



ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

Permanent Mission of St. Vincent and the Grenadines to the United Nations

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Statement

By

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At the

**Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable
Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security
Council and Other Matters related to the Security Council**

10th April, 2008
New York

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Mr. President,

Thank you for convening this meeting; for your continued energy, engagement and leadership in furthering this critical process; for your Seven Pillars, to which the current momentum owes a great deal; and for circulating the carefully considered positions of the various groups. My delegation also joins those applauding the addition of Djibouti to your Task Force. If only expansion of the Security Council could be accomplished with similar ease and acclaim as the enlargement of your Task Force.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines does not approach this issue with narrow national interests, but rather with a fundamental philosophical belief in the critical importance of a democratic reform process to fashion a more representative and accountable Security Council. Our wish for an inclusive and democratic process that follows the will of the General Assembly means that we have very few non-negotiable starting positions. However, we will deem as unacceptable any expansion in mere numbers that fails to address or otherwise entrenches the current inequalities in geographic and developmental representation.

Nonetheless, at this juncture, we have no desire to prejudge the substance of forthcoming negotiations, although we understand the urge of some to restate their negotiation stances today, since the actual commencement of intergovernmental negotiations seems to be always over the next horizon. However, we are more concerned at this point with the procedural mechanisms for moving the process forward, to the point where we can meaningfully negotiate and arrive at decisions upon substantive issues.

In that regard, we reject any attempts to perpetuate the existing state of paralysis through perpetual analysis. We think that Japan's call this morning for an April 2008 start to negotiations is both appropriate and feasible. It is not beyond the considerable skill of the Task Force to synthesize a text – within the next week or two – that can serve as the basis for intergovernmental negotiations in keeping with our unanimous Decision 61/561 of last September. In our opinion, there is no logical procedural bar to commencing the intergovernmental negotiations process within the current session of the General Assembly.

Mr. President,

I have listened closely to the discussions and carefully read the papers submitted by the various groups. Frankly, there does not appear to be any great disagreement over the negotiables, but rather a fear of the *results* of negotiations themselves. What I have heard among some groups is an apparent willingness to stick with the devil they know, rather than enter into a process whose outcome is not predetermined. We cannot let this fear hobble our march towards what we all agree is necessary reform. To refer to my distinguished colleague from the Netherlands this morning, all we need is a little courage.

Mr. President,

We have noted with concern a great deal of unsubstantiated discussion of an “apparent willingness” of Member States to settle for some sort of interim or intermediate agreement on reform. From our vantage point, no such apparent willingness has made itself empirically apparent, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, for one, does not support the imposition of such a limiting framework even before negotiations have begun. Our *unwillingness* to embrace an intermediate solution at the outset is born not out of an aversion to small steps and steady progress, but from a fear that the *first* small step will be the *last* step taken for the next two decades. However well-meaning interim measures may be, their practical effect would be continued disenfranchisement of developing and other underrepresented states. It would be tragic, Mr. President, if we squandered the hard-fought momentum created to this point by avoiding difficult issues and implementing stopgap reforms simply for the sake of reform; and on the basis of an untested assumption that the majority of states favoured such an approach.

Further, we note the apparent procedural misapplication of the need for consensus at stages prior to intergovernmental negotiations. Consensus is always a goal within this organization, but it is not a barrier to the commencement of negotiations. Indeed, paragraph (d) of Decision 61/561 speaks explicitly to consideration of “the positions and proposals made by Member States,” not unanimous or common denominator positions. Indeed, we must remember that the Security Council can be expanded by a $\frac{2}{3}$ vote of the General Assembly. It is illogical to apply a higher standard to a process of negotiation than we will to the substance of reform.

We also find it compelling that there is only one paragraph in Decision 61/561 that explicitly mentions intergovernmental negotiations, and that paragraph is also the only paragraph in the entire Decision that does *not* mention the Open-ended Working Group (OEWG). We cannot view the conspicuous absence of the OEWG from paragraph (d) as a drafting oversight. To us, it speaks to a recognition that the work of the OEWG ends when the process of intergovernmental negotiations begins. The proper forum for those negotiations, therefore, is necessarily the General Assembly.

Mr. President,

It seems that we are closer to meaningful reform today than we have been at any point in the United Nation's recent history. There is agreement that the Security Council should more properly reflect the world's current geopolitical realities. The only bar to this critical reform is our own inaction. Let us hear from the Task Force in two weeks. Let us begin intergovernmental negotiations this Session. And let us seize this rare opportunity to bring the Security Council into the 21st century.

I thank you.