

Informal Consultation on the Annual Report of the Security Council

16 January 2024

Summary by the Office of the President of the General Assembly

On 16 January 2024, the President of the General Assembly at its 78th session, H. E. Dennis Francis, in cooperation with the Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom to the United Nations, convened an informal consultation for Member States and Observers to express their views ahead of the drafting of the introduction of the 2023 annual report of the Security Council.

The informal consultation was convened as a result of the Gayap Dialogue held on 16 November 2023 on “the role of the General Assembly in times of heightened crisis”, as well as in accordance with Security Council Presidential Note S/2017/507, which stated that the Security Council member drafting the annual report “may also consider organizing, where appropriate, interactive informal exchanges of views with the wider membership”.

The President of the General Assembly delivered opening remarks, in which he acknowledged the membership’s calls for a more analytical and collaborative approach to the drafting of the annual report. In this connection, he outlined that in conferring the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security on the Security Council under the UN Charter, the members of the United Nations agreed “that in carrying out its duties under this responsibility the Security Council acts on their behalf”. He outlined several examples of good cooperation between the General Assembly and the Security Council, such as the monthly coordination meetings with the rotating Security Council Presidencies, the joint briefing on Haiti, and the plenary meetings held in accordance with Resolution A/RES/76/262 (so called “veto initiative”). He stressed that this informal consultation is a continuation and a deepening of the partnership between two principal organs. He urged members of the Council to maintain an open mind to the views expressed, which may find resonance in the annual report.

The United Kingdom, as the Security Council member responsible for drafting the introduction of the 2023 annual report, welcomed the opportunity to hear the views of the membership, which would serve not only to inform the annual report, but also to strengthen efforts to enhance the effectiveness, efficiency, and transparency of the Security Council. While geopolitics loomed large over the work of the Council in 2023, it was noted that 50 Resolutions were adopted during the reporting period, with a greater proportion adopted by consensus than in 2022, with a further 40 products in the form of Press Statements and Presidential Statements agreed. Nonetheless, the report should not only cover areas where Council members agreed but should also reflect disagreements. It should analyse trends, rather than simply report facts. The United Kingdom recalled the need for consensus amongst Council members on the document and expressed their intention to reflect the views of the membership to the extent possible.

Representatives of Member States and Observers took the floor to express their views, including one on behalf of a group of 27 Member States. The following is a summary of the statements delivered.

- Delegations described the submission of the annual report of the Security Council to the General Assembly as an important exercise of transparency and accountability. In this regard, many Member States warmly welcomed the organisation of the informal consultation and the opportunity to present their views and suggestions in advance of the drafting of the introduction of the report. They expressed the expectation that these views be taken into consideration.
- A recurrent call of Member States was for a more comprehensive and analytical report. The introduction of the report should not simply reflect the work of the Council in numerical terms, but should include

an analysis of the reporting period, thus facilitating a deeper and more substantive assessment by Member States of the Council's work.

- Numerous Member States referenced the increased use of the veto in 2023. They called for greater examination of the use of the veto, including the statements of explanation by the Member States which exercised the veto. In this regard, some Member States suggested a standalone chapter on the veto, as well as in relation to the special reports of the Security Council to the General Assembly, such as those in accordance with Resolution 76/262.
- Similarly, further details on draft resolutions that failed to be adopted were suggested for inclusion, along with information on the main provisions of the resolutions, voting record, number of cosponsors and an indication of the grounds for rejection.
- Implementation of Security Council resolutions was referenced by several Member States. It was suggested that information on this implementation, or lack thereof, should be incorporated in the report.
- The inclusion of information related to thematic and emerging issues, such as climate and security, conflict and food insecurity, and technology and security was proposed.
- Several Member States referenced the working methods of the Security Council. It was recommended that novel working methods, such as the confidential letter on Afghanistan, be included in the report. Reference to working methods commitments made by Council Presidencies could also be included. The report could also include statistics, such as disaggregated data on the participation of women and civil society representatives in the Council and information on informal meetings such as Sofa Talks and Arria formula meetings. Procedural issues, such as procedural votes and the addition and deletion of agenda items should also be noted.
- Several Member States recommended more detailed information on sanctions, including the trend of increasingly non-consensual votes on sanctions issues.
- Issues related to the non-adoption of monthly programmes of work, duplication of meeting requests and invitations of briefers were referenced and proposed for inclusion in the report. The importance of appropriate terminology and language to describe certain situations, such as language from General Assembly Emergency Special Session resolutions, was stressed.
- On the process, several Member States encouraged the timely adoption of the report in the Security Council by the deadline of 30 May 2024. Similarly, it was suggested that the General Assembly set a fixed date for its consideration of the report.
- 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 monthly assessments in a timely manner. It was noted that only one Council member (UK) published its monthly assessment in 2023.
- Several Member States encouraged the President of the General Assembly to assess the debate and provide a summary of the recommendations expressed at the meeting to the President of the Security Council for the subsequent consideration of the Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions.

Overall, it was noted that 2023 was a challenging year for the Security Council, with Member States referencing the crisis in the Gaza Strip and the continued aggression against Ukraine as examples of the Council's inability to fulfil its responsibility to maintain international peace and security. It was underlined that an accurate and analytical annual report to the General Assembly, taking into account the recommendations expressed by Member States and Observers, would thus not only contribute to the transparency and accountability of the Council, but also to its credibility.
