

18 November 2008

**Statement of Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann,  
President of the 63rd Session of the General Assembly,  
on the Security Council reform and the Security Council report**

*Delivered by H.E. Zahir Tanin, Permanent Representative of Afghanistan*

Excellencies, Distinguished delegates, brothers and sisters all,

As you all know, this summer the historic renovation of the UN building got underway under the Capital Master Plan. Asbestos, bad lighting, faulty ventilation, leaky roofs, inadequate security and dated décor. Just like the building, the institutions are also in desperate need of an overhaul – that is the real master plan. Today, we don hard hats and gleaming new shovels – I am ready to break ground. We are all ready to break ground. We are ready to assume our responsibilities and make the most out of our historic opportunity to democratize the Security Council.

At the 2005 World Summit, our leaders voiced support for, and I quote, “an early reform of the Security Council – an essential element of our overall effort to reform the United Nations – in order to make it more broadly representative, efficient and transparent and thus to further enhance its effectiveness and the legitimacy and implementation of its decisions,” end of quote. Our leaders thus already spelled out what the objective of Security Council reform is. What they did not tell us, of course, was their definition of “early reform”. However, it would seem safe to say, that they did not mean to see another World Summit pass us by with the status quo intact. That is why we must move swiftly to bring out the hammer and nails and rebuild the horseshoe table. The 21st century does not require a horseshoe table, but a circle-shaped one, with room for extra seats. We must come full circle, realising our founders’ vision of a Council with the legitimacy to act on behalf of all Member States, in accordance with article 24 of the Charter.

Thanks to the moral courage and diplomatic skills of many great men and women, many of them here in the room, we are in an excellent position to make change happen. In the twilight of the 62nd session, you decided to take a decisive step towards Security Council reform by launching intergovernmental negotiations during the 63rd session. Making the most out of that achievement would be a centrepiece of any subsequent GA presidency. However, it places a special responsibility on a transformational presidency like mine. A presidency built around the imperative of a more democratic United Nations, where every country counts. You can count on me and you can also count on Ambassador Tanin, whose appointment as vice-chair of the Open-Ended Working Group and as chair of the upcoming intergovernmental negotiations was universally applauded. You can count on us to work our hearts out for you, for all of you.

Each and every one of us stands to gain. Peace and security cannot be maintained by a Security Council that is out of date and out of touch. Let our reform effort therefore not run out of time: a better Council cannot wait until tomorrow, if we want to have a better tomorrow.

So here we are today, poised for progress. The platform for progress is decision 62/557. This decision is the ground beneath our feet and, as I have stressed both informally and formally, I intend to implement it both in letter and in spirit. That is why I guarantee the Open-Ended Working Group the opportunity to contribute to the upcoming intergovernmental negotiations in a positive way and help pave the way towards them. An effort already well underway, with meetings both last week and yesterday. To maximize the chances of success, I will shortly present a work plan for the Working Group. Above all, the plan will be characterized by ambition. Ambition not to waste a single minute. Ambition to, if possible, finish early, before the February 1 deadline. Whatever happens in the Working Group, the intergovernmental negotiations will start at the very latest on February 28, 2009 – however, it is my firm belief that we must work as hard as possible to be able to start as early as possible.

For this entire enterprise to prosper, one principle in particular should in my view be respected: we should not reinvent the wheel. Over the years, you the Membership, many of you personally, have been quite successful at paving the way towards the intergovernmental negotiations, culminating in 62/557. Standing on the shoulders of giants, we can deliver on its promise. I look forward to hearing your remarks, particularly on how you plan to contribute to that endeavour, as I am sure you all will to the best of your abilities.

As long as the Council remains unreformed, however, we need to make an extra effort to hold it to account. Today, the General Assembly has that opportunity and I have beforehand encouraged Member States to especially use this debate to take advantage of it. Before us is the report of the Security Council. It is a factual account of the Council's work in the period behind us. 219 formal meetings, 58 resolutions and 50 presidential statements. The report is full of such facts and figures on the Council's efforts to fulfil its mandate of maintaining international peace and security.

At the end of last year's debate, President Kerim made the following observation, and I quote: "Some serious concerns were expressed regarding the report, in particular the lack of comprehensive evaluations of the various deliberations of the Council. [...] Many participants in the debate stressed the importance that in the future the report should be more analytical and substantive." End of quote. It is my sincere hope that we will not let that hold us back in our debate today. Neither in our dialogue with the Council nor in our evaluation of its work. If the report indeed lacks evaluation and analysis, then the Assembly should make its own.

Nothing less is expected from a General Assembly that within the United Nations wants to hold its own. An Assembly that truly engages the Council at the same time engages in self-renewal. Next to Security Council reform, this renaissance of the General Assembly constitutes another crucial component of that real master plan I mentioned at the outset of my statement. That overhaul not only of the UN's physical structure, but of its institutions as well. Not of the exterior, but of the interior. Bringing about internal change is far more difficult than external change – the difference between an open-heart operation and a facelift. The open-heart operation involves opening the chest – in other

words, we face enormous resistance, but can also expect much greater rewards: a world body with a new lease on life.

Thank you.