

54. Letter dated 5 April 2007 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Initial proceedings

Deliberations of 17 April 2007 (5663rd meeting)

At its 5663rd meeting, on 17 April 2007, the Security Council included in its agenda the item entitled “Letter dated 5 April 2007 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council”. In addition to Council members, statements were made by 40 representatives.¹ The Council also heard a statement by the Secretary-General.

The President (United Kingdom) drew the attention of the Council to a letter dated 5 April 2007 from the representative of the United Kingdom,² transmitting a concept paper on the item under consideration. The President then drew the attention of the Council to a letter dated 12 April 2007 from the representative of Cuba,³ and a letter dated 16 April 2007 from Pakistan.⁴

¹ Statements were made by representatives of Argentina, Australia, Bangladesh, Barbados, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Cape Verde, the Comoros, Costa Rica, Cuba (on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement), Denmark, Egypt, Germany (on behalf of the European Union), Iceland, India, Israel, Japan, Liechtenstein, Maldives, the Marshall Islands, Mauritius, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Namibia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Pakistan (on behalf of the Group of 77 and China), Palau, Papua New Guinea (on behalf of the Pacific Islands Forum Small Island Developing States), the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Singapore, Solomon Islands, the Sudan (on behalf of the Group of African States), Switzerland, Tuvalu, Ukraine and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).

² S/2007/186. The concept paper was entitled “Energy, security and climate”.

³ S/2007/203. In this letter, the representative of Cuba, in the capacity of Acting Chair of the Non-Aligned Movement, expressed, *inter alia*, his concern regarding “the continued and increasing encroachment by the Security Council on the functions and powers of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council and other organs through addressing issues which

In her opening remarks, the President stressed that the international community should recognize the negative impact of climate change on security. Asserting that this debate was not intended to pre-empt the authority of other United Nations bodies, she stressed that the decisions and actions taken in all those bodies required the fullest possible understanding of the issues involved.⁵

Recalling that, throughout human history, people and countries had fought over natural resources, and that too often war had been the means to secure possession over livestock, waterholes, oil, gold and other commodities, the Secretary-General said that the projected climate change could have not only serious environmental, social and economic implications, but also implications for peace and security. He therefore called for a “long-term global response” to deal with climate change.⁶

During the debate, speakers generally acknowledge that climate change presented serious global challenges, most representatives calling for international cooperation to tackle the problem in a holistic and preventive manner. Many speakers expressed the view that the need to promote energy to sustain economic growth had to be balanced with the need to protect the environment and reduce fossil fuel consumption.

Among the potential negative effects of climate change on international security, many speakers pointed to the worsening of drought and flooding, the spread of disease, food and water shortages, the displacement of people and increased migration. Several representatives stressed that the projected rise in sea levels posed an immediate threat to the survival of small island developing States and lowland areas. It

traditionally fall within the competence of the latter organs”.

⁴ S/2007/211. In this letter, the representative of Pakistan, as the Chair of the Group of 77 and China, stated, *inter alia*, that the Group felt that it was “inappropriate to consider the issue of energy in the Security Council”.

⁵ S/PV.5663, pp. 2-3.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 13-14.

was noted that climate change most adversely affected those countries and peoples that were already struggling to achieve sustainable development, and which at the same time had contributed the least to carbon emissions.

On the linkage between climate change, energy and security, many speakers emphasized that the Council had the responsibility to consider the question, as it constituted one of the new threats to international peace and security the world was facing. They hoped that the debate would help to raise awareness and prompt further action to address the challenges.

The representative of Belgium opined that conventional security policies were still often based on obsolete threat assessments, and were more geared to managing crises than to preventing them. He further stressed that security policies exclusively based on national sovereignty appeared “less and less appropriate”.⁷

The representative of the United Kingdom stated that climate change was “transforming the way that we think about security”. Pointing to the possible consequences of climate change, including increased flooding, disease, drought and crop failure, and from that migration on an unprecedented scale and intensified competition for resources, she concluded that climate change reached to “the very heart of the security agenda”.⁸

The representative of Papua New Guinea, echoed by the representatives of Tuvalu, the Solomon Islands and the Marshall Islands, believed that the Council should keep the issue of climate change and environmental security on its agenda, and under permanent review. Recalling that the Security Council and the General Assembly had accepted the responsibility to protect, he stressed that the dangers facing the small islands and their populations because of climate change were no less serious than those faced by nations and peoples threatened by guns and bombs. The effects of climate change were likely to cause massive dislocations, hatred and alienation, just like any war or refugee crisis, he emphasized. He further opined that

the Council should ensure that all countries contributed to address the implications of climate change.⁹

Among other examples of the link between climate change and security cited during the debate, the representative of Germany, echoed by the representative of Israel, stressed that the scarcity of water, food and fertile land could contribute to “driving conflict”. She was also convinced that an overall framework of preventive diplomacy was needed to alleviate the worst foreseen consequences of climate change.¹⁰

While acknowledging the urgent need for the international community to address climate change and energy consumption implications, a number of speakers voiced the opinion that the Council was not the proper forum to discuss the issue. Stressing that energy and climate change were linked to development issues rather than to the threat to international peace and security, they were concerned that by convening this debate, the Council was further encroaching on the roles and responsibilities of other principal United Nations organs. They expressed the hope that the debate would not create a precedent or undermine the authority or mandate of the existing relevant bodies, processes and instruments. Speakers expressed the view that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change was the appropriate forum for considering risks associated with and action to address climate change.¹¹ The representative of China said that the Council’s involvement in the issue would not benefit the ongoing discussion among Member States, since it did not have the necessary expertise.¹² The representative of South Africa hoped that the discussions would not in any way elevate the issue of climate or environment to an item on the agenda of the Council, while the representative of France commented

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 26-29 (Papua New Guinea); S/PV.5663 (Resumption 1), pp. 7-8 (Tuvalu); pp. 12-14 (Solomon Islands); and pp. 16-17 (Marshall Islands).

¹⁰ S/PV.5663, pp. 19-20 (Germany, on behalf of the European Union); and S/PV.5663 (Resumption 1), pp. 32-34 (Israel).

¹¹ S/PV.5663, pp. 9-10 (Qatar); pp. 12-13 (China); pp. 14-15 (Indonesia); pp. 15-17 (South Africa); p. 17 (Russian Federation); pp. 24-25 (Pakistan, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China); pp. 31-32 (Namibia); S/PV.5663 (Resumption 1), pp. 9-10 (Bangladesh); pp. 10-11 (Venezuela, Bolivarian Republic of); pp. 21-23 (India); and pp. 26-27 (Cuba).

¹² S/PV.5663, pp. 12-13.

that “institutional squabbling” was inappropriate given what was at stake.¹³

On the ways and means to address the issue of climate change, many speakers stressed that all Member States should meet their obligations under the Kyoto Protocol. The need to support the development and use of clean energy and to reduce gas emissions was underlined, as well as the need to prevent the negative effects arising from natural disasters. A number of speakers called on the international community to cooperate in researching and developing renewable and alternative energy resources.

On specific measures to address the problem, speakers attached great importance to the holding of the forthcoming fifteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development and the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change. The representative of Switzerland invited all stakeholders to participate in the first session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, to be held in Geneva in June. This

¹³ Ibid., pp. 10-11.

high-level event was intended to raise awareness and to consider ways and means to move disaster risk reduction higher up on the international policy agenda.¹⁴

While the representative of Italy called for the establishment of a United Nations environmental organization,¹⁵ the representative of the Netherlands urged the Secretary-General to alert the Council regarding climate-related challenges.¹⁶ The representative of Japan proposed that the Secretary-General be requested by the General Assembly to swiftly issue a report with recommendations on how best the United Nations system as a whole could organize itself to strengthen its capacity so that it would be able to address climate change more effectively. He also underlined the overriding importance of controlling greenhouse gas emissions and creating an effective post-Kyoto framework.¹⁷

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 25-26.

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 4-5.

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 21-22.

¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 29-31.

55. Security Council mission

Overview

During the period under review, the Security Council completed 10 missions, which were discussed at 20 meetings under the item entitled “Security Council mission”. The missions’ destinations included several African countries,¹ as well as Afghanistan, Timor-Leste, Kosovo and Haiti, which was the first visit of a Security Council mission to Latin America and the Caribbean. The Council also held a follow-up meeting to its mission to Central Africa that had been conducted from 7 to 16 June 2003. In this study, the reports and meetings are discussed under headings corresponding to the missions, which are listed chronologically. A table at the end of the section lists all missions, including their destinations, composition and associated meetings.

¹ Burundi, Chad, Côte d’Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania.

1. Follow-up to mission to Central Africa, 7 to 16 June 2003

At its 4911th meeting, on 17 February 2004, the Security Council included in its agenda the progress report of the Secretary-General on the recommendations of the Security Council mission to Central Africa.² The Council heard a briefing by the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, following which statements were made by all Council members and the representatives of Burundi, Egypt, Ireland (on behalf of the European Union),³ Japan, Rwanda and the Syrian Arab Republic.

² S/2004/52.

³ The representative of Ireland spoke on behalf of the European Union and Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Norway, Poland, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovakia, Slovenia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey.