General Assembly
65th Session

Agenda items 29 and 119
Report of the Security Council & Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters

Swiss Statement

Presented by
H.E. Mr. Paul Seger
Permanent Representative

Permanent Mission of Switzerland
to the United Nations

New York, 11 November 2010
Mr. President,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the “S-5” - Costa Rica, Jordan, Liechtenstein, Singapore and Switzerland.

My intervention will address both agenda item 29 on the “Report of the Security Council”, as well as agenda item 119 on the “Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters”.

Regarding agenda item 29, the S-5 appreciates the holding of the debate on the annual report of the Security Council. We also commend the United Kingdom, as the current President of the Council, for its very meaningful initiative to introduce an element of reflection and analysis in the presentation of the annual report, and we hope that other Presidencies of the Council will continue this practice.

However, we believe that it is time to take further steps in order to make this debate more meaningful. This would imply both changes in the way the annual report is being drafted, as well as how it is being discussed here. This 65th General Assembly, whose overarching theme is “global governance”, offers a good occasion for us to reflect on how to improve the annual report, and the manner in which it is addressed. Ideally, the discussion of the Security Council’s future reports should be framed by three adjectives: informal, inclusive, interactive.

If we get it right, we will be able to draw greater and more tangible benefits from the annual report in our common endeavour to strengthen international peace and security while fully respecting the tasks, mandates and competencies of both the General Assembly and the Security Council. Clearly, the UN Charter delegates the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security to the Security Council. A more substantive and interactive dialogue between the two main bodies of the UN, and among Member States, based on the annual report is not meant to undermine this prerogative. However, the Council could benefit from the
wider membership’s inputs on this matter to help it better discharge its functions. At the same time, a political discussion with the UN members would have the added benefit of a larger buy-in and broader political ownership of decisions taken by the Security Council.

In that sense, the annual report would constitute an excellent occasion not only to review the past but also for all parties to take in lessons learned in order to discuss options and strategies for the coming year and beyond. In other words, a discussion on the annual report should not mainly be a retrospective exercise but a prospective one as well. Such a discussion need not be a formal exercise, and the S-5 would indeed suggest a format that is more seminar-like. One could think of a series of workshops clustered around situations and/or issues.

Our ideas may sound like a “quantum leap” to some. But the fact of the matter is that the debate on the report of the Security Council has become stale and ritualistic; so, it has lost most of its relevance. If we are really serious about our common commitment to international peace and security under the UN Charter, we should then have the courage to be bold and innovative in making better use of this annual report. The S-5 therefore invites all Member States to reflect on possible improvements during this 65th General Assembly.

This being said, the S-5 would like to offer the following comments on this year’s annual report:

Although we had hoped for more with regard to process and substance in the annual report, there are encouraging signs of progress:

On the process, we value the openness of Nigeria in holding a dialogue session with Member States on the annual report. However, we would suggest the substantive involvement of all Member States at an earlier stage during the drafting process, for example, through an interactive open debate. We would also like to see these exchanges reflected in the annual report.
As for the substance, we have noted some positive new elements in this year’s annual report that could serve as a basis for further improvements:

First, we welcome the fact that Nigeria has included the analytical summaries of some of the Presidencies, where available.

Second, in the chapter on Sudan, we see a new practice whereby the discussions within the Security Council after a briefing by the Prosecutor of the ICC were reflected. In this regard, we support and encourage the inclusion of an analysis of the challenges faced by the Security Council, and of its assessments and the rationale for its decisions.

Third, the S-5 stresses the need for highlighting the linkages between thematic, regional and country-specific issues. The chapter on the DRC is a most obvious and timely example that clearly shows the pertinence of the Security Council’s thematic approach on women, peace and security in countering sexual violence against women in armed conflict. The annual report should take this into account.

Finally, we particularly welcome the inclusion of a chapter on working methods. For the future, we would suggest expanding this chapter by adding the Security Council’s assessment of its consideration and progress on this matter, and updating the wider Membership on the implementation of Presidential Note 507.

In concluding our remarks on this item, the S-5 would like to congratulate the current Presidency of the Security Council for its efforts to make the Council’s discussions more forward looking and interactive. We would like to highlight that the increase in the number of open debates organized by each month’s Council President, while one marker of greater openness and inclusion, in itself cannot translate into meaningful discussions. In this context, the procedural changes presented by the United Kingdom during its informal briefing last week for members of the General Assembly deserve support as they will make debates less formulaic and more conducive to discussions. We particularly welcome the idea of organizing an exchange of views with the Department of Political Affairs and the various suggestions for making the consultations within the Council more spontaneous, lively and productive. We
encourage future Security Council Presidencies to follow this positive example and continue such efforts.

Mr. President,

The issue of working methods leads me to agenda item 119, on the reform of the Security Council.

In this context, the S-5 thanks the Security Council for having held an open debate on its working methods in April this year, which was followed by the revision of Presidential Note 507 (S/2010/507). We commend the Informal Working Group on Documentation, and Japan as its Chair, for their work, and welcome the updated version of Presidential Note 507. This document constitutes a good compilation of existing practices and developments since the adoption of the earlier Presidential Note S/2006/507. At the same time, we believe that the revised Note 507 does not fully address all the important areas of work with regard to working methods. In particular, we regret the absence of implementation mechanisms.

The S-5 group will continue to focus on the issue of reforming the working methods of the Security Council as a matter of priority. Progress in this area has to take place whether or not we can agree on an expansion of the Security Council.

With regards to the enlargement of the Security Council, the S-5 hopes that the 65th General Assembly will be able to pave the way for initiating real, substantive and interactive negotiations. If we are not able to take this process to the next level, the United Nations would be perceived as an organization incapable of reforming itself. This would be very detrimental to the image and the credibility of the UN and would reflect badly on us as Member States.

Therefore, we welcome the early resumption of the intergovernmental negotiations, as well as the reappointment of Ambassador Tanin as its facilitator. We wish to assure Ambassador Tanin of our full support for the upcoming process.

Thank you.