

Intergovernmental Negotiations (IGN) on Security Council reform

New York, 13 December 2023

Statement by H.E. Ambassador Bahia Tahzib

Deputy Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

on behalf of the Benelux countries (Belgium — Luxembourg — the Netherlands)

Dear Co-Chairs,

Thank you for convening this debate.

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Benelux countries: Belgium, Luxembourg and my own country, the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

I would like to start with expressing once more our appreciation to you, Ambassador Marschik and Ambassador Albanai. We are very supportive of your re-appointment as IGN Co-Chairs, and we appreciate your able leadership and your energetic and innovative efforts towards Security Council Reform. We welcome your plans for the 78th session as outlined in your letter of the 21st of November 2023. This includes your proposal to discuss all of the five clusters during this first IGN meeting of the 78th session.

We also support your proposal to discuss the IGN's contribution to the Summit of the Future. The Benelux countries see the Summit of the Future as an important opportunity to reaffirm our common commitment to the United Nations Charter. This includes achieving concrete results on Security Council reform. We will constructively engage in the upcoming IGN-sessions to ensure a substantive contribution of the IGN to the Pact for the Future.

We also believe that your proposed structured dialogues on models presented by States and Groups will help distil possible further convergences. We must act with a sense of purpose to break the impasse in the IGN, through the broadest possible political agreement around our

convergences. The IGN are amongst the most difficult and complex processes at the UN. Yet, it does not mean that we cannot make progress towards meaningful reform of the Security Council. Reform is needed to address the issues of representativeness, effectiveness, legitimacy, accountability and credibility of the Council.

Let me make five key points to reiterate the Benelux countries' position on the five clusters.

First, it is absolutely clear that the Security Council should be more representative of today's world. The Benelux countries support the call for an increased representation of developing countries and small- and medium-sized Member States, including Small Island Developing States in the Security Council. We also recognize and support the legitimate aspirations of the African countries for an increased presence in the Security Council. As stated in the Secretary-General's New Agenda for Peace policy brief, *'a Security Council that is more representative of the geopolitical realities of today, and of the contributions that different parts of the world make to global peace, is urgently needed'*.

Second, the use of the veto has often prevented the Security Council from effectively assuming its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. The Benelux countries are among the large and growing number of Member States that support limitations on the use of the veto. In particular, we strongly support the political declaration on the suspension of veto powers in cases of mass atrocities, presented by France and Mexico, as well as the Code of Conduct regarding Security Council action against genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, elaborated by the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency Group (ACT Group).

Third, as also highlighted in your Elements Papers of the 77th GA Session, there is a growing consensus among Member States that the Council needs to be enlarged, in order to be more representative of the UN membership and to better reflect the realities of the today's world. The Benelux countries support a limited expansion of the number of seats, divided between permanent and elected members, with the exact number to emerge from discussions between Member States on the key issues of 'categories of membership' and 'regional representation'. We also stand ready to discuss models proposing the creation of long-term,

non-permanent elected seats, with the possibility of immediate re-election, should this proposal form a basis for a compromise between the various groups.

Fourth, while the Security Council remains the principal organ with primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, the relationship between the Security Council and the General Assembly must be mutually reinforcing and complementary. The Benelux countries support the General Assembly revitalization process. This includes the revitalizing General Assembly's role in peace and security, in line with its powers under articles 10 to 14 of the Charter. We believe the General Assembly has a political responsibility to address situations where the use of the veto leads to paralysis in the decision-making of the Security Council. Any permanent member using the veto should be held accountable. That is why we have supported the resolution initiated by Liechtenstein entitled "Standing mandate for a General Assembly debate when a veto is cast in the Security Council". The Veto Initiative has introduced a welcome change in the relationship between the Security Council and the General Assembly.

Fifth, and finally, the Benelux countries support steps in improving the working methods of the Council towards greater accountability and transparency. We welcome all efforts to further strengthen the cooperation between the Council and regional organizations, not least between the UN and the European Union, as well as the African Union. Systematic coordination and regular exchange with regional organizations, countries concerned, civil society and relevant entities, especially the UN Peacebuilding Commission will not only benefit the work of the Council, but also increase support to the decisions eventually taken.

Dear Co-Chairs,

Let me conclude by reiterating the fullest commitment and readiness of the Benelux countries to help move the reform of the Security Council forward and to make the Council more effective, transparent, democratic, representative and accountable.

I thank you.