



ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

Permanent Mission of St. Vincent and the Grenadines to the United Nations

800 2nd Ave., Ste. 400G, New York, NY 10017 • Tel: (212) 599-0950 • Fax: (212) 599-1020 • www.svg-un.org

Statement

By

H.E. Camillo M. Gonsalves

Permanent Representative of St. Vincent and the Grenadines to the United Nations

At 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

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Mr. President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I shall attempt to be brief, because I have begun to tire of repeating myself *ad nauseum* on this issue, and I can only imagine how others would react to my repetitions if not constrained by diplomatic protocol. Further, I suspect that, rather than listening what is being said to us, many of us are already listening to what we ourselves will say when our turn comes to speak. I will try not to unduly delay anyone's opportunity to voice their own timeworn reiterations.

A great Caribbean poet and singer, Bob Marley, once sang that "it's a foolish dog [that] bark at a flying bird." I confess some empathy with this lyrical dog, as St. Vincent and the Grenadines has been consistently barking at a target that seems above our heads, out of our reach, and frankly, unconcerned with our repeated interventions.

Small States like ours continue to compose lengthy speeches that are no more than monuments to our own apparent irrelevance in this process. Despite considerable lip service being paid to openness, transparency and inclusiveness, the facts belie these words. States may be included in this forum, in that they are allowed to speak, but their ideas, positions and arguments have clearly not been included in the Draft Report and Draft Decision. Indeed, this Report, seemingly in contrast to much of what I have heard expressed by multiple States in the OEWG, appears to have been inexplicably conceived and birthed in a manner that contravenes the principles of openness, transparency and inclusiveness.

To wit, in St. Vincent and the Grenadines' June 17th statement before the OEWG, we said:

... the increased fealty to the 7 Pillars seems to be coming at the expense of a clear understanding of the unanimous mandate of the General Assembly in Decision 61/561, which is rarely cited anymore by the Task Force or its Report. As useful as the 7 Pillars have been, they cannot be viewed as having somehow superseded the actual mandate that they were conceived to implement.

Despite the fact that the Seven Pillars were never drafted, debated or formally adopted by the General Assembly, they are now included in sub-paragraph d(3) of the Draft Decision – on equal footing with Decision 61/561 – as a basis for intergovernmental negotiations! This, despite the fact that many States expressed concern about the manner in which the Seven Principles were being imposed on the membership of this body; and despite the fact that, while the Principles do have some utility in getting us to *the point* of intergovernmental negotiations, they are devoid of any substance that could form *a basis* for such negotiations.

Additionally, we note the twin references to "general agreement" in the Draft Decision. Like many other States, we read the phrase "general agreement" as a euphemism for "consensus." As we said in the April 10th meeting of the OEWG:

Consensus is always a goal within this organization, but it is not a barrier to the commencement of negotiations. . . . we must remember that the Security Council can be expanded by a $\frac{2}{3}$ vote of the General Assembly. It is illogical to apply a higher standard to a process of negotiation than we will to the substance of reform.

Mr. President,

The well-known fact of the matter is that it is neither required, nor is it possible, to achieve consensus on the composition of a reformed Security Council. What we can all agree upon, however, is the course of action that we must take in reforming the Security Council, namely, the immediate commencement of intergovernmental negotiations. Indeed we have already come to this consensus. To quote the report of the OEWG Task Force, “**All** [Member States] have expressed their disposition to enter intergovernmental negotiations.” Here, as in the text of the unanimously adopted Decision 61/561, is the needed general agreement. To insist on consensus beyond that point is to enter into a suicide pact for the death of the reform process.

As such, references to consensus, or any of its synonyms, should be replaced by the language of Resolution 53/30, adopted in 1998, where the General Assembly decided “not to adopt any resolution or decision on the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters, **without the affirmative vote of at least two thirds of the Members of the General Assembly**.” I see no compelling reason why today’s Decision should set the procedural bar any higher than the one we set ourselves a decade ago.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines – and other States – have also called in the past for a time frame for the commencement of intergovernmental negotiations and for the forum of those negotiations to be an informal plenary of the General Assembly. These concerns, and many others mentioned by my colleagues, are absent from the Draft Report that we discuss today.

Of course, this is not to say that Saint Vincent and the Grenadines’ positions, once uttered, become immutable laws that govern the process of Security Council reform. It is merely to illustrate that, in a working group that purports to strive for consensus and inclusiveness, a significant segment of the Membership – perhaps even a majority – is consistently marginalized, excluded, and ignored. To my great despair, it seems that the OEWG has been contaminated by the maladies that afflict the Security Council itself: a lack of transparency, an unfathomable decision-making process, and a decidedly undemocratic bent.

Mr. President,

Allow me to briefly sketch two additional shortcomings with the Draft Decision that I hope can be remedied in future drafts.

First, sub-paragraph (d)(3) appears to present an exhaustive list of documents that form the basis for intergovernmental negotiations. Despite our already-voiced objections to the Seven Pillars as one of those documents, more curious is the omission of others, like for example, the mandates of heads of state in the Millennium Declaration and the World Summit Outcome. Many other resolutions and decisions could also justifiably be included. Given the difficulty in compiling an exhaustive list, it may be better to delete the sub-paragraph, and simply refer to (d)(1) which lists the positions and proposals of member states, and therefore includes what you have attempted to delineate in subsequent sub paragraphs.

Second, paragraphs (d) and (e), which deal with the substance of intergovernmental negotiations, are bracketed by paragraphs (c) and (f), which refer to the OEWG. In the absence of an explicit reference to the forum for intergovernmental negotiations, or even of other alternative forums,

the placement of these references to the OEWG creates what I am sure is an unintended implication that the negotiations should occur within this Working Group.

My personal preference would be to thank the OEWG for a job well done in leading us to the brink of intergovernmental negotiations, pat ourselves on the back, and excise it from the Draft Decision altogether. However, inasmuch as the OEWG remains useful, it is not as an implied forum for intergovernmental negotiations. I suggest correcting the unintentional ambiguity by placing paragraph (f) immediately after paragraph (c), which would correct the chronological perception of the process: OEWG first; negotiations – in whatever forum – afterwards.

Mr. President,

It is often said that a committee is singularly capable of making a decision that is dumber than any of its individual members. Rather than having this Working Group accused of such a decision, and rather than bequeathing a procedural straitjacket to the incoming President of the General Assembly, I urge you to craft a Decision that simply mandates the commencement of intergovernmental negotiations within some short period of time, under the bases outlined in subparagraph (d)(1) of your existing Draft Decision.

In that way, the negotiations will commence, the President-elect will not be constrained by an impracticable Decision, and we who bark at flying birds will be heartened that, within this body at least, our small voices can still be heard and valued.

I thank you.