

17 October 2003

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Julian Robert Hunte,
President of the 58th Session of the General Assembly,
at the President's Assessment of the Debate of Item 11: Report of the
Security Council**

The Assembly will recall that in opening the debate on Item 11, Report of the Security Council, I advised that I would implement the provision contained in paragraph 12 of resolution 51/241, whereby, "the President of the Assembly shall assess the debate on this item and consider the need for further consideration of the report of the Security Council". To facilitate this process, this item was presented for separate consideration in the Programme of Work of the Plenary.

Over the course of three sessions, forty (40) speakers addressed the Report of the Security Council. The United States, in its capacity as President of the Council for the month of October, provided a succinct presentation of the Council's report.

The United States was, however, the only one of the five (5) permanent members of the Council to speak in the debate on item 11. Of the ten non-permanent members of the Council, four (4) presented views on the Report in the debate. It was said to be a pity that so few Security Council members - particularly permanent members - spoke in the debate. It was suggested that, in order to get more and better information, all fifteen (15) members of the Council should be requested, in adopting the report, to give their views on it.

There were divergent views regarding the separation of Item 11 from Item 56 on reform of the Council, for consideration by the Plenary. Among those who specifically addressed this issue, some thought that separate debates on these two priority issues was warranted. However, disappointment was also expressed concerning the return to separate debates.

While a number of speakers focussed their remarks specifically on the Report of the Council, in the final analysis, few spoke strictly or fully to it. Some combined their remarks on both Items 11 and 56, while others speaking to the report of the Council, made only cursory remarks on that issue and went on to comment more substantively on reform issues. I wish now to turn to the principal points emerging from the debate on item 11.

There were widely divergent views on the quality and usefulness of the Council's report. On the one hand, the report received commendation and support as a comprehensive, yet concise document, evidence of the Council's hard work and productivity, and an invaluable source of reference information and insight into the activities of the Council. The Report was also cited as an encouraging sign of the Council's continuing positive response to the demand of member states that its Report should be more analytical, concise and easy to read.

On the other hand, it was stated that the Report reflected neither the depth nor importance of the Council's work; was too descriptive, excessively lengthy and devoid of elements that would allow an assessment of the work of the Council; lacked clarity; and was characterised by an abundance of information, but little in the way of explanation or analysis. This led some to conclude that the report did not lend itself to the in-depth reflection that it should command.

It was the widely held view that the Report of the Council needed to be a document more useful to member states, one that had greater analytical content and that provided the full accounting to which the Assembly had a legitimate right. It was said that the Report should not be confined to what the Council had achieved, but importantly, should also address what has worked, and why. In this way, the Assembly would be in a position to evaluate, in depth, the workings of the Council.

The Security Council's procedure for the preparation of its Report was also raised as an issue in the debate. It was considered regrettable, in that regard, that the Council had not observed its practice of previous years of discussing among Security Council members, in open meeting, how each member's views should be reflected in the report during the drafting process. That practice, it was contended, was in the interest of transparency and accountability. The view as also expressed that the Council ought to revert to holding open meetings on its Report.

The wider issue of the relationship between the General Assembly and the Security Council was also taken up in the context of the Council's Report. A satisfactory relationship between the principal organs was considered to be fundamental to the work of the United Nations. It was contended that the report reconfirms the rules that regulate the rapport between the General Assembly and the Security Council and provides an important opportunity for the Assembly to examine in depth the activities of the Council and to identify action that should be taken to achieve the improvements required. The Council's Report was also seen as providing a rare opportunity for dialogue between the Assembly and the Council, a dialogue that should not be ritualistic.

Attention was drawn to Article 15 of the Charter, which both calls for the report of the Council and characterises its content. In this context it was emphasised that the Article was meant to involve more than merely a symbolic or ritualistic act. In that context, it was said that the relationship between the General Assembly and the Security Council left much to be desired, and that it might be contended that the concentration of decision-making power within the Security Council has been at the expense of the General Assembly. This need not be so, it was contended, because the Charter sets out how the various organs of the United Nations should reciprocally support each other.

Also on the relationship between the General Assembly and the Security Council, the view was expressed that the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council should consult frequently, particularly during crises. It was also pointed out that the General Assembly still does not receive the special reports envisaged in Article 24 paragraph 3 of the Charter, which calls for "the Security Council ... when necessary [to submit] special reports to

the General Assembly for its consideration". If such specific reports were received, it was contended, they would contribute to promoting an active relationship between the General Assembly and the Security Council. They would also provide a basis whereby the General Assembly could formulate recommendations for the Council.

A question was raised as to whether the relationship between the General Assembly and the Security Council was clear, especially with reference to whether the Security Council reports to the Assembly and was subordinate to the Assembly.

Notwithstanding, there was positive reaction to, and commendation for, a number of procedures of the Council that were considered to be useful and developments in the relationship between the General Assembly and the Council that were considered to be both positive and promising.

Open meetings of the Council received notable support, as did the monthly briefings by the President of the Security Council and the periodic "wrap-up" sessions to which non-member states were invited. It was suggested that these "wrap-up" monthly sessions could be institutionalised, in order to enhance interaction and promote synergies between the work of the Assembly and the work of the Council. It was pointed out, however, that the Council's changing of open meetings to open debates, though welcomed, was often done without adequate notice, leaving non-members unable to take full advantage of the opportunities.

Speakers also commented on the initiatives taken by the Council in respect of non-member states. Providing briefings for non-member states, and public discussion of pressing issues that relate to the maintenance of peace and security were cited in this context. In that regard, public discussions were considered to assist the Council in producing more balanced and impartial decisions.

Concern was nevertheless expressed regarding the Council's lack of transparency and its failure to give due attention to the views of the wider membership. The importance of giving all non-members of the Council the opportunity to express their views on issues before it, and more systematic consultations with non-member states was emphasised in that context.

It was suggested, however, that where decisions are taken before the debate is held and non-members are heard after Council members have spoken, the contribution of non-members cannot be really effective. The tendency for decision-making to be concentrated among the permanent members was considered to be an undemocratic process, undermining the legitimacy of Council decisions and the authority of Council action. It was emphasised, in that regard, that the views of non-members should be taken into account before the Council makes decisions.

Views diverged on the issue of thematic debates in the Security Council. Some supported and commended the debates, which they found to be helpful. It was also argued, however, that thematic debates were an unnecessary addition to the work of the Council, giving increasing concern about duplication and encroachment on subject matters that are more appropriately handled by the General Assembly. It was also stated that "wrap-up sessions" that engaged in a

thematic discussion totally unrelated to the Council's activities for that month did not serve their purpose.

Regarding the relationship between the Council and other United Nations bodies and regional organisations, it was asserted that such relationships were of particular importance. Consultations between the Council and regional and sub-regional institutions were particularly welcomed.

In respect of reporting procedures, it was contended that if the General Assembly wanted clear reporting, it should provide clear criteria. It was suggested that the Assembly's failure to provide such criteria might have accounted for the regression in the quality of the current Security Council Report.

Regarding the outcome of the Assembly's consideration of the Report of the Security Council, it was proposed that a special meeting of the Council should be held to hear the response of the General Assembly to the Report. According to the proposal, this might be done through a statement to be made by the President of the Assembly, or alternately through the adoption of a formal document to be presented to the Council.

Having now given you my assessment of the debate on the Report of the Security Council, I wish to revert to resolution 51/241. In it, the President is to hold informal consultations as appropriate following assessment of the debate, to determine if there are recommendations that might be made to the Security Council. I will be consulting informally, including with those delegations that made specific proposals, to make a determination of any further action that might be taken in respect of the Security Council's Report.

Excellencies, delegates, I thank you for your attention.