



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 for working so assiduously on this particular matter. Thank you also for your inspiring opening statement, and your call for a spirit of open minded compromise in this matter. It is a call that we would like to echo unreservedly.

Mr. President, as your tenure at the helm of the General Assembly enters its final days, allow me to thank you and your task force for the countless hours that you have devoted to this subject. History will no doubt record your efforts on this most fundamental aspect of global peace and security.

Turning to the current iteration of the OEWG Recommendations, some immediate changes are apparent, a few of which are most welcome. However, despite the revisions, the Draft is not yet acceptable to St. Vincent and the Grenadines. I am reminded of an old joke in the medical profession, where the surgeon declares that “the operation was a success, but the patient has died.” We cannot become so lost in the process of cobbling together this document that we lose sight of our common declared objective: The commencement of meaningful intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform.

Having listened intently to the public contributions of Member States on this issue over the last few weeks and months, I am convinced that the overwhelming majority seek brevity and clarity in these Recommendations. Every amendment that I shall now suggest is intended to make this document tighter, shorter, and clearer than it is at present, and to assemble what has been dissembled in the tortuous path that this document has traveled in the past few days.

First, clarity must be brought to the issue of the level of agreement required among Member States for Security Council reform. The second preambular paragraph refers to three separate standards of agreement: Chapter 18 of the Charter, which speaks to two thirds of the members of the general assembly, defined by our rules of procedure as 2/3 of those present and voting; Resolution 48/26, which includes a reference to “general agreement;” and Resolution 53/30 refers to 2/3 of the General Assembly, as opposed to 2/3 of those present and voting, which is obviously a different, and higher, standard. Later, in paragraph (d), a fourth standard is introduced, that of “widest possible political acceptance by the membership.” The inclusion of these four competing standards are vague and patently unhelpful to the survival of the reform process.

General agreement, as a negotiating requirement, is unacceptable. It has been selectively quoted out of context in this document in ways that compromise the integrity of prior resolutions and the process in which we are now engaged. Indeed, in insisting on general agreement, it would seem that before we have even taken up the issue of the veto in plenary, we have endorsed it the OEWG. Because by insisting on general agreement, we would have doled out the right of veto to any and all of the 192 members of our family.

In Resolutions 48/26 and Decision 61/561 the phrase was referred to in the context of the consultative role of the OEWG, and was never applied to the negotiating process. Resolution 53/30, which explicitly contemplates action, rather than consultation on Security Council reform, plainly sets forth a 2/3 standard. This standard is the only one applicable to this process.

Along those lines, and in the spirit of clarity, the reference to “widest possible political acceptance” in paragraph (d) is misplaced. Operational paragraphs must be clear and precise.

However, the phrase “widest possible political acceptance” is imprecise and subject to countless interpretations. As an aspirational paragraph in the body of the report, I have no problem with the phrase. It is, however, incompatible with a meaningful numerical majority. I suggest, for brevity and clarity, to simply use the already accepted language of Resolution 53/30.

Second, the reference within the Recommendations to the Seven Principles is again too strongly worded. We have been made aware, clearly, that all Member States have not accepted the 7 Principles. Does that mean they are dead? No! The 7 Principles, in as much as they form part of the positions and principles of Member States, are included by implication in paragraph e(i) of this document. By way of example, the Ezulwini Consensus of the African Group is a position that probably has greater numerical support than that of the 7 principles. Because we do not mention the Ezulwini Consensus in the decision, or even the African Group itself, does that the position is dead? No! it forms part of the positions of the Member States referred to in e(i), and will be a basis of negotiations in that regard. In the same manner, any group that has explicitly endorsed the 7 Principles can raise them and introduce them in the negotiating process. The 7 Principles obviously form part of the positions of some Member States. But this fact alone cannot justify the codification of this position over and above the unmentioned positions of all other groups of states.

In the spirit of compromise, St. Vincent and the Grenadines has no problem with the factual existence of the 7 Principles being noted in the body of the Draft Report or limited to the consultative function of the OEWG. But the implicit endorsement that they “serve as guiding principles” appears to be an attempt to introduce through the backdoor what was explicitly rejected at the front door by the majority of those who have spoken on this matter.

Third, we must bring clarity and brevity to the role of the OEWG. Mr. President, in this decision, which purportedly governs intergovernmental negotiations, I see no reason why the OEWG has to be mentioned in 5 of the 10 paragraphs before us today. Additionally, the specific role of the OEWG has been subject to a creeping expansion that is plainly counterproductive to the negotiating process.

Most critically, Paragraph (c) attempts to broaden the mandate of the OEWG in a manner not anticipated by Resolution 48/26, and comes at a time when the role of the OEWG should be carefully delineated and limited to a strictly consultative role, if any. The subtle, but significant expansion lies in the difference between the verb “consider” and the verb “address.” The OEWG was created to consider questions related to Security Council reform, not address them. This paragraph gives the OEWG a substantive decision-making power that was not contemplated when it was created 15 years ago. Further, paragraph (c) also creates a conflict with the subsequent paragraph (d), which commences intergovernmental negotiations by a fixed date. Let us not ignore the implication that addressing the modalities, frameworks and negotiables, the OEWG could still stand as a bar to commencement of negotiations. What happens when the OEWG says that its report is not complete, and is not due until the end of the 63rd session, and that negotiations cannot begin before such a report on modalities is issued?

Paragraph (c) is therefore unnecessary, unhelpful and unclear in its intent. The OEWG, in its consultative role, is already free to consider this aspect of Security Council reform, so why state it here? And, if memory serves, the Task Force report already did its best to the majority of the negotiables within the framework of the OEWG. Why would we ask the OEWG to revisit this in

the future? To our mind, Paragraph (c), as currently drafted cripples the effectiveness of Paragraph (d). As such, we cannot accept Paragraph (c) as drafted.

Paragraphs (f) and (g) continue to confuse and expand the role of the OEWG. As an initial matter, the paragraphs are misplaced, in that they follow the substantive discussion of negotiations in paragraphs (d) and (e), once again implying that the OEWG has a role to play in the substantive intergovernmental negotiations. This implication conflicts with the earlier reference to the informal GA plenary.

Equally unacceptable is the continuing creeping expansion of the OEWG's mandate. In 1993, we charged the OEWG to "consider of *all aspects* of the question" of Security Council reform. Today's decision changes that language to "consideration of *all issues relevant* to the question." This is a subtle, but unmistakable broadening of the mandate of the OEWG. Under this formulation, all issues relevant to Security Council reform, however tangential, can now be taken to the OEWG, where the Member States, like Sisyphus, endlessly roll the reform bolder uphill.

If there are those among us who can envisage a continued role for the OEWG once negotiations commence in the informal GA plenary, I accept your superior vision. However, any language referring to the OEWG must be precise, and must carefully delineate a purely consultative role for the OEWG, or the group will become an unwitting roadblock to meaningful progress on this issue. In the spirit of compromise, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines could support language that carefully and clearly limits the OEWG to its consultative function, even if this strict consultative role is guided by the Seven Principles and the concept of general agreement.

Fourth, sub-paragraphs e(ii) and e(iii), which have belatedly reappeared in this draft, are superfluous and should be deleted. As we have previously stated, the key issues, documents and positions are already subsumed within Paragraph e(i), and any attempt to list them exhaustively will invariably result in the unintentional omission of some key issues. The term regional representation, for example, prejudices negotiations aimed addressing the issue of representation of developing countries or access by Small Island Developing States. Such a prejudice may not be intentional, but the point is that nothing is added by this Paragraph except the potential for future misunderstanding. We can rely upon (e)(i) to take us to the negotiating stage.

Mr. President, to be clear, and with specific reference to your request that we focus on the two operative Paragraphs, please allow Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to reiterate the following positions:

1. Paragraph (c) is unacceptable as is, and should clearly reflect language limiting the role of the OEWG to consultations, and denying it the ability to unduly delay negotiations.
2. Paragraph (d) is acceptable, save and except for the unduly late start date for negotiations and the reference to "widest possible political acceptance" in an operative paragraph.

Our delegation hopes that this contribution can further enhance the draft document under consideration.

Thank you, Mr. President.