

General Assembly Debate on the Annual Report of the Security Council

30 June 2023

Summary

Introduction

On 30 June 2023, the General Assembly held a debate under agenda item 27 entitled “Report of the Security Council”. The President of the General Assembly delivered opening remarks, available [here](#). Two group statements and 31 national statements were delivered by Member States.

Under Article 24(3) of the UN Charter, the Security Council must submit an annual report to the General Assembly for its consideration. The submission of the annual report is therefore an obligation the Council has to the General Assembly under the Charter. The report A/77/2, which was introduced by the United Arab Emirates in its capacity as President of the Security Council for the month of June 2023, provides an overview of the work of the Security Council covering the period from 1 January 2022 to 31 December 2022.

The following is a summary of recommendations made during the debate divided into those focused on process and those focused on content.

Process

- Several Member States welcomed the Security Council adoption of the report by the deadline of 30 May and encouraged the Council to meet other relevant deadlines in future, such as agreeing on the introduction of the report by the end of January. Some suggested that the General Assembly similarly set a fixed date for its consideration of the report in order to enhance predictability, transparency and to assist smaller delegations in their preparations.
- Member States advocated for enhanced engagement with the UN membership throughout the process of the drafting of the report.
 - From the Council side, an open debate could be organised in January to allow Member States to offer their assessment of the Council’s work.
 - The Council member in charge of drafting the report’s introduction could organise an interactive dialogue with Member States to hear and incorporate their views.
 - The PGA could similarly convene a mid-term dialogue for Member States to discuss the work of the Council.
 - Some Member States also argued for greater consultation with peacekeeping mission host states as well as troop and police contributing countries.
- The importance of Security Council monthly assessments was stressed. Such assessments do not require unanimity and should thus not be reduced to the lowest common denominator. Council members were encouraged to complete their assessments by the end of the year to assist in the preparation of the annual report.
- On the debate itself, several speakers encouraged greater participation from Member States. Council members, in particular Permanent Members, should be present at the debate.
- Further, several Member States encouraged the President of the General Assembly to assess the debate and provide a summary of recommendations expressed by Member States to the President of the Security Council for the subsequent consideration of the Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions.

Content

- The vast majority of Member States called for a more comprehensive, complete, and analytical report. Failing this, the duty of accountability is not fulfilled, and Member States are not properly informed of the Council's work.
- In addition to analysis of the Council's publicly accessible activities, Member States also called for additional information on closed consultations and discussions held under "Any Other Business". Some argued that private deliberations should be the exception rather than the norm. Inclusion in the report of information on Arria formula meetings was also suggested.
- Several Member States called for the report to cover draft resolutions that failed to be adopted, including points of divergence and convergence, reasons for rejection, and the positions of Council members. While reference to the use of the veto was welcomed by Member States, others called for greater analysis as well as a standalone chapter on the use of the veto.
- Some Member States further suggested that the report analyse the status of each conflict on the agenda of the Council, the impact of the Council on the conflict throughout the reporting period, and information on the implementation, or lack thereof, of the Council's resolutions by relevant actors.
- The inclusion of thematic and emerging issues, such as climate and security and food security, was welcomed by some Member States. However, it was noted that further information on these issues could be included in the report.
- The role of the elected members of the Council was commended, and it was suggested that the views of the departing elected Council members could be specifically cited in the annual report without the need for unanimity. Elected Council members bring regional perspectives and insights to the Council's work, which could be further reflected in the annual report.
- The distribution of work amongst Council members was raised and as regards the annual report, it was suggested that information on the penholder system, including a chart on the distribution of penholder roles, be included.

Conclusion

Throughout the debate, Member States were clear that the Security Council acts on behalf of the UN membership. The General Assembly's consideration of the annual report of the Security Council therefore represents an important exercise in accountability and transparency across the main organs of the UN on matters of international peace and security.

Many of the Council's achievements over the course of 2022 were commended, including the adoption of a resolution establishing a humanitarian carve out to UN sanctions regimes, action on the situation in Haiti and the adoption of the first resolution on Myanmar. However, Member States also stressed that, in several cases, the Council had not lived up to its mandate to maintain international peace and security. In this regard, the use of the veto, the Council's failure to act in relation to the war in Ukraine and lack of progress on longstanding agenda items such as the question of Palestine, featured prominently in the debate.

Member States suggestions and proposals were numerous, substantive and diverse. However, it must be acknowledged that while statements varied in some respects, there was a resounding call for the annual report to contain more analysis to facilitate a deeper and more substantive assessment by Member States of the Council's work. Going forward, innovation is possible, both as regards the process and substance of the annual report.