

consideration, particularly the important changes in international relations and the considerable increase in the membership of the United Nations. We should define a new concept for the twenty-first century which would take these new conditions into account and would be commensurate with them.

Any observer of the activities of the Working Group will note agreement among all States on the need to expand the Security Council membership in the light of the considerable increase in the membership of the United Nations, which grew from 51 Members in 1945 to 185 today. It is necessary now to ensure wider participation, and the opportunity to participate in Security Council deliberations as members must be given to all States.

It would be desirable for the expansion of the Security Council not to compromise effectiveness or efficiency in the Council's work. Therefore, this issue must be studied very carefully in order to strike a balance between increasing membership on the one hand and effectiveness on the other.

My delegation views with satisfaction the measures already adopted by the Security Council to improve its working methods and procedures. These include briefing non-members of the Security Council on Council deliberations and discussions. These issues are of interest to all States. We hope that the Council will continue this policy of openness — perhaps by publishing a monthly programme of work and by holding as many open meetings as possible. We recently witnessed such a trend, when the Council held open meetings to consider a number of urgent issues, and thus enabled non-members to contribute to its debates. In addition, we believe that further statements from the Council would be of benefit to all.

The Working Group's report to the General Assembly indicates that the Group took up the following five essential issues: the working methods of the Security Council; the size and composition of the Council; decision-making in the Council, including the veto; amendments to the Charter; and periodic review of membership and Security Council activities. These are very important and complicated issues, as shown by the many proposals put forward by Member States, some of which conflicted with, if not actually contradicted, others.

The substantive deliberations and consultations of the Working Group showed the following. First of all, the issue is multi-faceted, because of the many details that

have to be taken up. It is not limited solely to membership and other related issues as it would seem at first glance. Secondly, there is currently a balance in the membership of the Security Council which took many years to achieve. It would be difficult to change that balance without an alternative that was acceptable to all. Thirdly, the Working Group with its current membership cannot effectively take up all aspects of the issue unless subgroups are created to take up each element individually.

In the light of the experience of the Working Group to date, it is clear that the most important factor for the Group is time, as well as the trust of Member States. Member States must be patient; this is not an easy subject to deal with in a short period of time. We therefore believe that the Assembly should adopt a draft resolution renewing the Working Group until the next session, as has been proposed.

Proceeding from its belief in the central role of the Security Council in the maintenance of international peace and security, and from its belief in the importance of giving an opportunity to all Member States to participate in the Council, the State of Bahrain has put forward its candidature for membership of the Security Council for the period 1998-1999. Bahrain hopes to contribute to the implementation of the tenets and principles of the United Nations, and we hope the international community will support our candidature.

Mr. Gorita (Romania): For the third consecutive session, the General Assembly is examining the agenda item entitled "Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters". The work done since the last session, particularly the inter-sessional consultations under the able guidance of Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral, President of the fiftieth session of the General Assembly, and the decisive contribution of the two Vice-Chairmen, Ambassador Breitenstein of Finland and Ambassador Jayanama of Thailand, has been conducive to important clarifications on matters such as the lines of convergence that exist and major differences which still remain, as reflected in the report of the Open-ended Working Group on this subject.

The report of the Working Group, so carefully negotiated and pondered, may not necessarily reflect the considerable efforts put into this crucial endeavour throughout the year. But the report definitely offers a useful basis for future consultations and negotiations, to which we are all committed, because now we have a clear picture of what is and what is not acceptable to Member States.

My delegation closely followed the debates of the Open-ended Working Group on Security Council reform and offered its own contributions to that work.

From the very beginning of this exercise, we have seen this vital issue for the United Nations membership from both the perspective of equitable representation in and enlargement of the Security Council and from that of developing additional measures and procedures for its working methods within the existing framework of the United Nations Charter. Such an endeavour is closely interrelated with the whole process of United Nations reform and adaptation to present and, more importantly, future challenges.

From the inception of our own work on this issue, my country offered a set of comments and suggestions in its official reply, in accordance with resolution 47/62.

At the same time, the process of consultations, which identified a core of ideas, made us more aware of the complexity, special interests and, consequently, the difficulties of finding a solution that is both equitable and pragmatic. As for the results achieved so far, it is definite and particularly positive that important efforts — in terms of measures and procedures within the existing framework of the United Nations Charter and the United Nations Security Council rules of procedure — have been initiated and are currently under way. They concern the improvement of the work of the Security Council in terms of transparency, greater openness to the entire membership, and its relationship and interaction with other United Nations organs, especially with the General Assembly and with peacekeeping operations. The Security Council has already taken initiatives and put into practice some ideas and measures resulting from the extensive process of consultations related to the so-called Cluster II issues. Thus, a genuine process of interaction in this area was initiated and is currently under way. The United Nations Security Council itself took some positive initiatives, welcomed afterwards by the Open-ended Working Group.

The issue of the enlargement of the Security Council membership is proving to be far more complicated. As for the ways and means of realizing the imperative of ensuring a larger and more equitable representation of the membership of the Security Council, Romania, at the very beginning of this exercise, pointed out that any change in the composition of the Council must necessarily provide the most favourable conditions for the Council to perform its responsibilities under the United Nations Charter,

while maintaining and even increasing its efficiency. On that occasion, the Romanian Government supported a moderate increase in the composition of the Security Council. We encourage the efforts to reach an agreement and we favour increasing the membership of the Council up to a total of 25.

With regard to the eligibility criteria for membership in the Security Council, we consider that, in general, the provisions of Article 23, paragraph 1, of the United Nations Charter, namely the contribution to the maintenance of international peace and security, as well as equitable geographical distribution, are still valid. The first one justifies the importance given in the debates of the Working Group to the specific contribution of every State to United Nations peacekeeping operations and related activities. Our delegation does not consider that a special debate is necessary to discuss in detail the Charter's provisions with regard to multiple criteria and their possible classification for assessing a Member State's capacity to exercise its mandate as a Security Council member.

For these reasons, we continue to believe that Germany and Japan could be considered legitimate candidates for the Council's permanent membership category.

At the same time, in the spirit of equitable representation, the possibility of permanent membership should also be open to countries in developing regions in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Regarding the proposals submitted for the non-permanent member category, we think that the Italian initiative reflects genuine and legitimate interests and concerns, and suggests a flexible approach that merits examination. We also consider that in assessing the distribution of new seats for elected members in the Security Council, the balanced representation of all regional groups of the General Assembly should be taken into consideration. Romania reiterates the legitimate need to ensure at least one additional seat for the Group of Eastern European States, which, in the last few years, has more than doubled its membership.

Our responsibility for ensuring a more representative and stronger United Nations Security Council in the future is particularly important for the overall process of United Nations reform. That is why our delegation considers that a sense of urgency should prevail in our work. We have to make more tangible, practical progress on this crucial issue in the near future.

Finally, I should like to reaffirm my delegation's spirit of openness and its full cooperation in the efforts to achieve the anticipated results.

Mr. Maximov (Bulgaria): On behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Bulgaria, I should like to express our sincere appreciation of the fact that the President will be guiding the deliberations 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 during the current session of the General Assembly. We share the expectations of previous speakers that under his able guidance and with the assistance of the two Vice-Chairmen, Ambassador Breitenstein of Finland and Ambassador Jayanama of Thailand, the Working Group will achieve concrete results in 1997.

Bulgaria shares the view that the ongoing discussion on the reform of the Security Council in the framework of the Open-ended Working Group is of supreme importance to the future of the United Nations. We continue to offer our support and contribution to this important exercise. It is our strong belief that, in the spirit of cooperation, it will be possible to reach consensus solutions, enabling the Security Council to meet the challenges of modern times in a most effective manner.

An increase in the membership of the Security Council should be directed at enhancing its capabilities in the discharge of its duty to maintain international peace and security. We support the search for an appropriate balance between the need to increase the membership of the Council due to the growth in United Nations membership over the past few years and the need to ensure effectiveness and efficiency in its work. In this process, it is indispensable to ensure that the number of non-permanent members is increased in a manner that will maintain both the ratio between permanent and non-permanent members and a broadly representative proportion among the regional groups. In this context, we are studying carefully all proposals, including the one put forward by Italy, that aim to change the principles of rotation of non-permanent seats; of the right of veto; and of the so-called enemy States, which results from the Second World War, as well as other ideas that could serve as a basis for reaching consensus.

In practical terms, this should ensure that States carrying considerable weight in the international political and economic arena — Germany and Japan for example — as well other influential countries in regional

and global terms, could assume the responsibility of permanent status in the Security Council. An additional non-permanent seat should be designated for the Group of Eastern European States. It would be appropriate to recall once again that this regional group has more than doubled its membership since the last enlargement of the Council in 1965, while the overall number of the United Nations Member States has increased by about 50 per cent over the same period.

We greatly appreciate the steps taken by the Security Council towards improving its working methods, aimed at increasing transparency and at the wider involvement of non-member States. This pace should be maintained also by devising mechanisms for considering the positions of States concerned with an issue, and of neighbouring countries, at an early stage of the decision-making process. Possible contributions by regional organizations or mechanisms should also be considered in arriving at an adequate settlement.

Consultations are necessary when the Council is discussing the imposition of economic sanctions. It appears to be a widely supported view that increasing the transparency of the functioning of Security Council sanctions committees should also be continued.

In conclusion, I wish to assure the Assembly that my country is sincerely committed to contributing actively to the important process of reshaping the world Organization to be better able to meet the challenges of our age. Without any doubt, the reform of the Security Council is a major element of this joint effort.

Mr. Ngo Quang Xuan (Viet Nam): As the fifty-first session of the General Assembly comes immediately after the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, the emphasis on striving for more rapid reform is natural. This session is therefore immensely significant, and we will have to work even harder to achieve the targets we have set in our reform effort, lest we lose the precious momentum of that event. We are truly encouraged by the determination expressed by the President of the Assembly to push forward the reform process. I should also like to express the high appreciation of my delegation to the two Vice-Chairmen 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, Ambassadors Asda Jayanama of Thailand and Wilhelm Breitenstein of Finland, for their great efforts in contributing to the advancement of our tasks.

In order to play its role and to function adequately, the United Nations must be drastically reformed to enhance representative values and to democratize and make transparent the working procedures. The key to democratizing the whole system is to reform the Security Council and to enhance the authority of the General Assembly. This is a very complex and difficult task that requires utmost caution and perseverance.

The General Assembly needs to be revitalized so that it can enjoy the highest authority within the system. This body is truly the most representative of all United Nations organs. Only when it can operate as the most powerful body, giving guidance to other parts of the system — including the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and the various United Nations funds and programmes — can we achieve a democratic United Nations. This achievement would enable us to reduce the current abuse of power by a minority of countries and would enhance respect for the most fundamental principle of the United Nations Charter: the principle of sovereign equality.

The vast changes in the international political scene over the past few years have made reform of the United Nations bodies, and the Security Council in particular, a necessity. The expansion of Council membership is now an urgent demand. The membership of the Council is now so at odds with the growth of the general membership of the United Nations and with geo-economic and geo-political realities that the legitimacy of the decisions of the Council is in jeopardy. The Security Council depends for its effectiveness on the commitment and contribution of Member countries, so it is essential that it engage in genuine joint decision-making if its moral legitimacy is to be retained.

We share the view expressed by various delegations that the task of reforming the Security Council is one of the most crucial and difficult parts of our comprehensive reform platform. Although the majority of the United Nations membership can agree on the indisputable need to renew the working methods and the structure of the Council, including a reasonable enlargement of its membership, it is still very hard for Member countries to agree on ways to achieve these aspirations. We are afraid that this task will take a lot more time and energy than most of us expected. However, the task cannot be shelved if the United Nations is to be turned into a true democratic instrument in the service of all Member countries.

We agree that there are now certain differences of opinion amongst Member countries, particularly with regard to how the Security Council should be expanded. However, we believe that a moderate addition to both permanent and non-permanent seats on the Council would win much more support from a large majority of Member countries. We have always laid emphasis on the need to give additional seats to the developing countries so as to redress the current imbalance in representation in the Council. Reform of the Security Council must accommodate the genuine interests and concerns of the developing countries, which form the overwhelming majority of the Organization.

In our view, the criteria for new permanent members should be equitable geographical representation, political and economic strength, and the commitment and capability to contribute to the purposes of the United Nations — namely, the promotion of peace, security and development, both globally and regionally. The most important consideration is that reform must be undertaken on the basis of the agreed principles, in particular the principle of consensus, so that it reflects to the fullest degree the common aspirations and expectations of the vast majority of Member States and the interests and concerns of all geographic regions.

Various proposals have been put forward, including those of Tunisia and other African countries, Belize, Norway, Italy, Malaysia and many other countries. Our delegation believes that these proposals deserve serious consideration and study by Member countries. True consensus may be obtained through our determination to build upon these premises. Negotiations always demand determination, flexibility, compromise and respect for the genuine interests and concerns of all parties involved. The work of the Working Group on this subject must be further enhanced.

Our delegation is confident that the United Nations will be able to arrive at a suitable resolution of this issue that is acceptable to all countries and peoples. We need to accelerate our efforts to this end, but a hasty deadline should not be imposed.

Once again, we wish to express support for the working paper introduced by the Non-Aligned Movement with respect to the veto power and the democratization of the decision-making procedures of the Security Council.

In conclusion, I should like to reiterate that since the last review of the composition of the membership of the Security Council was undertaken over a quarter of a

century ago, the enlargement of the Council has become long overdue. We must therefore exert every effort to turn that body into a truly democratic tool that can represent the overall membership of the United Nations. Concrete measures to replace the current rhetoric are urgently called for. The future of the United Nations itself is at stake if we cannot break the deadlock on this crucial issue.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): There are no further speakers in the debate on this item for this meeting.

I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

May I remind members that, in accordance with General Assembly decision 34/401, statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and five minutes for the second and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Ferrarin (Italy): In relation to the statement this afternoon by the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom, in which he referred to a point in the statement made by my Ambassador yesterday regarding the scale of contributions, I would like to point out the following. The Permanent Representative of Italy, in his statement yesterday spoke of:

“the emergence of a group of countries with considerable economic and political capacities, including Italy, which by 1 January 1998 will be the fifth largest contributor to the United Nations budget” (*Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-first Session, Plenary Meetings, 44th meeting, p. 11*)

This point made by the Permanent Representative of Italy is based on a United Nations document, WGFS/19 of 21 June 1995, which gives estimated figures for the scale of assessments as of 1 January 1998.

Mr. Manley (United Kingdom): I just wish to note that I believe the document in question refers to the European Union proposals on reform of the scale of assessments, a worthy objective in itself. I think, as my Permanent Representative stated earlier, we were referring both to the scale of assessments for the regular budget and to that for the peacekeeping budget. Under that scale of assessment, even under the European Union proposals

the United Kingdom would continue to be the fifth largest contributor to the United Nations, and very proud of it.

Mr. Turnquest (Bahamas), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Programme of work

The Acting President: I should like to announce some additions to the programme of work of the General Assembly which appears in document A/INF/51/3/Rev.1/Add.1.

I should like to inform members that on Tuesday, 12 November, in the morning, the Assembly will consider agenda item 56, entitled "The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina", as the second item. On Thursday, 14 November, in the morning, the Assembly will consider agenda item 42, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity", as the fourth item. On Wednesday, 20 November, in the morning, the Assembly will consider agenda item 41, entitled "Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies". The lists of speakers for these items are now open.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.