

Lydia Swart, Center for UN Reform Education, Doha, 12 May 2011

First of all, I would like to thank the government of Qatar for organizing this very timely workshop. Furthermore, I would like to express my respect to Ambassador Tahir Tanin – it is not hard to imagine how stressful it must be to face the constant pressures from the competing factions.

The Center for UN Reform Education has closely followed reform negotiations in the GA since 2006 and has provided updates and analyses on our website and in our publication *Managing Change at the United Nations*.

As an outsider, I have the freedom to probably speak a little more frankly than most diplomats.

I would like to make ten observations:

- 1) In regards to process, there has been some movement. After 16 years, the discussions moved from the OEWG to Intergovernmental Negotiations. And in May 2010, a negotiation text - a compilation of member states' positions - was distributed.
- 2) However, this movement in process has not been matched by political progress - divisions remain very intense - and this is reflected by the length of the negotiation text and the difficulties in shortening it.
- 3) Genuine negotiations will require compromises as well as clarity on precise positions. The UfC has succeeded in slowing down the process. It is clear what this group is against - new permanent members - but it seems there is no such unity and clarity about what it does want instead.
- 4) Those that want permanent seats are not united either. The G4 has made compromises on the veto issue, but the African Group has not. Brazil, Germany, and Japan are willing to consider an intermediary solution, but India is not.
- 5) Any agreement that requires a Charter amendment needs the approval of the P5. It seems there is no agreement among the P5 about who should be allowed to become permanent members. This lack of agreement among the P5 makes a vote at this stage about expanding the SC with permanent as well as non-permanent members a tricky exercise. A no-vote of a P5 member would likely amount to a veto later on. And I imagine the P5 will want to know first what countries exactly will be under consideration for permanent seats.
- 6) But there are other problems with a vote about new permanent members at this stage. For instance, will there be a 2/3rd majority for the G4 resolution? Through the grapevine I have heard that there are only 66 signatories so far. Also, I've heard that some small countries approached by the initiators feel "bullied" to sign on. But, more importantly, the resolution lacks detail: how would it be implemented; which states would be eligible for permanent seats; and will there be some accountability for this new elite category of members.
- 7) On separating the five key issues - this will be very hard. For instance, working methods. On the one hand, this issue could be dealt with in a separate process as it does not require a Charter amendment. On the other hand, leaving it in the mix keeps pressure on

those powerful states that seek permanent or semi-permanent seats to take accountability seriously. I've heard the accusation that the working methods issue is "keeping the process hostage." However, especially to many NGOs, this is a key aspect of SC reform and its legitimacy.

- 8) How to proceed? It will be nearly impossible to create a win/win scenario for all groups - it will be hard for some countries not to regard compromise as defeat. Yet, India may have to reconsider its position; as may the African Group about the veto and selecting its 2 elite members sooner rather than later. And proponents of an intermediary model need to find agreement on important aspects, especially the review process, so that decisions taken now are not carved in stone. We live in a world where shifts in economic and political power are likely to see rapid and surprising turns. Decisions about SC reform should anticipate such shifts.
- 9) The most feasible way to proceed may be to amend the Charter so that some elected seats can be for a longer duration and/or can be renewed.
- 10) To not have progress on SC reform will reinforce harmful notions that the GA - as a universal body - cannot reach agreement on key issues; that smaller bodies are more effective; and that narrow national self-interests predominantly prevail.

I consider myself a "seasoned idealist," which means that I am often quite suspicious of member states' motives - yet, I know from experience that at times they also can reach the most sensible agreement.

Thank you.