



Statement by HE, Ambassador Mathu Joyini, Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations during the first meeting of the Intergovernmental Negotiations on UN Security Council Reform

13 and 14 December 2023

Co-Chairs,

South Africa aligns itself with the statement delivered by Sierra Leone on behalf of the African Group and the L69 statement by Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

We congratulate you on your reappointment as Co-Chairs of this process, and we commend you for your innovations and achievements in improving the working methods of the IGN.

South Africa has held the consistent belief that the reform of the Council is the most important requirement for a reformed multilateral system, and as member states begin the process of defining the Pact of the Future, it is this fundamental understanding that needs to be foremost.

The nearly eight-decades-old United Nations system's effectiveness cannot remain disproportionately reliant on serving and securing the interests of only five permanent, non-elected, Members of the Council. They represent a mere 2.5% of the Membership of the UN.

My delegation remains deeply concerned by the inability of the Council to act decisively even when the very existence of the people in Gaza is threatened, and the most catastrophic humanitarian crisis unfolding before our eyes deepens on a daily basis.

Thus, the structure of the Council that allows such atrocities to unfold and for Israel's brutal disproportionate actions and flagrant violation of numerous conventions, and international law, to persist unchecked, necessitates urgent Council reform. Indeed, the

prevailing Council's consideration of the question of Palestine which has been on the Council's agenda for the entirety of the UN's existence, represents a profound failure of the Security Council – a failure which is rooted in the structural imbalances and anachronistic make-up of the Council itself, which has a direct bearing on its credibility and legitimacy.

As long as the source of the inability of the Council to act is not addressed, we will be left with resorting to inadequate and piecemeal approaches to holding the Council to account, which places a greater burden on the General Assembly and relies on this principal organ to make up for the failures of the Council.

Co-Chairs,

In order to stress the urgency of the reform process and address the challenges, we would like to make the following points:

Firstly, progress can, and has been made using the Co-Chairs' elements paper as the basis for negotiations, and it can thus be assisted in its task with addition of attribution where we are enabled to track and react to the positions of various delegations.

This will allow us to establish urgent text-based negotiations, which will enable a chance at consensus through the process of negotiating our different viewpoints and proposed models for a reformed Council and seeking to achieving convergence for its reform.

Three years since the commitment our Heads of State and government made during the 75th Anniversary of the UN, we must move to fulfill this commitment. As the report on Our Common Agenda states, the Security Council could be made more representative of the twenty-first century, such as through enlargement, including better representation for Africa, as well as more systematic arrangements for more voices at the table.

We therefore have an opportunity to give impetus to this through the consultations on the Summit of the Future.

Secondly, we must recognise that delays in the reform of the UN Security Council will not assist us in refining the global means of addressing threats to international peace and security. We need a composition in the Council more relevant to today's globalized world, and not one that merely perpetuates an outdated thinking of a bipolar world.

Delays will also not help in addressing the lack of representation in the Council to ensure that it is able to fulfil its obligation under the UN Charter to legitimately act on behalf of the UN membership in its entirety.

Co-Chair's,

Our **third point**, is the reiteration of our firm conviction that to realise equitable representation on the Council, the *lack of permanent African representation and under-representation in the non-permanent category of the Security Council needs to be corrected.*

This lack of representation, apart from being historically unjust, also adversely affects the Council's ability to adequately address matters of peace and security on the Continent.

The voice and participation of African Council members have already proved to be effective in allowing the Council to act with relative unity on matters affecting the continent, even in a difficult global political environment.

South Africa, therefore, fully supports the Common African Position as encapsulated in the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration with the goal of Africa being fully represented in all the decision-making organs of the UN, particularly in the Security Council. We must agree on the full representation of Africa with: **i.** not less than two permanent seats with all the prerogatives and privileges of permanent membership including the right of veto and **ii.** a total of five non-permanent seats.

We appreciated the opportunity to build on the Co-Chairs elements paper on convergences and divergences that was distributed at the end of the 77th session.

There is no longer any doubt that there is wide recognition and support for the African Common Position referenced in full, and that we are already proceeding on an evolving basis for our discussion.

Co-Chairs,

In conclusion, urgency of Council reform is needed now more than ever as the very credibility of the United Nations to come to the defense of those subjected to atrocities is now called into question. If we cannot expedite reform we risk an ever more divided world,

while we retain a Council structure that is unable to respond or fulfill its mandate at times of dire crisis.

I thank you.