

16 May 2011

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Joseph Deiss,
President of the 65th Session of the General Assembly,
at the Opening of the Conference on “Global Governance and
Security Council Reform”**

Mr. Foreign Minister,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The beginning of the 21st century needs a global governance system that is efficient, inclusive and representative - a governance system that combines, in a coherent manner, legitimacy, leadership and expertise. Time was needed for reflection, but now we have to move to action. This is why I have made global governance a major focus of the 65th session of the General Assembly.

The world today is getting more interdependent and more integrated. Problems cross borders without asking for passports and visas. Information spreads instantly all over the globe. It is no longer possible to ignore what is happening abroad. Global challenges require coordinated and concerted action of the international community.

Our institutions need to adapt in order to integrate changes that occurred and to cope with today's global challenges. Many date back to just after the Second World War. They have been instrumental in pacifying the world and in increasing prosperity and welfare. But we are now at a historic juncture and a new world order is in the making. New markets are emerging, which are proving more resilient and more dynamic than the more mature economies of the industrialized countries. Population growth is mainly happening in the emerging and developing countries. New political powers are positioning themselves on the international stage. Our multilateral institutions do not adequately take into account the political, economic and demographic shift that has been taking place during the last decade, from West to East and from North to South.

Against this background, there is no doubt that the UN Security Council also has to adapt to the changes that occurred since 1945. There is broad agreement about this. I have not heard any dissenting voices neither in New York nor in any capital or at any international conference that I have attended since the beginning of my mandate. Yet, the discussion about the reform has been going on for nearly two decades and there is no satisfactory progress.

In fact, while there is general recognition of the need to reform and to enlarge the Council, opinions diverge when it comes to the more concrete questions such as the category of new members, their number, their geographic distribution and the Council's working methods.

The international community is put to the test. Unless we find the determination to advance on this issue, the United Nations will lose its credibility. Our organization will be marginalized, and important issues will be discussed in other forums and groupings, which are perceived to be more efficient and more representative of the new realities of the day. Do we really want this? I personally would find it unacceptable. It is for this reason that I am so strongly pleading to reinforce the United Nations as the central place of global governance.

Therefore, let me ask all of you: Is the challenge to reform the Security Council really that daunting? Is there no way to overcome the divisions and to forge a win-win compromise that would be acceptable for a broad majority of Member States?

I have consulted widely on this topic of crucial importance. I have listened carefully to all of you and I have a couple of observations that I want to share with you. I see them as helpful in reaching a solution that reflects the new realities of today. I would like to group them in five key principles that should guide us.

First: Broadest possible support.

We will only succeed to reform the Security Council if we rally the broadest possible support within the international community. Reforming the Security Council is touching one of the foundations of our organization. Therefore, a narrow two-thirds majority is not sufficient.

Second: Respect for the fundamental values of the United Nations.

The outcome of any reform of the Security Council has to be in conformity with the most basic values and principles of the United Nations. Inclusiveness, democracy, accountability, transparency and subsidiarity: these are core values that the United Nations stands for. They must also guide our effort and constitute the backbone of institutional reform.

Kenneth Arrow, the economist and Nobel Prize winner, set out the criteria for perfect democracy and famously demonstrated with his ‘impossibility theorem’ that all conditions cannot be fulfilled at the same time. The same applies here. An appropriate balance among these core values that I have just mentioned will have to be found.

Third: Simplicity.

We must seek the best possible model for all parties, but our effort to reform must be realistic and take into account what already exists. The solution has to be simple so that it can be easily understood by politicians, parliamentarians and the wider public.

Fourth: Efficiency.

The fact is that the Security Council has to act more and more in situations of urgency. Therefore, the reform has to aim at efficiency and the solution has to be workable in every respect.

Fifth: Flexibility.

We should also be mindful not to lock ourselves into a new structure that could soon become obsolete. The world is changing rapidly. Who knows what it will look like in a few years? Flexibility is therefore required and the system should manage to adapt to new developments smoothly and rapidly.

Mr. Foreign Minister,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me be clear: I am not proposing or pleading for any specific solution. It is up to you, the Member States, to decide about the direction and the pace of progress. I welcome all the initiatives taken by the Member States over the last weeks, including the organization of this Conference in Rome. These are opportunities to discuss, to seek common ground on important issues and to advance.

The decision to forge the compromise ultimately lies with you. But be assured – I said it in my speech at the opening of the 65th session of the General Assembly and I repeated it on many occasions, for example in Addis Ababa at the Summit of the African Union, and during the many bilateral consultations that I had on the topic: I am determined that progress on this issue can be made during my presidency. I am available and willing to move forward with you on the reform of the Security Council.

We must now embark on real negotiations and, if they are to succeed, it is essential that all parties display a constructive, realistic and flexible attitude. I call on your support in this endeavor. Success in reforming the UN Security Council will be an important contribution to improving our capacity to address global challenges and to creating a world that is safer, more democratic, more representative and more prosperous. It will be an important legacy to the next generations, giving them the opportunity to live according to their aspirations in peace, prosperity and happiness.