



**PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE REPUBLIC OF SINGAPORE
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

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**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR VANU GOPALA MENON,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF SINGAPORE
TO THE UNITED NATIONS,
AT THE INFORMAL PLENARY MEETING
ON THE QUESTION OF EQUITABLE REPRESENTATION ON
AND INCREASE IN THE MEMBERSHIP
OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL AND
OTHER MATTERS RELATED TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL,
4 MARCH 2009**

1 Thank you, Mr Chairman. Today we are supposed to discuss “Categories of Membership” under the five key and inter-related issues of Security Council reform. While we are fully prepared for an in-depth session, we should also bear in mind that any reform proposal would ultimately have to be examined as a holistic package. I assure you that we remain committed to the important and urgent task at hand, and we hope that all of us can work together in order to make real progress.

2 Singapore supports the expansion of the Security Council in both its permanent and non-permanent categories to better reflect geopolitical realities. We also believe that small states, which make up the majority of UN members, should be given more opportunities to serve on an expanded Council. Therefore, it is crucial to ensure that the views and concerns of small states are taken into account in any reform arrangement.

3 The divergent aspirations and positions of Member States on the subject of “Categories of Membership” are well-known. You have also spelt them out clearly in your letter dated 2 March to all Member States. But over the course of our discussions on UNSC reform, some delegations have expressed support for an “intermediate approach” as a possible way forward. My delegation is prepared to consider this approach, but we must point out that it is only one of many options that are on the table. Other proposals also deserve equal and serious consideration. With this in mind, my delegation would like to make the following two points on the “intermediate approach”.

4 First, assuming we decide to go down the route of creating a new intermediate category of long-term renewable or re-electable seats, my delegation would like to reiterate our suggestion for a “time-bar” to restrict countries from “flip-flopping” between categories of membership. Countries that want to run for a seat in the proposed intermediate category would be expected to stick with this category and refrain from competing for the traditional two-year non-permanent seat for a certain number of years. Using soccer terminology, countries will have to decide upfront whether to compete in Division 1 (i.e. a long-term seat in the intermediate category) or Division 2 (i.e. a regular two-year non-permanent seat). If one decides to run for a Division 1 seat, there should be an automatic prohibition for a certain number of years from competing for a Division 2 seat, irrespective of the outcome of the bid for a Division 1 seat. The reverse would also apply if one decides to run for a Division 2 seat. A Member State which decides to run for a traditional non-permanent seat (what I have called a Division 2 seat) would similarly be prohibited from running for a Division 1 or long-term seat in the intermediate category for a certain number of years. This is an obvious way to ensure that small states have a decent chance

of serving in the Council. Fundamentally, large countries, with the resources to run consecutive or concurrent campaigns, should not be allowed to have “two bites of the cherry”, to the detriment of small states. The playing field for all Member States must be fair. The right to serve on the Council must not be restricted to only the larger or medium-sized countries.

5 Second, some have proposed that when creating a new category of intermediate seats with more frequent rotation, we should also consider simultaneously reducing the number of traditional two-year non-permanent seats in an expanded Council. We have difficulties with this proposal. While we recognise the rationale behind such a proposal – which is to keep the size of the Council to a manageable number - the trouble with such a proposal is that it caters more to the larger and medium-sized countries at the expense of small states’ interests. We have stated many times before that there should be more non-permanent seats so that small states have more opportunities to serve on the Council. We therefore do not agree with proposals that reduce the number of traditional non-permanent seats. Small states already have few opportunities to serve regularly on the Council. We should not make it more difficult for them to become non-permanent members. Any reform we undertake must genuinely serve the interests and needs of the wider UN membership.

6 Turning to the question of new permanent members, I note that in your letter of 2 March, you had stated the following: “Delegations defending permanency would accept to submit the status of any new permanent seats to challenge.” This is an important point because if we are able to create a robust review clause, one which will subject aspiring permanent members to mandatory periodic reviews, before a final decision is taken on elevating them to permanent membership, we might be able to break the current impasse and take the process forward. The idea is to allow Member States to scrutinise the performance of these aspirant members, in order to ensure their accountability to the wider membership.

7 The debates we have had in the past seem to suggest that we are trapped in a fixed mindset: every time permanent or intermediate seats are mentioned, it evokes certain negative visceral reactions. But I believe that the positions of delegations may perhaps not be as far apart, a point which you yourself have alluded to in your letter of 2 March. Our challenge is how to bridge the positions? The answer may lie in tightening the review clause because no country becomes a new permanent member until it has passed the review test a certain number of times. In the interest of being helpful, what if, for example, all candidates must pass three reviews spaced ten years apart. If a candidate gets through all three reviews, then it has perhaps clearly staked a strong claim for permanent membership. Perhaps this can be a way forward for our discussions. However, I note that the delegations which have supported such a review have not presented concrete proposals on review criteria. Simply saying that there should be a review of the situation fifteen years down the road is not good enough. It is important to set clear benchmarks for each candidate’s performance, aimed at assessing the ability of the candidate to make substantive contributions to international peace and security. This defends the integrity of the reviews, and avoids them from becoming mere popularity contests.

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