Statement by the Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations, H.E. Ambassador Thomas Matussek

Informal Plenary of the General Assembly:

Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council

20 April 2009

Mr. Chair,

As we have reached the last topic of our first round negotiations – the relationship between the Security Council and the General Assembly – allow me to express my deep appreciation for your relentless efforts to move the reform process forward.

Mr. Chair,

In the world of soccer, a former coach of the German national team is often quoted with the aphorism: “Nach dem Spiel ist vor dem Spiel” – “After the game is before the game”. This, Mr. Chair, is equally apt for us today: at the end of the first round of negotiations, we must look already towards the next round. I will therefore - at the end of my intervention today – share with you a few thoughts on how to ideally focus our discussions further, move into the negotiating phase and eventually put proposals on the table for the Membership to decide upon.

Mr. Chair,

The relationship between the Council and the General Assembly is a topic that could easily fill many tomes of scholarly work. While it is true to say that over recent years, we have seen a number of measures that increase the clout the General Assembly has over matters of the maintenance of international peace and security, the relationship between the Council and the General Assembly as defined by the Charta of the United Nations is relatively set in its ways.

Mr. Chair,

In a narrow sense of interpretation, what we then should be looked at when talking about reform, is an enhanced mode of interaction between the principal organs of the United Nations. This could be a regular dialogue between the Presidents of the Council, the General Assembly and ideally of ECOSOC – of which the Membership will be informed. This could be a more focussed reporting by the Council to the GA, and possibly a more analytical reporting. This could be discussions of topics of common or specific interest to
a larger part of the membership. In a broader sense, however, we are looking at the interaction of the Council and the Membership as such – which brings us back to the discussion we had on 7/8 April on the working methods or on 16 March on the right to veto. In a way, the relationship of the Council and the GA is defined more through the access to, the transparency and openness of the Council to individual Members, groups of Members or the Membership at large. Rather than by introducing new Charter language to redefine this relationship, we need to reform first and foremost the crucial question of access to the Council’s work. This is good news after all, it narrows the scope of reform. It will also help to bring about more legitimacy to the Council’s work.

Mr. Chair,

As mentioned earlier, allow me to share with you a few thoughts on the way forward.

Before we move on, we need to be clear what we expect from the upcoming negotiations. We need to be clear what we expect the reform of the Security Council to achieve.

Mr. Chair,

In my opinion, we need to bring about real change. In order to bring about real change, there has to be a real change of the power structure in the Security Council. It is certainly not enough, to have a reform of the Security Council with some more short-term memberships. What we need to do to really shift the power structure in the Security Council is to introduce additional permanent members or at least a new category of real long-term membership, serving for twelve to fifteen years. This would enable those new members to participate in the Security Council on an equal basis – deservedly so by their contributions to the maintenance of international peace and security according to Article 23 of the UN Charter and their geographic experience.

How do we get there?

Mr. Chair,

From our point of view, the first round of negotiations resulted in the following:

1) The overwhelming majority of us wants a reform of the Security Council as soon as possible. We should therefore not waste much time anymore but move quickly to decisions.

2) There is a very large majority supporting the enlargement of the Council on both categories, permanent and non-permanent. A number of these States showed flexibility for “intermediate” long-term memberships.

3) There is only a very small minority supporting the enlargement of the Council only in the category of more non-permanent members with the election for a term of only two
years. Therefore, options for Security Council reform that obviously do not garner sufficient support need not to be included anymore in the further rounds of negotiations.

Mr. Chair, if we are not going to narrow down options for Security Council reform, how could we make any progress in the negotiations?

Mr. Chair,

As has been suggested repeatedly, we now need a concise “composite paper” to help us focus in the next round of negotiations. A “composite paper” would outline the main elements for the further negotiations. As this “composite paper” would reflect the main ideas that have been put forward by member states throughout the first round and before, we do not see how it could honestly be disputed as a catalyst to progress. It would, however, effectively allow us to narrow down the options. A paper such as the so called-“methodology paper” is instructive in this regard. I would strongly encourage you, Mr Chair, to introduce such a paper to the negotiations.

Focussing can also be done by grouping new clusters to be discussed. As has been held widely in our last meeting, the topics of size, categories of membership and equitable geographical representation should be looked at as one – and as a priority. The relationship between the Council and the GA, working methods of the Council and the right to veto could be another cluster. I strongly encourage you, Mr. Chair, to regroup the topics in front of us accordingly.

We then need to move on to the formulation of concrete ideas - ideas that can be negotiated. After the second round of negotiations, I would expect all of us to have formed more specific ideas of what we want and to have gained a deeper understanding of what can be done and what needs to be done to reform the Council. These ideas will then need to be put to the test.

They will be tested, when the time has come, in the formal plenary of the General Assembly. Only that will ensure that all Members will be heard and that all Members can contribute to the success of the reform. A reform to make the Council more representative, more transparent and therefore more legitimate.

Thank you.