

Discussion on 5 Clusters of UNSC Reforms
Wednesday 13 December 2023
Remarks by Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj

We thank the Permanent Mission of Kuwait and Austria for organizing this early FIRST round of IGN discussions in December itself, a testament to the urgency of addressing the burning issues related to the reform of the UN Security Council in a comprehensive and holistic fashion. We align with the statements delivered by G-4 and L-69 this morning and wish to make the following additional remarks in our national capacity.

2. We do acknowledge the initiatives taken by the re-appointed co-Chairs Kuwait and Austria with regard to webcasting and opening of a website repository in the last IGN cycle and reiterate our appreciation for the incremental efforts of the Co-Chairs. However, we continue to believe that the

need to take credible steps to instill new life in the discussions on the reform of the Security Council, as reflected in the commitment made by our leaders in the UN 75 Declaration remains unfulfilled.

3. We will do well to recall that this past September, during the High-Level Week, the UNGA heard unequivocal calls for comprehensive and meaningful reforms from more than 85 global leaders. These calls must be answered. We must all realize that the clock is ticking and turning the other way in the face of global challenges is just not an option for multilateral institutions rarely die. They simply fade into irrelevance.

4. Here I take the opportunity to highlight that this year, upon India's

initiative, the African Union became a permanent member of the G20 at the New Delhi Summit in September, thus ensuring that an important and valuable voice from the Global South is added to an influential institution of global governance and decision-making. It was India's firm conviction that with Africa's full participation in the G20, this group would truly be a more representative and relevant institution.

5. This significant step in reform should inspire the United Nations, a much older organization, to also make the Security Council contemporary. Broad representation is after all, a pre-requisite for both effectiveness and credibility. The Summit of the Future next year, therefore, provides a golden opportunity to reaffirm our common commitment to the UN Charter and undertake a review of the Charter focused on reforms in

general including Security Council reform.

6. We will do well to recall that UN General Assembly, through its decision 62/557 of the year 2008, is explicit in the need for this reform process to be member-state driven, based on member states' proposals, done in good faith and with mutual respect. To this end, we emphasize that the early commencement of text-based negotiations remains the very essence of the spirit of Decision 62/557. A text prepared on the basis of member states' proposals is part of a member state-driven process, while the subsequent negotiation and agreement by member states make it member state-owned.

7. We believe the co-Chairs Elements Paper. It provides some indication, however imperfect in its content and form, of where we stand collectively; how we approach the five aspects of UNSC reform; and the elements of convergence and divergence. The Elements Paper and the Framework document, along with the roll over decision provides continuity to our work.

8. In this context, we note the transmission of the Revised Co-Chairs' Elements Paper during the last cycle. Going forward, we need to be cognizant of the fact that the IGN process is a democratic process, and it is our collective responsibility to ensure that Elements Paper accurately reflects its deliberations. The IGN process doesn't work on presumed discretionary powers, and I am sure our co-Chairs will agree with me on this.

9. Towards this end, we hope the co-Chairs will consider the views of the membership in the interest of the IGN process. Thus, it is our minimal expectation that the Elements Paper accurately reflects the area of divergences and convergences. For example, it was clear from the interventions in recent discussions and debates in IGN, UNGA and the Security Council, that a large majority of the Member States supported expansion of both permanent and non-permanent categories. To say, anything beyond this, and present it under divergence is just simply inaccurate. This is clearly supported by the majority of Member States, and this fact is on record. In the 2015 Framework Document, on the issue of “Categories of Membership”, a total of 113 Member States, out of 122 who submitted their positions in the Framework Document, supported expansion in both of the existing categories specified in the Charter. This

means that more than 90% of the written submissions in the document are in favour of expansion in both categories of membership specified in the Charter. This is a proof of support and showing it as divergence defeats the mandate of the majority in favour of a few. Further the way second and third points in the divergence section of regional representation is phrased it seems to particularly raise questions which are completely out of place and are only likely to create confusion about this process. While some countries can continue to discuss issues in theory but for issues to be reflected in a document like the elements paper, they should be respectful of national and regional positions. And this point does neither. Further we seek clarification on the basis on which the position about who opposes attribution has been framed. These are serious issues of issues being reflected wrongly and it needs correction in the elements paper.

10. We all acknowledge the fact that the present structure of the Security Council is not reflective of contemporary realities and that there is urgent need to reform this. Expanding only in the non-permanent category will not solve the problem, it will in fact not reform one category of the UNSC at all and – in fact it will widen the difference between permanent and non-permanent members even more, further entrenching a dispensation that is no longer relevant in the current geo-political context.

11. On the Elements paper and discussion on other clusters, my delegation has the following additional comments to offer:

One, the structure of the Elements Paper needs to be streamlined further, by doing away with the lengthy introduction and the distinction between convergences and divergences. Two, exact attributions to be introduced throughout the document for each position, and for eliminating vague terms like “some Members” or “other Members” and thus explicitly naming the member countries.

Three, the language on the Common African Position should be further strengthened and be included in full under general convergences, with a reference to both the Ezulwini Consensus and in the Sirte Declaration, as desired by the African Group.

Four, there needs to be a clear attribution of groups and Member States that have openly expressed their full support for the Common African Position, so as to differentiate between those who are in favour of expansion of the permanent category to include permanent representation for African nations as envisioned by the Common African Position, and in response to the historic injustice meted to Africa, and those who do not support permanent seats for African states and try to dilute

their claim by inventing new categories like ‘regional permanent seats’,

and

Five, the concerns presented by us and many other delegations on procedural issues and working methods (including calls for a single consolidated document), classified as “divergence” presently, needs clear attribution, to indicate the high level of support on these issues.

We also look forward to discussion on models in the coming days, for which L-69 has already offered its Vision Document to the repository.

12. As we make greater efforts to bridge divergences and find convergences since 2009, stepping into the 15th year of IGN, my delegation firmly is of the view that we cannot have old wine in new bottles and expect new results which is comprehensive reforms. Conversations on convergence and divergence alone can only lead us so much. As diplomats we know that countries do not change positions unless in a negotiating mode where we create possibilities of real and meaningful exchanges. Going forward, what we should do is what we are good at doing, as the name of the process itself suggests – negotiations with attributions. Else our collective failure to make concrete progress on the issue of Security Council Reform at this critical juncture, will be interpreted as an attempt towards the preservation of the failed status quo, the brunt of which is

borne by real people around the world, who are grappling with real threats, both existing and emerging. In this scenario we do not see how an IGN which cannot even prepare an accurate reflection of its discussions can produce a credible input for SoTF. Let me remind all of you that SoTF unlike this IGN is actually an intergovernmental negotiating process. We need to get real. India, as the world's largest democracy, will continue to strive for the voice of the Global South to be heard on the urgency of immediate action in this regard.

I Thank You.
