ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

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Statement

By

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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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Please check against delivery

Mr. President, thank you for convening this meeting and may I extend special thanks to your task force for all of the hard work they have done in recent weeks on this document. It is certainly no privilege to be a member of that task force, and to be subjected to the slings and arrows of the general membership. We are grateful for their diligence and professionalism.

In light of your recent request, my delegation will limit its intervention today to a discussion of the draft resolution in the Recommendations section of the document before us.

On Monday of this week, you invited all interested delegations to a meeting whose purpose was to discuss a revised draft report and draft recommendations. That revision, though far from perfect, was an improvement in many ways over the first draft, which was analysed in the OEWG last Tuesday. It was clear that Draft 2 had taken on board the suggestions of the majority of Member States' concerns from the previous OEWG meeting: In addition to including a proposed October start date for negotiations, the second Revision removed and softened many references to the Seven Principles, deleted a reference to the 5 key issues, and corrected the erroneous placement of what was then paragraph (f), which thereby avoided unnecessary ambiguities about the role of the OEWG. Qualitatively, Draft 2 was indeed addition by subtraction.

To be sure, serious problems remained, including continued references to general agreement, a neutering insistence on frameworks and modalities as a precondition to negotiations, and the absence of any explicit reference to the proper forum for intergovernmental negotiations. Nonetheless, as a work-in-progress, Rev 2 seemed to mark an important and, dare I say, encouraging evolutionary step in often-fractious history of this body.

However, it seems that, overnight, the theory of evolution has been superseded by one of Intelligent Design, where some higher power has intervened to direct the outcome of this drafting process. How else can one explain the revision that now appears before us, and which seems unconnected to Draft 2 or to the substance of majority's Monday interventions? The revision before us today, with the exception of a vague and contradictory reference to the General Assembly, represents a somewhat retrograde step relative to previous drafts, and is unacceptable to Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

Allow me to focus on a few of the fundamental and fatal flaws in the current revision.

First, the Seven Principles are endorsed as "guiding principles for the advancement of the Security Council reform." As stated by numerous Member States, these principles were never adopted at the outset, and cannot be retroactively rubberstamped at the end of this session. In as much as the Seven Principles exist as guiding principles for some of the groupings of member states, they survive through subparagraph d(i) as negotiables to be formally considered. They cannot, however, be given the patina of general acceptance and adoption by this document.

Second, the concept of "general agreement," to which has been added the phrase "compromise solution" are euphemisms for consensus, and are simply incompatible with the process of negotiations of this nature and with the text of the UN Charter or Resolution 53/30. General agreement is always a goal, and a noble one at that, but this goal cannot be elevated to the level of a substantive requirement, over and above the formalities spelt out by the drafters of the UN Charter.

Third, the deletion of specific references to the named groups is curious. I have heard no great clamour for this deletion. Indeed, of all the parts of subparagraph (d), this listing seemed the least contentious. I can only surmise that the mere existence some particular group within that listing was offensive, and the since it could not be individually excised, the entire subparagraph was axed. I am aware of the Biblical teaching that if my right hand offends me, I should cut it off; but I have never seen the teaching applied to the drafting process.

Fourth, paragraph (c) warrants special analysis, because it is the most substantive operative paragraph in the Recommendation and has enjoyed the most comprehensive revision. To our eyes, the paragraph collapses under the weight of its own inconsistencies.

The start date is a welcome, clear addition. To those who bemoan the imposition of artificial time frames and time lines, I submit that it is neither. A line, by definition, requires at least two points, and paragraph (c) only includes one: a staring point. Similarly, a timeframe is a closed measure – within which a task must be completed. Paragraph (c) has no end date, and a mere start date does not a time frame make. Nonetheless, the positive inclusion of the start date is negated by the inclusion of the precondition of setting the "framework and modalities" at the outset, which is a rather obvious poison pill that subverts the expressed intent of commencement.

The reference to the objective of seeking a "compromise solution in the General Assembly that can garner the widest possible political acceptance by the membership, well above the required majority. . ." is a mishmash of contradictions and ambiguities that ultimately serves only to confuse. Reference to Resolution 48/26 is misplaced in a paragraph dedicated to negotiation, because the subject of 48/26 is consultation in the OEWG, not negotiations. The General Assembly is mentioned, but not the informal GA Plenary. We have competing standards of two-thirds of the members present and voting, two-thirds of the total membership, consensus, and a new concept of "well above the required majority." Assuming that I could even discern the required majority from this language, I would have no idea how and when this body has gone "well above" this point.

Fifth, and fundamentally, is the counterproductive ambiguity surrounding the role of the OEWG and the implication that it should serve as the forum for consensus-based intergovernmental negotiations. The draft currently before us once again reverts to bracketing the paragraphs that discuss substantive negotiations with references to the OEWG. The unmistakable impression is that the OEWG is the proper forum for these negotiations. Further, Resolution 48/26, which birthed the OEWG, makes its debut in this draft document, rather clumsily juxtaposed with Resolution 53/30, which calls for a 2/3 majority of Member States on Security Council reform. This juxtaposition, as I see it, has a dual purpose: First, it once again places the OEWG in close proximity to substantive decisions on reform; and second, the reference to general agreement in Resolution 48/26 is intended to act as a counterproductive counterweight to the concept of a 2/3 majority in Resolution 53/30.

Mr. President, all of this speaks to a perversion of the intended role of the OEWG. Clearly, it was conceived as a consultative body, not a negotiating one. We cannot now task it with a hybrid consultative and negotiating role, which it is plainly ill-suited to accomplish.

In the English language, no amount of definitional gymnastics can fit the concept of negotiations within the verb "consider." The OEWG was explicitly created to ***consider*** the question of

Security Council reform. Within the four walls of that mandate, we in the OEWG can contemplate, reflect, ponder, ruminate, scrutinize, evaluate, review, examine and meditate on Security Council reform. We cannot negotiate and decide upon the substantive parameters of that reform. In our host country, in this election season, the pundits can endlessly consider the candidates for President of the United States within the forum of television talk shows and newspaper editorials, but only the voters can decide who that president will be, within the forum of their local ballot box.

Mr. President,

These and other flaws in the draft document, and in the process of its revision, have led me reluctantly to a conclusion shared by some of my colleagues: That our impasse today is not a drafting issue, but rather a conceptual one. This drafting exercise must be guided by our honest answer to a fundamental conceptual question: Do we really want to begin meaningful intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform? If the answer to that question is a sincere “yes,” then, and only then, can impediments to that goal be corrected by the drafters.

The conceptual flaw is manifest in the suggestion that we throw up our hands and simply enact a “technical rollover.” What would be the purpose of this? This year, we had a unanimous mandate in Decision 61/561, yet we made absolutely no progress in implementing that mandate. Passing a technical rollover would be an admission that, even with a unanimous mandate, we could make no progress in this session. It would represent a neutering of our unanimous decision.

The only way that a technical rollover would not be considered rolling over, in the colloquial sense, is if it explicitly confined the future role of the OEWG to consultations, and specifically removed the prospect of negotiations from this body’s functions.

Mr. President, my delegation would be remiss not to mention another issue that has been brought into sharp relief by this process. That is the role of small states in the substantive consideration of weighty issues that go to the heart of the UN’s functioning. There is a principle of sovereign equality of states that undergirds the operation of this body. It may be a legal fiction, but the legality of that fiction is enshrined in our Charter, and has no place for Orwellian notions that some states are more equal than others. It follows naturally from this concept that meaningful consultations are open to all States, and that all States voices are equally respected in a process such as this. When examining this document today, with a full appreciation of the history of our open discussions to date, one cannot escape the conclusions that fundamental changes to the draft were made privately while small states were finding our way back from our merry jaunt down the primrose path of open and transparent discussions.

It may be easier to seek consensus within the confines of a claustrophobic echo chamber, oblivious to the cacophony of uninvited dissenting voices, but it is a contravention of both the spirit and the letter of our Charter. It is our most sincere wish that the voices of small states, who generally have no geopolitical axes to grind, are heard and respected, individually and collectively, in these pivotal issues within our global family.

I thank you.