



**PERMANENT MISSION OF SINGAPORE
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

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**STATEMENT DELIVERED BY
AMBASSADOR VANU GOPALA MENON,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE,
PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF SINGAPORE
TO THE UNITED NATIONS,
AT THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY SECOND MEETING
OF THE OPEN-ENDED WORKING GROUP
ON THE
QUESTION OF EQUITABLE REPRESENTATION ON AND INCREASE
IN THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL
AND OTHER RELATED MATTERS TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL,
10 APRIL 2008**

1 Thank you, Mr President, for giving me the floor.

2 We have discussed Security Council reform extensively over the last several years. Many positions were articulated and we have found ourselves at an impasse. In this context, some delegations suggested that you, as President of the General Assembly, consider a direct leadership role in finding an acceptable solution or in making an effort to address the current impasse. Nevertheless, at the last OEWG on 14 December 2007, you asked member states to “*begin to conduct consultations among themselves in various settings*” before submitting “*elements of the negotiables*” to the Task Force. In effect, you asked member states to shoulder the responsibility for drafting a compromise text for negotiations outside of the OEWG. Alas, this has expectedly proven to be a difficult exercise that has led to an increasingly complicated and, on occasion acrimonious, situation.

3 As of today, we have multiple documents before us. The African Group has presented their views. The Uniting for Consensus has given us their perspective. The Organization of Islamic Conference has submitted its views. Finally, a small number of drafters in their personal capacities, the so-called “Overarching Group”, has submitted a draft proposal with “negotiables” that is meant to enable member states to negotiate on that basis. Other delegations and groupings will doubtless have their own views. Once again, there seems little agreement on how to proceed.

4 The “Overarching Group” draft is new, so allow me to comment on it. Let me first thank the drafters for taking the initiative in their personal capacities. It is no easy task compiling and reconciling views on Security Council reform so they should be admired for their courage. The draft generally covers elements of the G4 and UfC positions, as well as several possible “intermediate” possibilities. Insofar as it is a compilation, this could be a useful start. However, the draft also has some important omissions. If we agree that this document is to serve as a basis for negotiations, our sense is that the draft must also address these omissions.

5 First, there is no mention of what to do about the veto for new permanent members, should we decide to go down that route. This is a significant omission. The right of the veto was born of a different era. It was a privilege conferred on the five victorious powers from the Second World War to secure their participation in the UN. The situation today is different. While Singapore supports expansion in the permanent and non-permanent categories, we oppose granting the veto to new permanent members. Extending the veto will complicate and perhaps even paralyse decision-making in the Council. That said, we recognize that the P5 will not give up their right to veto. But we should not add to the problem by further complicating UNSC decision-making. The broader point is that it may be better to address this question of the veto upfront, rather than to put it aside and court disagreement later.

6 Second, the proposal tends to come across as catering to the interests of the medium and larger powers, and not the interests of small states. As I stated a minute ago, Singapore’s position has always been that we support expansion in the permanent and non-permanent categories. But in this proposal, most of the seat allocation permutations - permanent, long-term, intermediate renewable - cater to the interests of the larger and medium powers. In fact, the only region that seems guaranteed a traditional two-year non-renewable seat is the Eastern European Group. This is very different from the proposals that were on the table before - all of which had a significant number of traditional non-permanent seats for all regions. We need to have more of these traditional non-permanent seats to cater to the needs of small countries, which are not about to contend for longer or renewable seats, let alone permanent seats. In this regard, there should be additional non-permanent seats for all regions and not just one region. As drafted, there seems little regard for the interests of small states, who make up the majority of the UN membership.

7 Third, with respect to the intermediate approach, I wonder what

happened to the proposal to prevent countries from flip-flopping between the regular two-year seats and the proposed renewable seats? My delegation referred to this idea many times last year. Several other delegations also expressed support for this idea. The point is that there should be a fairly lengthy time-bar to prevent countries from flip-flopping between categories and getting two bites of the cherry, assuming that an intermediate approach is adopted. Once a country decides to run for a seat in the "intermediate" category, and irrespective of the outcome of that election, it should be precluded from running for a traditional non-permanent seat for a number of years, let us use 3-5 years as an indicative period. A candidate for the traditional non-permanent category would likewise be barred for running for an intermediate category seat for the same period. Member states should make clear choices in line with their ambitions. Without such restrictions, large countries will have "two bites of the cherry". It is only larger countries that have the resources to "flip-flop" and run consecutive (or even concurrent) campaigns.

Mr President,

8 My delegation said last year that we would keep an open mind on the subject of new ways to discuss Security Council reform. So if there is the political will to embark upon negotiations, on the basis of whatever approach or proposal, we will consider the options and negotiate in good faith. But the larger point remains that if we are going to expand the Security Council, we should do it properly so that the concerns of all stakeholders - aspiring permanent members, medium powers and the interests of the small states are taken into account. Small states already have little opportunity to serve regularly on the Security Council, if at all. They should not have their interests disregarded in any new proposal. Security Council reform is a delicate issue. We urge you, Mr President, to personally take charge of the process to see if a way forward can be found.

9 Let me end by stressing that reviewing and improving the Security Council's Working Methods is equally important. We are encouraged that the draft prepared by the "Overarching Group" recommends making concrete improvements on Working Methods, such as in the areas of transparency, access, openness, and in the explanation of vetoes. Singapore regards reform in Working Methods to be beneficial to all states by making the Council more effective. While complementary to each other, we also believe that Working Methods and expansion can be pursued on parallel tracks.

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