



ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

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

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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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New York

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Mr. Chairman

Thank you for convening this meeting. My delegation would also like to thank the President for his statement at the opening of last week's sitting, and for his letter of October 10, which we endorse, both for its content and for the fact that it stands as tangible evidence of His Excellency's ability to communicate directly with member States, without the filter of third parties.

While we respectfully differ with His Excellency's assessment of conditions on the floor – which, to us, is evidenced by the unanimous decision 62/557 – we trust that you, Mr. Vice Chairman, will soon gauge the mood of this body through an analysis of arithmetical numbers, rather than subjective assessments of volume or pressure; and that you will convey your findings to His Excellency the President.

This is the first meeting of the OEWG since the pivotal events of September 15, 2008, which finally cleared the path to intergovernmental negotiations in the General Assembly Plenary. That meeting was not without drama and compromise, and it represented a substantive highlight of the meandering and maddening 15-year odyssey of the OEWG. My delegation would like to thank the participants in this working group for their hard work in arriving at Decision 62/557, for their good faith consultations on this thorny debate, and their vision in recognizing that the OEWG is ill-suited for the task of substantive negotiations. The September 15 decision was a fitting and redemptive close to the prolonged period of consultation. Whatever the contours of the reform that finally arises through negotiations, no one can claim that the issue of Security Council Reform has not been fully ventilated and carefully considered in the Open Ended Working Group.

However, like Shakespeare's Antony, I come not to praise the OEWG. Instead, the purpose of this intervention is to remind Members of the strict parameters within which this body continues to operate, and its limited role in reform process going forward.

First, it is clear that the process of intergovernmental negotiations must neither wait for nor rely on the results of further consultations in the OEWG. Paragraph (d) states clearly that the basis of negotiations in the GA plenary are the positions of member states and the work of the OEWG "so far," – meaning up to the Sept 15 date of that Decision. Further, as explained succinctly last week by Nigeria, South Africa, Germany, Japan, Brazil, Mauritius and Jamaica, among others, the framework and modalities for these negotiations are already established and widely understood: negotiations within the informal plenary of the General Assembly, carried out within the Rules of Procedure of the GA. In other words, negotiations can begin at any point, and the OEWG cannot limit the substance of the negotiation or further delay its commencement with procedural roadblocks.

Second, Decision 62/557 has clearly demarcated the respective roles of the OEWG and the GA Plenary, going forward. The OEWG, as originally construed in Resolution 48/26, has a consultative role. It was created in 1993 to "*consider* all aspects of security council reform." Similarly, Decision 62/557 tasks the OEWG with providing the results of its *consultations*. In fact, while the original resolution allowed for consideration of *all aspects* of the reform process,

the OEWG is now limited to consideration of frameworks and modalities. In the past, lacking an alternate forum to move the process forward, many member States were tempted to attempt substantive negotiations within the OEWG. This is no longer necessary or desirable. The role of the OEWG is to consider and consult, as established in its original resolution and reaffirmed in September's decision. The role of the GA is to negotiate and seek a solution that can garner the widest possible acceptance by member states. We must therefore be careful not to expand the role of any forum in such a way as to make it encroach on the other. Similarly, we must resist any pressure to link the OEWG to the substantive negotiations process, especially since these two functions were explicitly de-linked on September 15. Any attempt to make negotiations in the informal GA plenary somehow dependent on the outcome of the next few months of consultations in the OEWG will do violence to letter, spirit and credibility of Decision 62/557, and could, in practical terms, reduce negotiations to nothing more than a shimmering mirage on a distant, unreachable horizon.

As such, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines now looks to the OEWG as a forum within which it can consult, be educated, or brought up to speed on issues and implications of substantive matters being concurrently negotiated in the GA plenary. It can remain a valuable complementary informational resource for delegations – particularly smaller ones like ours – which may not otherwise have the ability to fully participate in the reform process.

In short, this body has been freed of the implied responsibility of being all things to all members. Its work up to Sept. 15, 2008 will be taken into account once negotiations begin, and will help to inform the process. As stated by France and India, among others, last week, the OEWG has no power to dictate terms to the GA plenary, nor can it delay or obstruct substantive negotiations. There is a reason that the OEWG has been excluded from the task of negotiations, and that reason was made obvious by last week's procedural and rhetorical merry-go-round. There is also a reason that, throughout last week's and today's sittings of the OEWG, precious few frameworks or modalities were proposed or considered by the member States in over five hours of consultations. The reason is that we already know what those frameworks and modalities are.

Indeed, the only concrete proposal that emerged was neither a negotiating framework nor a modality, but a "roadmap" to govern these discussions sometime in the future. And that roadmap, though obviously well-intentioned, deviates from the letter of Decision 62/557 in several critical aspects, not the least of which are the introduction of elements beyond frameworks and modalities, and in its practical effect of reopening and renegotiating settled decisions. The President of the General Assembly said today that "our road map is 62/557." Saint Vincent and the Grenadines accepts the president's assessment to the exclusion of other, competing roadmaps, because, if we navigate with two road maps, we will undoubtedly get lost.

We look forward to members' strict adherence to the letter and spirit of our consensus Decision, and to the commencement of substantive intergovernmental negotiations in the GA plenary.

I thank you.