

Ministerial Meeting on Security Council Reform (Rome, 5 February 2009)

Final remarks by H.E. Franco Frattini Minister of Foreign Affairs

Today's debate allowed us to exchange views on Security Council reform highlighting some general principles and areas of interest which appear extremely important and relevant for the forthcoming intergovernmental negotiations. I will not draw conclusions. Summing up our discussion, I would like to mention the following:

A more representative Council. The debate has showed a general engagement to reform the Security Council. Progress is necessary to make the Council more representative of the diversity and pluralism of today's international context, to enable it to respond more effectively to new challenges and threats to international security. One of the very important points raised during the meeting is for instance the importance of correcting Africa's under-representation in the Council. A more representative Council also means making sure that all UN Members States, be they large or small, can have their voice heard and their interests taken into account in the Security Council.

Comprehensive reform. Another fundamental element is the need for a comprehensive reform, a reform not limited to the question of the enlargement of the Security Council. There has been a tendency to equate Security Council reform with an expansion of its members only. This is an important issue, but not the only ingredient for a successful reform. The majority of UN member States would like, for instance, to see changes in the Security Council's working methods, beginning with greater transparency and effectiveness of the Council's decision-making process. These points were highlighted by many speakers. We should improve the relation between the Security Council and the General Assembly, where every member state is represented. We should also realistically review the question of the veto.

Single undertaking. In terms of procedure, there is a general agreement that the informal sessions of the General Assembly should allow an objective, transparent and inclusive process. More clarity is needed on the terms and modalities for the negotiations. More generally, many referred to the forthcoming intergovernmental negotiations as a "single undertaking", that is to say according to the principle that nothing is agreed until everything is agreed. This is, I firmly believe, an essential element of the process.

Broadest consensus. To achieve progress it will be of fundamental importance to look for the broadest possible political support. Because if we act in terms of controversial or unilateral initiatives in the General Assembly, these would derail the process. Only an inclusive reform, one that virtually all UN Member States subscribe to, can enjoy the legitimacy which is needed to strengthen the Security Council, to make it more credible and, I think also, more effective.

Accountability. Another point on which I noted a strong convergence relates to the importance of accountability, which is closely linked to the democratic principle. An accountable Security Council implies first and foremost a sense of responsibility vis-à-vis the General Assembly. We cannot escape this principle when we aim at bringing together all UN Member States. So there is a valid argument to improve the relationship between the Security Council and the General Assembly, also because its members elect the Security Council non permanent members.

Inclusiveness. Many colleagues mentioned the point that an accountable and responsible Security Council must also be more inclusive. Today we have noted the political readiness to consider flexible proposals and a certain interest in solutions of an intermediate nature allowing an enhanced participation not only of those countries that already provide significant contributions to the goals of the United Nations, but also to the many medium and small-sized Member States who represent the vast majority of this universal institution. The reform should take into consideration the legitimate interests of all UN Member States, not just an "élite", to serve on the Council.

These are the broad principles, not a detailed solution, that should guide our action over the coming months, beginning with the intergovernmental negotiations due to start in New York on 19 February. So the excellent level of participation at our meeting today and your very concrete contributions highlight a strong commitment to engage in these negotiations. Only working together, in a spirit of openness and flexibility, it will be possible to move the process forward.