



## Security Council

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### **Letter dated 8 February 2021 from the Permanent Representatives of New Zealand and Switzerland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council**

We are writing on behalf of the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency Group regarding the working methods of the Security Council. The Group, comprising 25 Member States<sup>1</sup> from all regional groups, promotes a more transparent and efficient United Nations. Advocating Council working methods that meet higher standards of efficiency, as well as accountability and inclusion towards the wider United Nations membership, and promote greater effectiveness is a priority of the Group.

The Accountability, Coherence and Transparency Group acknowledges the unprecedented nature of the challenges posed by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) crisis pandemic for the day-to-day work of the Security Council and its working methods. We congratulate the Council and the successive Presidencies since March 2020 for ensuring business continuity during this period and adapting its working methods while ensuring minimum standards of transparency and inclusion.

As we approach one year since the disruption and drastic alteration of Security Council working methods as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is clear that the crisis is far from over and the functioning of the Council will continue to be affected for months to come. In this context, the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency Group encourages the Council to revisit and continue to improve upon the adaptations that it has made thus far. At the same time, there is an opportunity to reflect on and look to embed COVID-19 adaptations that better serve the transparency, efficiency and effectiveness of the Council with a view to their continuation when we return to normal circumstances and to future-proof the Council against the risk of other crises or pandemics.

#### **Further adaptations related to coronavirus disease**

In order to implement these commitments and efforts further, the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency Group invites the Security Council to:

- Decide that virtual meetings of the Council are formal meetings. Include all videoconference meetings being held as per the Council's mandate on a formal

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<sup>1</sup> Members of the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency Group: Austria, Chile, Costa Rica, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Gabon, Ghana, Hungary, Ireland, Jordan, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Maldives, New Zealand, Norway, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Portugal, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland and Uruguay.



Council programme of work, list the meetings in *the Journal of the United Nations* and have the normal record-keeping, etc., by the Secretariat apply

- Agree on an updated process that allows the Council to vote virtually and in real time on both substantive and procedural matters, in line with Article 27 of the Charter of the United Nations and the provisional rules of procedure
- Explore ways to enable video and/or direct participation by non-Council members in virtual open debates. No matter their exact modalities, we recall that one of the *raison d'être* of open debates is to give the opportunity to the wider membership to be informed of Council deliberations. We trust that the Secretariat will provide the necessary technological support to enable this to take place
- Enhance the participation of civil society representatives, in particular women and youth, in virtual meetings
- Increase efforts to agree to press elements after every virtual meeting of the Council in order to enhance the transparency of the Council's deliberations
- Promote dialogue and interaction during the Council's closed consultations, in pursuit of more focused and action-oriented outcomes, as per the "New Year Resolutions" put forth by Tunisia and the United Kingdom
- Continue the practice of organizing, under the leadership of the Council's Presidency, virtual information and interaction sessions with Member States on the Council's programme of work (briefing on the programme of work), as well as on the Council's activities during the month (wrap-up session)
- Ensure that wrap-up sessions are held in a format that allows substantial discussion and interaction with non-Council members
- Display on the Council's website a President's addendum to the programme of work, containing the meetings of the Council's subsidiary bodies and any informal Council meetings not included on the programme of work
- Make available to the wider membership in a timely manner any documents agreed to by the Council regarding the adaptation of its working methods in the context of COVID-19

The Accountability, Coherence and Transparency Group welcomes Council members' efforts to steer international action in the field of international peace and security through this unprecedented global crisis as per the Council's mandate. Creativity and initiatives by Council members to this end are very much encouraged, and the leadership of successive Council presidencies in driving innovation will be continuously needed.

### **Beyond coronavirus disease**

The Accountability, Coherence and Transparency Group welcomes the renewed focus that the crisis has brought to the issue of working methods. We invite the Security Council to seize this momentum as an opportunity for wider reflection on working methods, including how to embed relevant improvements made under COVID-19 so that they continue during normal times, in particular:

- Continue to allow the direct, virtual participation of briefers and representatives of Member States who are unable to travel to New York
- Harness the full potential of technology, for instance by exploring the possibility of receiving more dynamic virtual briefings or conducting virtual Council visits to the field as a complementary instrument of existing and established physical visits

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- Continue the practice of the President of the Council circulating a letter to the membership containing a compilation of all statements made at each open Council meeting
  - Ensure consistency in the implementation of “note 507” and of the notes most recently adopted
  - Institutionalize the practice of the incoming President issuing a letter at the start of its Presidency on working methods for the month, including concrete commitments that it will pursue to enhance the effectiveness, efficiency, inclusivity and transparency of the Council’s work
  - Institutionalize the practice of analysing and discussing the comments and observations made by Member States during the general debate on the Annual Report of the Security Council to the General Assembly, considering that the discussion of such a report by the General Assembly is an open issue in its agenda, pursuant to resolution [51/241](#) of 22 August 1997
  - Share more equally between members responsibilities in Council matters, in particular when it comes to drafting Council products and the chairing of subsidiary bodies
  - Improve the working methods of the Council’s subsidiary bodies

The Accountability, Coherence and Transparency Group stands ready to contribute to the process of identifying lessons learned from the crisis, to participate in open debates on working methods and to support the work of the Security Council Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions in this process.

*(Signed)* Pascale **Baeriswyl**  
Ambassador  
Permanent Representative

*(Signed)* Craig J. **Hawke**  
Ambassador  
Permanent Representative

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