

PORTUGAL

Statement by

H. E. Ambassador José Filipe Moraes Cabral

Permanent Representative of Portugal

to the United Nations

at the Security Council

**“Question of equitable representation and increase in the
membership of the Security Council and related matters”**

New York, 19 February 2009

(check against delivery)

Mr. Chairman,

I wish to thank you for convening this meeting. Portugal hopes that the opening of this new chapter will give real impetus to the process at hand, allowing us to move more decisively towards accomplishing what must be our common goal, that is, to reform the Security Council and adapt its working matters.

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me to impress upon our colleagues the urgency of this task. We cannot spend another decade in fruitless discussions. This decisive exercise must have a positive conclusion within a reasonable period of time.

Not only because the world has changed significantly since the San Francisco Conference and continues to change each day, at an accelerating pace.

Not only because the Security Council does not reflect the present geopolitical realities and needs to reflect them in order to effectively discharge its mandate.

Not only because at a time when the International Community is devoting serious efforts aimed at reviewing the architecture of world governance, the reform of the Security Council must be brought to the forefront of our attention, due to the central role it plays in that architecture.

Not only because the Council's working methods must be adapted so as to increase the involvement in its work of non-member States, thus furthering transparency and accountability.

Not only for these reasons, Mr. Chairman. In fact I believe that the great risk facing us is that the Security Council may become irrelevant.

Decisions concerning international peace and security, in their broad acceptance, will have to be made. The risk facing us is that they may be taken within the framework of other formal or informal bodies outside the United Nations, bodies that do not represent the International Community as a whole, and that do not enjoy the legal, political and moral legitimacy that emanate from the Charter.

For all these reasons, Mr. Chairman, our task is indeed urgent.

Portugal's views on how to bring the SC into line with current geopolitical realities are on record. We support a comprehensive reform touching both the working methods and the expansion of the two existing categories of members.

In particular, we firmly believe that the current underrepresentation of Africa, Asia and the GRULAC must be redressed.

We also firmly believe that the reform must be accomplished in a way that guarantees that all States that so wish will retain a fair chance to serve in the Council, based on their own merits. Preserving the conditions for an effective rotation of non permanent members is essential. It is an issue of decisive importance for small and medium countries which account for the vast majority of the UN membership.

Likewise, non permanent members must play a meaningful role in the Council's decision making process.

Without these two elements, both the letter and the spirit of the Charter would be distorted and the principle that the SC acts on behalf of the whole membership would be reduced to a simple formula without real significance.

We are conscious, Mr. Chairman, that countries and groups of countries hold different views on Security Council reform. This is normal, and even healthy, for the exercise touches upon core national interests and key security concerns are at stake.

But we must strive to try and address everyone's concerns with a view to achieving a global agreement which the whole membership is comfortable with, a

final outcome in which each member can review itself and its fundamental interests.

For this we must engage in serious negotiations. We must be ready to listen carefully to positions, ideas and initiatives coming from all quarters. If we are not willing to build bridges, to compromise – not as objectives in themselves but as means to ensure cohesiveness and unity among Member States which are prerequisites of a functioning collective security system – then our exercise will be doomed and we will find ourselves facing even more acute difficulties.

Portugal, for her part, is determined to contribute to this objective, through dialogue, showing flexibility and seeking compromise where needed in order to further our collective interest and responsibility.

One last point Mr. Chairman, if you allow me.

Reform of the Security Council is as essential part of a new, more effective and more cohesive Governance adapted to a World that has significantly changes since 1945, as the issues and the challenges we face have changed also. But our efforts should also be addressed to the UN system as a whole. Much is also needed in this sphere, streamlining procedures, increasing transparency and participation, making the whole system more effective, more cohesive and more answerable to the requests of the International Community as a whole. These are issues that go beyond our present debate and negotiations. But they will also have to be addressed in the future.

I thank you very much Mr. Chairman.