



OPENING STATEMENT BY

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PRESIDENT OF
THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, brothers and sisters,

1. While opening the last meeting of this Open-Ended Working Group, I highlighted 2008 as the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights – one of the supreme accomplishments of our General Assembly and one of the strongest pleas for democratization, both of national governments and of international institutions. Today, at this first meeting of the new year, I want to draw your attention to the Assembly's proclamation of 2009 as the International Year of Reconciliation – also deeply relevant to our common resolve for Security Council reform.
2. One of the NGOs spearheading the International Year, the S.E.R. Foundation, holds up Saint Martin as a symbol of reconciliation. A warrior who, compelled by the force of compassion, cut the cloak of his soldier uniform in two, in order to share it with a scantily dressed beggar. Reconciliation by sharing the earth's resources in peace and justice, by ^{su,} declaring war only on poverty. It does not take a saint – it just takes a sane human being. The UN was supposed to be the congregation of the sane – anyone watching the insanities of the daily news can see that it is not. Every single day, lives are lost because in particular the Security Council does not live up to its potential.
3. On our shoulders rests the responsibility to turn the Council into an agent of real reconciliation. By discharging its duties of maintaining peace and security, the Council could end agony and usher in harmony. Repairing the Council requires reconciling our differences on how to reform it. Consensus decision 62/557 has already taken us far down that path, well beyond the point of no return. But there is still a long journey ahead of us. From our current position, I can clearly see the next stop in that journey: the launch of intergovernmental negotiations in the informal GA plenary, to take place as early as possible, but at the latest on 28 February 2009.
4. All the while, this Open-Ended Working Group could potentially smooth our path. I call on Member States to make the most out of the Working Group meetings, guided by my widely supported work plan. On 5 December 2008, we conducted consultations on the framework of the negotiations. Today the other topic you specified for the Working Group in Decision 62/557 features on our agenda: modalities. You have the undivided attention of Ambassador Tanin and me, especially for proposals that unite rather than divide the membership. Proposals that ultimately promote the reform we need. Reform that transforms the Council into an agent of real reconciliation. That symbol of peace and reconciliation, Saint Martin, was ironically named after Mars, the god of war. It is high time we all stop worshipping that god and start following Saint Martin's example by cutting our soldier cloaks in two. How's that for a New Year's resolution here at the UN?

Thank you.