



PERMANENT MISSION OF PORTUGAL TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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Statement by H.E. Ambassador João Salgueiro
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of equitable representation on and increase in the
membership of the Security Council and related matters"
and agenda 120 "Follow-up to the Outcome of the
Millennium Summit"

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Mr. President,

First and foremost I would like to start by thanking the President of the General Assembly for convening this meeting.

Throughout the current session of the General Assembly several important measures and decisions have been adopted in the reform process of our organization.

Much of the credit for what we have achieved in implementing the decisions taken by our leaders in September goes to the President of the General Assembly.

Under his perseverance and leadership we are responding gradually and successfully to an unprecedented challenge for a much needed renewal of the UN.

We have just concluded part of the management reform of the organization. It is time now to regain focus on political issues. And one of the most significant political issues that still needs to be addressed is undoubtedly the reform of the Security Council.

Mr. President,

The need for Security Council reform and for adapting the world body responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security to the realities of today's world is broadly shared among the International Community.

In December 2004 the High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change acknowledged that "(...) the paucity of representation from the broad membership diminishes support for Security Council decisions" and that there was a need to "bring into the decision-making process countries more representative of the broader membership, especially of the developing world".

The Secretary-general in his report "In larger freedom" reaffirmed that "no reform of the United Nations would be complete without the reform of the Security Council".

Following these two landmark reports three draft resolutions were tabled on the question of Security Council reform during the 59th session of the General Assembly.

Besides that a number of Member States declared their commitment to SC reform and put forward concrete ideas on this issue.

And in September 2005 our Heads of State and Government considered "...early reform of the Security Council as an essential element of our overall effort to reform the United Nations...".

Mr. President,

Allow me just to, once again, briefly reiterate the principles that in our opinion should guide efforts aimed at making Security Council reform a reality:

- First, reform must comprise concrete and ambitious proposals on both domains of enlargement and working methods.

We fully understand and accept that in many circumstances the Security Council needs to work with discretion. But the Council acts on behalf of the International Community and we all have to feel we have a stake in its deliberations.

The fact is that a "working culture" developed, throughout the years, in the relationship between the Security Council and the membership at large as well as with the Secretariat, that the Charter did not provide for.

This "working culture" has been a source for criticism causing a wide spread sense of frustration among the Members States.

Thus we see merits in the initiatives aimed at making the working methods of the SC more open, transparent and inclusive in particular the draft resolution tabled by the group of states known as the "small 5".

And we also recognize that the recently approved outcome of the SC "*Informal working group on documentation and other procedural questions*" - if implemented properly - would constitute progress in the right direction.

But we believe that a decisive improvement in the current “status quo” demands action through joint structural and working methods reforms. Expansion and working methods are two sides of the same coin.

- Secondly, expansion of the SC providing for more and better representativeness of the wider membership should take place through an enlargement of the existing two categories of permanent and non permanent members.

The preservation of the impediment of immediate re-election from non permanent members guarantees the chances of accession to the Security Council by the vast majority of the UN membership, comprised by more than 100 small and medium states.

Enlarging the Security Council along these lines will pave the way for a redress of current imbalances in its membership through an increased presence of developing countries in both categories and through an accession of Africa to permanent membership.

- Thirdly, on the veto question the Portuguese long-standing position is that the requirement for concurring votes, established in the article 27, para 3 of the Charter, should not be expanded beyond the current permanent members of the Security Council.

Mr. President,

Portugal believes that, whatever may be the reforms that we manage to undertake a review exercise should take place at a given moment in the future – for instance 15 years - in order to assess the merits of the reforms and their impact in the work of the organization.

Finally, we think that the timing for SC reform is now. Therefore the momentum initiated in the summer of 2005 should not be lost. That is why we believe that movement towards this goal would better be made early in the 61st session of the General Assembly.

Thank you, Mr. President.