

Ambassador Shirin Tahir-Kheli, Senior Advisor to the Secretary of State for UN Reform, on UN Reform, in the General Assembly, July 12, 2005

Mr. President:

Our discussions on United Nations reform reflect unity on one point: we all believe in this Organization. That is why UN reform is so important. We want to change this institution so that it can become stronger and more effective, to enable it to fulfill the vision of its founders when they signed the [Charter](#) 60 years ago. We need a strong, effective UN if we are to confront successfully the many challenges we all face in the 21st century, including terrorism, mass poverty, human rights violations, epidemic disease, environmental degradation and so many other issues.

The United States is committed to a strong and effective United Nations. Our presence and our actions over many years confirm this fact.

The United States, as President Bush has said, recognizes that no nation can achieve its foreign policy objectives alone. "Global challenges," he affirmed, "must be answered by active, effective, multilateral institutions."

The [High Level Panel](#) and the Secretary General have done a great service in identifying the broad areas where we must enact reforms.

Mr. President:

The United States appreciates your leadership in helping move the UN toward agreement on key areas of reform. We will continue to work with you and other member states at this historic time.

The United States shares the conviction that no single area of reform should be addressed to the exclusion of others. The United States has worked extensively with a large number of countries to ensure that UN reform is comprehensive and successful.

I come before you, to strongly urge all present -- including the four good friends of the United States who have tabled the Framework Resolution -- to consider the potential impact on this Organization and its vital work of pressing forward with a vote at this time.

Mr. President:

I want to reiterate that the U.S. supports expansion of the [Security Council](#). We have on several occasions expressed our strong support for Japan's candidacy for permanent membership, and anticipate that other countries will qualify for permanent or semi-permanent membership, and have proposed criteria to that end. As Secretary Rice has noted, we recognize that 2005 is not 1945. But Security Council reform, alone, will not address the most pressing problems of the Organization, nor will proposals to alter the

Council garner the support needed to amend the Charter absent broader reform. Regardless of timing, we will oppose any proposal that would make the Security Council less effective than it is today. And we will oppose calling for votes on proposals that do not command the breadth of support necessary to be put into practice.

Let me be as clear as possible: the U.S. does not think any proposal to expand the Security Council – including one based on our own ideas -- should be voted upon at this stage.

Mr. President:

It is important that all understand that while we disagree with this resolution, the nations that have put it forward are our friends. We reiterate our willingness to work with them and other countries in the effort to achieve Security Council enlargement via a plan that is supported by the vast majority of UN members, and which results in a stronger, more effective Security Council, in the context of overall reform of the United Nations. Unfortunately, however, the timing and substance of the proposed resolution does not accomplish these ends.

Let me share with you some of the reasons that have led my Government to the position that it cannot support this resolution.

First, moving to a vote on this, or any other resolution involving Security Council reform, is bound to be divisive at this stage. The Charter of the United Nations is designed in such a way that reform of the Security Council requires broad consensus. And that is as it should be. We do not yet know the actual numbers of countries that may vote for this resolution. But we do know that world opinion is still highly divided on this issue. While there is in our view broad consensus regarding the need for Security Council expansion, major differences exist regarding what kind of expansion should occur. In addition to the proposal before us, the [African Union](#) has initiated actions to introduce its own resolution. Although the African Union resolution may contain a number of points in common with the resolution under consideration, there are differences, many of them significant. We understand the aspirations of African nations, the vast majority of which did not enjoy independence when the UN was created in 1946, to serve on the Security Council.

We also know that a group of countries that have joined together as “Uniting for Consensus” have put forward a resolution that proposes a very different formula for Security Council enlargement. In short, while we see valuable elements in each of these efforts, it is clear that as yet there is no broad based agreement.

Second, Security Council expansion requires amendment of the Charter. Under Article 108 of the Charter, expansion of the Security Council requires lengthy constitutional processes in many nations, including my own. In our system, for example, the support of two-thirds of the [United States Senate](#) is needed to pass an amendment to a treaty. We need to prepare the way carefully to ensure that whatever we vote for in this

body will gain the requisite support of member states required by the Charter during the ratification process. A vote to lock in a particular mode of Security Council expansion at this stage would interfere with our ability to shape a proposal later that would stand a reasonable chance of securing the requisite ratifications from member state legislatures. In this regard, I would note that this is not a partisan issue in my country or in many others. Whether Democrats or Republicans, American Senators -- like officials of our Executive Branch -- will be looking to see if Security Council enlargement is part of a broader package of needed reforms and whether it makes the Council more or less effective in discharging its important duties.

Third, the search for a broader consensus should be based on agreement on criteria. Security Council expansion is both necessary and has far reaching consequences. We all recognize that the world has changed profoundly in the 60 years since the Charter was signed and this organization was created. The founders struggled with some of the same issues we face today in applying the principles they enshrined in the Charter. Their example is instructive today. Instead of choosing between a body that was representative but too large and unwieldy to deal with emergent security situations, or one that was efficient at the expense of representativeness, they created a system with multiple bodies with different roles. To deal with security, they formed a body of countries with demonstrated capability to contribute to international peace and security. To ensure worldwide representation, they created the General Assembly.

The only responsible way to approach Security Council expansion is to ensure, as did the founders, that those nations accorded permanent seats on the Council meet appropriate criteria for the tremendous duties and responsibilities they will assume. The Founders did not arbitrarily pick a number for permanent membership and then try to force-fit countries into those slots. Instead, they asked "which states have the demonstrated capacity to contribute substantially to international peace and security?" I have mentioned before the criteria that in our view define the qualifications for permanent members: size of economy and population, military capacity, contributions to peacekeeping operations, commitment to democracy and human rights, financial contributions to the United Nations, non-proliferation and counter terrorism records, and geographic balance. We are prepared to consider other proposals for appropriate criteria.

But we are committed to following the basic principles that have served us all so well.

Fourth, Efficiency is Essential. The Security Council has been an effective body, and is more relevant today than ever. One of the first principles of reform should be to do no harm. Once we have reached consensus on new permanent members, we should consider some expansion of non-permanent membership that maintains representativeness, but without making the Council so large that it becomes ineffective.

In closing, I ask all countries to again very carefully consider the resolution before us and to ask the critical question: does this resolution serve to strengthen the United Nations?

We believe it does not. We will work with you to achieve enlargement of the Security Council, but only in the right way and at the right time.

We urge you, therefore, to oppose this resolution and, should it come to a vote, to vote against it.