



STATEMENT BY

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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. Next week, we extend, raise and join hands while celebrating that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights turns 60 – a milestone secular text promising to safeguard our sacred human dignity. Today, I want to highlight fourteen of its 1772 words, and I quote: "The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government." In 1948, in the depth of a long and dark night of colonialism and dictatorship, these words championing democracy were enough to light a candle of hope for billions. The hope that one day they would be delivered from foreign occupation and domestic oppression. And many have indeed been delivered, especially over the last few decades. During our lifetimes, democracy has reached a majority of the human race for the first time in history. However, that wave of democratization at the national level has yet to wash over the international system, stuck in its old undemocratic ways. Almost 60 years ago, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights sent out a transformational message of democratization into the world – now those fourteen words must come back here and transform these stately halls as they have transformed individual states. Now democratization must come to the United Nations.
2. No UN organ needs that democratization as much as the Security Council does. As I said during our recent GA debate on the Council, the 21st century does not require a horseshoe table, but a circle-shaped one, with room for extra seats. We must come full circle, realising our founders' vision of a Council with the legitimacy to act on behalf of all Member States, in accordance with article 24 of the Charter. Reading your interventions during that debate in the General Assembly, which I was unfortunately unable to attend, I was struck by one thing: the common resolve for rapid reform. "The reform cannot wait," said the representative of Brazil. The Canadian Permanent Representative spoke similar words, and I quote: "The need for change in relation to both enlargement and effectiveness of the Security Council is urgent and the time for progress is now." End of quote. Bagudu Mutle Hirse, Honourable Minister of State from Nigeria, called for, in his words, a "flexibility informed by a shared view that the Council reform in all its aspects is long overdue." And the Chinese representative elaborated on why it was indeed long overdue, alluding to, among other things, the expansion of UN membership over the years and the global advance of democratization and the international rule of law. In a world where the will of the people increasingly forms the basis of the authority of government, international peace and security cannot be left to what St. Vincent and the Grenadines described as a "five-headed monarchy". Now democratization must come to the United Nations Security Council.
3. That is the banner under which we all came together during the recent debate in the General Assembly. I therefore believe that the fire in which consensus decision 62/557 was forged still burns – a fire that needs compromise as its oxygen. To keep this fire going as we swiftly head into negotiations very early

next year is a shared responsibility – I will throw as much oil on it as I can, but the oxygen you must provide.

4. Likewise, I have devised a work plan for this Open-Ended Working Group, but you need to make it work. It is up to Member States to come up with detailed ideas and suggestions that could sway their peers. In strict conformity with consensus decision 62/557, I have scheduled a separate meeting for each of the two topics that you yourselves decided the Working Group should address. Today we address the framework and on January 19 we address the modalities in order to prepare and facilitate intergovernmental negotiations on the question of equitable representation and increase in the membership of the Security Council and other matters related to the Council. Each and every Member State is of course free to put forward each and every theme it deems relevant – however, I have put forward my work plan precisely to help you focus and achieve results. We have precious little time available, but as the American musician Leonard Bernstein quipped, “to achieve great things, two things are needed: a plan, and not quite enough time.” Whether this Working Group can indeed achieve something and contribute more than it already has to the fast approaching intergovernmental negotiations – that is now in your hands. One thing I do know, however, and that is that you will only be successful if you refrain from reinventing the wheel and if you extend, raise and join hands amongst each other.
5. I am fully confident that you will do all you can to expedite the work of the Open-Ended Working Group so as to facilitate the rapid conclusion of the responsibility given to us by decision 62/557 and thus comply with the wish of all the Member States. I wish you all blessings and happiness for the coming holiday season and throughout the next year.

Many thanks.