

**Remarks by H.E. Mr. Paul Heinbecker
to the General Assembly on Security Council Reform
Thursday, November 16, 2000.**

Monsieur le Président,

Le Canada aborde le débat sur cette question primordiale dans une nouvelle perspective puisqu'il arrive pratiquement à l'échéance de son mandat de deux ans auprès du Conseil de sécurité.

Cette expérience nous a beaucoup appris sur le Conseil, d'un point de vue tant théorique que pratique.

Elle nous a surtout permis d'aboutir à certaines conclusions quant à la réforme du Conseil de sécurité.

J'aimerais développer trois points aujourd'hui :

Des progrès ont effectivement été accomplis en ce qui concerne la réforme des méthodes de travail du Conseil, mais davantage peut et doit être fait, en particulier en ce qui concerne les travaux avec les pays qui fournissent des contingents;

Le fonctionnement du Conseil est gravement entravé par le droit de veto, qu'il soit appliqué ou utilisé de manière dissuasive.

Des réformes sont nécessaires et possibles.

Il faut élargir le Conseil pour qu'il représente mieux le monde actuel, mais seulement en élisant des membres, et ça pour une période limitée.

We are aware that some among us here today are critical of the Open Ended Working Group.

We are not completely satisfied with the Group either.

We are certain, nonetheless, that it has had a positive impact and remains the appropriate locus to discuss reform.

In our view, the single most important development in the Security Council over the last 12 months or so has been the reform of the working methods of the Council.

After years of urging by the Open Ended Working Group and others that the Security Council reverse the trend of meeting increasingly behind closed doors, significant changes have, in fact, occurred.

Over the last 22 months Canada has advocated the need to develop a culture of transparency and accessibility in the Council's work.

Our efforts and those of so many others in this chamber have to a large extent come to fruition.

It is appropriate that I note explicitly that these reforms would not have been possible without the strong, active engagement of certain permanent members and the acceptance of these reforms by all of them.

A range of Council business is now being discussed in public - from Secretariat briefings to open debates to interactive discussions and special meetings with important visitors.

This week's Security Council calendar, which indicates that 5 out of the 7 scheduled meetings

will take place in public session, is evidence of the progress made.

The Council is now welcoming representatives of member states in the Council chamber itself as the Charter and the Council's Provisional Rules of Procedure provide, and not, as former Argentinean Permanent Representative Petrella so aptly put it, "in the dungeons" of the Conference Building.

At the same time we, Canada, do readily acknowledge that judicious recourse to private meetings is necessary.

It allows the Council an intermediate course that balances the sensitive nature of the issue under discussion and the need to respect the right of participation of member states in accordance with the Charter.

Still, further progress is required.

We agree with those delegations that have argued that participation under Articles 31 and 32 of the Charter means more than mere attendance.

If the Council decides that the question brought before it specially affects the interests of specific members, those members must be allowed to speak.

Attendance is no substitute for participation.

The working methods of the Council must be improved more.

Perhaps the most pressing and far-reaching reforms are necessary with respect to peace keeping missions and cooperation with troop-contributing countries.

Last month's meeting of the Council and UNAMSIL troop contributors was an important step in the right direction.

Current approaches remain, nonetheless, inadequate.

We need to rethink quite fundamentally how peace missions are conceived and provided with political and military guidance.

Troop contributing countries must have confidence in both the process and the guidance.

They will have that confidence only when we find a way of ensuring that they participate fully in discussions and decisions germane to the missions in question.

We need also to devise a means to allow troop contributors to have access to the Secretariat as missions are planned, as well as access to the information and intelligence available to the Secretariat as missions unfold.

And all of this should be a matter of course, of right, of sound governance, not of privilege.

The objective is to work together to understand the causes of the conflict and what we intend to achieve by employing military forces.

Then we need to reach a common understanding of the circumstances a mission faces, and to give it political and military direction and support it needs to succeed on all our behalfs.

Our next observation on the operation of the Council is more worrisome.

We have been struck and disappointed by the tendency towards a two-tiered Security Council.

The permanent members are prepared to, and often do, act collectively and exclusively.

Last fall, when the East Timor crisis boiled over, the Indonesian Foreign Minister came to New York and first met with the P5 and only afterwards with the full Council.

During a briefing on the Sierra Leone crisis in May of this year, minutes after insisting that options for Council action not yet be discussed, the Secretariat hosted a meeting on the 38th floor of the Secretariat building, to which only five members of the Council were invited.

The subject? Options for Council action.

Again on the Iraq Compensation Commission, a month ago, the P5 met and agreed amongst themselves on a course of action.

There are other examples.

One wonders which of us among the elected members is regarded as so politically powerful or intellectually dominant or rhetorically persuasive that the P5 can not risk even closed meetings with us.

In fact, a good argument could be made that if there are any members of the Council with special responsibilities it is the elected members of the Council, who have mandates from the voters of this General Assembly to act on their behalf.

The point of this preamble is that the Council needs to be reformed comprehensively, in three distinct but related ways:

First, to promote a more democratic and accountable character for the Council;

second, to enhance Council effectiveness, in ways that maximize the ability of non-members to follow and inform Security Council activity;

and third, to curtail progressively the use of the veto, an instrument that colours and limits far too much of the Council's deliberations.

As regards the size of the Council, we feel it is imperative that enlargement be in the non-permanent category only for limited terms.

We believe it is beneficial that new members of the Security Council stand for election and subject themselves to the politics, demands and disciplines inherent in campaigning.

There are two ways in which we could achieve such a vision.

First, we would ask the permanent members of the Council to join us in working for any comprehensive reform, knowing that that necessarily entails a progressive curtailment of the veto.

It is anachronistic, even a bit perverse, that an organization with such an impressive and important record in assisting countries to develop democratic institutions should accept that an exception should be made for 5 of 189 countries in its own governance.

We would argue that reform of the use of the veto is also in the long term interest of even the permanent members.

They, even more than the rest of us, have an interest in preventing the sure and steady decline in

the authority of the Council that unrestrained recourse to this anachronism entails.

Second, we should no longer regard the OEWG as a forum for a handful of member states to insist that we accord them the privilege of individual permanent seats on the Council.

‘Permanent’ is a long time.

None of us can know what the future holds.

As well, adding vetoes would only make the Council more sclerotic.

It would be the equivalent of pouring cement into the UN motor.

The veto, or the threat of the veto, is omnipresent.

Five vetoes already impair the good functioning of the Council.

How would adding five more vetoes help?

And who would it help?

The organization is, after all according to Article 2 of the Charter, “based on the sovereign equality of all its members”.

It is time for reform of the Council, without doubt.

But that reform will only really be reform if those who aspire to the privilege permanent membership and those who were accorded it, in a time long past, work with the rest of us to develop a new, democratic, representative and accountable Council.

Monsieur le Président,

Je propose que nous utilisions la prochaine session du Groupe de travail à composition non limitée pour oeuvrer en faveur d’un Conseil de sécurité doté de méthodes de travail plus efficaces, capable de prendre des décisions équitables et raisonnables, doté d’un processus d’élargissement qui lui permettra de refléter la diversité des membres de l’ONU et conforme aux principes de cette Organisation.

L'heure est venue de faire passer nos besoins collectifs avant des intérêts nationaux étroits.