



# **ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES**

Permanent Mission of St. Vincent and the Grenadines to the United Nations

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## **Statement**

By

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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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Mr. President,

I thank you for convening this meeting. I also thank the members of the Task Force for the considerable time and effort they have spent consulting with Member States; for summarizing the basic positions of the various groups; and for determining definitively that all States are disposed to enter intergovernmental negotiations. I also thank the Task Force for attempting to move the process forward through the provision of an Annex of options, which, although fatally flawed in its current iteration, can easily be modified to serve as the basis of intergovernmental negotiations.

Having recited the exhaustive list of subjects for which the Task Force rightly deserves our gratitude, allow me to move on to the Report that we have gathered to discuss today.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has been labouring under the apparent misapprehension that the immediate purpose of the Task Force and this OEWG was to act as midwives to the intergovernmental negotiation process, which we have all agreed is the mechanism by which we shall achieve Security Council reform. However, after decades of attempts at conception, and nine months of gestation in this 62<sup>nd</sup> Session, the midwives are telling us that the baby is not yet ready to be born, because they are not yet certain of what sort of person it will grow up to be.

This fear of an outcome that cannot be controlled, predetermined or “preconditioned” – to use a word uttered at the beginning of today’s meeting – is at the heart of the current substantive inertia, and of the willingness by decision makers to defer final decision making to some arbitrary point in the distant future.

The Report of the Task Force is remarkable as a document of advocacy and obfuscation, rife with semantic sleight of hand and amazing leaps of logic that have already been adequately commented upon by many of my colleagues. The Report, in its current version, simply cannot serve as an accurate roadmap for progress towards intergovernmental negotiations. In the opinion of the Saint Vincent and the Grenadines delegation, there are two broad failings that preclude its acceptance.

First, and most fundamentally, is the evident attempt to delay the commencement of intergovernmental negotiations. The Report speaks of “eventual” negotiations; opines that there is currently an insufficient “basis to launch intergovernmental negotiations;” and suggests that an “all-encompassing solution is not possible.” In our respectful opinion, these sentiments are not supported by the evidence compiled by the Task Force. Indeed, I was heartened to see on the first page of the Report that “**All** [Member States] have expressed their disposition to enter intergovernmental negotiations.” This is a compelling statement. By my own count, the Report makes 13 attempts to quantify the sentiments of Member States on various issues related to Security Council reform. Of those 13 attempts, authors of the Report use imprecise quantifiers like “many,” “some,” “numerous,” “a number of,” and “widely accepted,” among others. Only twice is there mention of the agreement of “all” Member States: Once in reference to improvement of working methods, and once in support of intergovernmental negotiations. This rare expression of unanimity begs an obvious question: if all of us want intergovernmental negotiations, why delay their commencement?

In that regard, Mr. President, I applaud your stated desire to “begin intergovernmental negotiations during this session,” even if I respectfully disagree with the basis upon which you would like those negotiations to begin.

The second fundamental flaw in the Report, in our opinion, is the continued baseless advocacy of a transitional approach. Having attended the last meeting of the OEWG and two meetings of the Task Force with separate groups, I heard many States place on record their opposition to the transitional approach. Yet this opposition is not reflected in the Report we are discussing today. Quite the contrary, the Report champions the transitional approach – now rechristened as the “timeline approach” – and this meeting began with mention of a “growing recognition” of the positive possibilities of the transitional approach. It is fascinating to this delegation how often the transitional approach is advocated by those who purportedly strive for consensus, when there is clearly no consensus for a transitional approach! For the sake of clarity, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines reiterates what it said in the most recent OEWG meeting: namely, that we “do not support the imposition of such a limiting framework even before negotiations have begun.” If a transitional approach is indeed the preferred way forward for a majority of the membership, let that preference emerge through the course of intergovernmental negotiations, not as a thinly disguised straitjacket within which we must operate from the outset.

Let me revisit my already tortured midwife analogy. There can no transitional birth of Security Council reform, and “partial birth” refers to an act of termination, rather than one of successful completion. If we abort the fullness of the intergovernmental process with unnatural restrictions, we would not be addressing the issues that the Report identifies as having driven the process to date – namely, the current imbalance of power; the empowerment of developing states; democracy and developing a body more reflective of the modern world. A transitional approach is quite simply reform for the sake of reform.

In addition to these two fatal flaws, allow me to refer to a further three points that bear highlighting, and which compromise the efficacy of the Report as a fully-formed prescription for Security Council reform. Firstly, Task Force’s discernable advocacy of the OEWG as the forum for continued discussion – at the expense of negotiations in the General Assembly – does not accurately reflect the range of views on this subject, nor does it comply with the directive of Decision 61/561, for reasons discussed fully in prior meetings of the OEWG. Secondly, the increased fealty to the 7 Pillars seems to be coming at the expense of clear understanding of the unanimous mandate of the General Assembly in Decision 61/561, which is rarely cited anymore by the Task Force or its Report. As useful as the 7 Pillars have been, they cannot be viewed as having somehow superseded the actual mandate that they were conceived to implement. In the unlikely event of perceived conflict between the 7 Pillars and the Decision, we must remain mindful of the force of our unanimous mandate. Thirdly, I must take issue with the Report’s suggestion that we de-link contemplation of additional non-permanent seats from consideration of permanent membership. Of the groups that have advocated expansion in both permanent membership and non-permanent seats, I am unaware of any who have suggested that these proposals can be divorced from each other, or considered in isolation.

Mr. President,

Despite my rather muted criticisms, a careful reading of the Report reveals the grounds upon which truly inclusive and democratic intergovernmental negotiations can proceed. Let us begin

with the Annex to the Report, which lists “specific options” of an enlarged Council for the consideration of Member States. As a first step, we must disaggregate the reference to “extended or permanent seats,” and speak definitively of the option of permanent membership, as explained already by the distinguished representative of Brazil. We must also add negotiations on improved working methods, an issue that enjoys unanimous support, according to the Report.

Second, in order to remain faithful to Decision 61/561, which speaks explicitly to consideration of “the positions and proposals made by Member States,” we must naturally include those positions and proposals for consideration as part of the basis of initial intergovernmental negotiations. Thankfully, most of those positions and proposals are accurately catalogued in the Report, and need only to be extracted and added to the Annex. These issues are, as we all know:

(1) Expansion of both permanent and non-permanent categories; (2) Extension of the veto to new permanent members; (3) Equitable geographic distribution; (4) Greater representation to developing countries, including better access for small and island states; (5) Adequate increase in representation to the developed countries and those with economies in transition, reflective of current world realities; and (6) Provision for a review.

These issues, added to the work begun in the Report’s Annex, would form an exhaustive list upon which we can begin intergovernmental negotiations. Quite naturally, in the course of these negotiations, States will compromise on many of these issues, and others will fail to find favour among the required majority of our membership. That is the nature of negotiations. But the end result of that process will necessarily be a Security Council that more accurately reflects our modern United Nations, and the world that it strives mightily to make safe. I can think of no defensible reason to fear the results of such an inclusive and democratic process.

Mr. President,

I share your sense of urgency, and the Task Force’s assessment of the unanimous desire for intergovernmental negotiations. To your leadership and our impatience we now add a Report whose Annex can be easily modified to serve as the basis for meaningful intergovernmental negotiations. We are now ready to move immediately to the next substantive step in the reform process.

I thank you.