



Statement by Mr. A. Gopinathan, Acting Permanent Representative at the informal thematic consultations of the General Assembly on the Report of the Secretary-General entitled “In larger freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all” [A/59/2005] [On Cluster IV Issues: The imperative for collective action: strengthening the United Nations] on April 28, 2005

Mr. Facilitator,

We thank the Facilitators for convening these consultations and affording Member States the opportunity for an exchange of views on Cluster IV: “Imperative for collective action: Strengthening the United Nations” of the March 21 report of the Secretary-General.

The Secretary-General has proposed several measures for strengthening of the United Nations, both the inter-governmental machinery and the Secretariat support structure. He has described these as being necessary to strengthen the relevance, effectiveness and accountability of the Organisation. He has included the wider network of agencies, funds and programmes that make up the UN system in his proposed measures. While acknowledging that more needs to be done to make the Organisation more transparent and accountable, he admits that recent failures have only underlined this imperative. He has pledged to make the procedures and management of the UN Secretariat more open to inter-governmental scrutiny. At the same time, he has called for the Office of the Secretary-General to be empowered to manage the Organisation with greater autonomy and flexibility. According to him, this would enable the Member States to demand even greater transparency and accountability.

We agree with the Secretary-General on the imperative of collective action for strengthening the United Nations. We recognise the importance of institutional reforms within the Organisation and the UN system as a whole, in order to equip them to fulfil the tasks that would be entrusted to them consequent to the decisions that we take in the run-up to the September summit and at the summit itself. We perceive the coming months as providing an important opportunity for the UN membership to accomplish these tasks. We shall work together with other Member States to re-invigorate the substantive agenda of the UN so as to deal with the

challenges of the new century, respond to the needs and priorities of the Member States, particularly the developing countries that constitute the vast majority of its membership. Such re-invigoration should extend to the institutional reforms as well. As we have said before, without addressing the vulnerabilities and insecurities of the vast majority, arising mainly from extreme poverty and deprivation, we cannot provide security in its true sense to all. We shall look at the questions relating to institutional changes from this perspective.

Mr. Facilitator,

As the only universal principal organ of the United Nations, ensuring an efficient and effective General Assembly responsive to the concerns of its membership is of central importance to all of us. We have been engaged for some years in the process of revitalisation of the General Assembly to restore its role and authority in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. The measures undertaken already in this direction have, regrettably, neither addressed fully the concerns of Member States nor reversed the decline in the Assembly's prestige, nor achieved the objective of enhancing the Assembly's pre-eminent role and authority.

The General Assembly can only be revitalised through action - by re-asserting control over the long-term questions of peace and security, including disarmament and arms control. Only by its action in elaborating international law, overseeing Secretariat-restructuring, setting the global development agenda, and giving practical content to oversight and accountability can the General Assembly be truly revitalised. This revitalisation cannot be accomplished through a mere rationalisation of agenda and meetings, or by transferring agenda items from one weak body to another.

The revitalisation of the General Assembly is necessary to guide and direct the other organs of the system and thereby fully exercise functions envisaged under Article 10 of the Charter. The weakness of the General Assembly and the strength of the Security Council cannot, and should not, be perceived as a zero sum game. The weakness of the General Assembly erodes the legitimacy and support for the Security Council: conversely, a strong General Assembly implies a strong Security Council.

Mr. Facilitator,

We would be supportive of the Economic and the Social Council playing its due role in promoting awareness and giving policy guidelines in the area of development cooperation. The central question is one of political will - in allowing ECOSOC to discharge its responsibility, and not so much its mandate. Article 55(a) and (b) of the UN Charter seeks to promote higher standards of living, full employment and conditions of economic and social progress and development and solutions of international economic, social, health and related problems. We support, in particular, measures that would give practical effect to the provisions of the Charter in the co-

ordination, policy guidance and oversight functions of ECOSOC with regard to its own functional commissions and subsidiary organs and funds and programmes and above all, the Specialised Agencies of the UN system.

Mr. Facilitator,

We have received further details from the Secretary-General with regard to the proposal on the Human Rights Council, including the 'terms of reference', functions and competence. As we have said earlier, it is difficult to conceive the proposed Human Rights Council escaping the politicisation that seems inevitable in this enterprise. We are not quite convinced that the contribution of the proposed Council to law making and the nature of the proposed peer review would benefit from small size: pluralism and enlargement reinforce effectiveness through greater legitimacy. We share the Secretary-General's view on the need for the Commission to move away from the present tradition of those wishing to criticise others and those wishing to escape and forestall such criticism. The challenge lies in designing a body that would accomplish this in practice. We remain committed to engaging with delegations further on this.

Mr. Facilitator,

We look forward to working together with other Member States on the proposal for the setting up of a Peace-Building Commission in the light of the more detailed proposal received recently from the Secretary-General that reflects the Secretariat's thinking on the functions and powers of this proposed body and the lines of authority, responsibility and reporting so as to facilitate further inter-governmental consideration of the matter. As a major troop contributor to UN peacekeeping operations and as an emerging non-traditional donor for reconstruction activities, India has a keen interest in the idea and is keen to ensure that we get the concept and its implementation to be right from the very beginning of the exercise.

Mr. Facilitator,

The need to assist vulnerable populations remains as relevant today as ever. We hope to see greater political commitment from the international community to the needs of the vulnerable populations through action on the Secretary-General's recommendation calling for new funding arrangements to ensure that emergency funding is available immediately as the need arises and evenly for all emergencies. The recent Tsunami crisis demonstrated the urgent need for new and flexible funding arrangements that would substantially reduce the response time of the United Nations to humanitarian crises. We believe that the UN's humanitarian response is best implemented in collaboration with, and in assistance of, the national effort.

The proposal of the Secretary-General on the governance of the global environment, in our view, requires further analysis and clarity. The elements of international environmental governance identified at Cartagena and debated at the Johannesburg Summit demonstrated the need to

examine the legal as well as system-wide implications of any proposal or structure for environmental governance. Primacy needs to be given to sustainable development, taking into account the economic, social and environmental aspects and the imperative of poverty-eradication, in the discussions on the issue of global environmental governance.

Mr. Facilitator,

We welcome the thrust of the proposals of the Secretary-General for Secretariat reform. In particular, we would like to congratulate the Secretary-General for responding to calls from the General Assembly for greater transparency and accountability of the Secretariat. We agree that it is necessary to develop the oversight tools by which Member States can hold program managers truly accountable for their performance. At the same time, it is understandable that many of the reform proposals will have to be further elaborated in order for Member States to consider them in detail.

Mr. Facilitator,

On the expansion of the Security Council, the Secretary-General has reiterated his view that no reform of the United Nations would be complete without reform of the Security Council. The Security Council must be broadly representative of the international community as a whole, as well as of the geopolitical realities in today's world. The Secretary-General urges Member States to consider the two options, Model A and Model B, proposed in the report of the High-Level Panel, or any other viable proposals in terms of size and balance that have emerged on the basis of either model. Member States should agree to take a decision on this important issue before the Summit in September 2005. It would be 'very preferable', to quote the SG, for Member States to take this vital decision by consensus, but if they are unable to reach consensus, this must not become an excuse for postponing action. While presenting his report to the General Assembly, the Secretary-General reiterated that this important issue has been discussed for too long and that he believes that Member States should agree to take a decision on it - preferably by consensus, but in any case, before the Summit. He has articulated these very same views repeatedly in his subsequent pronouncements and writings, including the most recent ones.

India has declared her readiness to shoulder the responsibilities of permanent membership in an expanded Security Council. We have been working with Brazil, Germany and Japan towards this end, and have announced our willingness to work with Africa in this regard. The discussions in the General Assembly over the past eight-nine months have demonstrated a clear support of the majority of States for reform and expansion of the Security Council by increasing the number of permanent members and non-permanent seats and by including developing and developed countries as permanent members in an expanded Council. We hope to pursue the expansion of the Security Council with all Member States as we move towards the 2005 Summit in September. Expansion in both categories, the inclusion of developing and developed countries as new permanent

members, improvement in working methods to enhance transparency and inclusiveness, accountability reinforced through review and equal responsibilities and obligations between existing and new permanent members, must form the core elements of any reform package that we support. This, we believe, is where the mainstream opinion lies and what the general membership will support.

Those who oppose expansion of the Security Council are, in effect, opposing the inclusion of developing countries as permanent members in an expanded Security Council. Nowhere is this better illustrated than in respect of Africa. For the first sixty years of its existence, the Security Council has not had a permanent member from among the Member States of the African Union. African States have unanimously called for two permanent members from their region to be included in an expanded Council. Other developing countries have supported this call. The conclusion is inescapable that those making concerted attempts to postpone Security Council expansion in the name of 'no artificial deadlines' and chasing the mirage of an unattainable unanimity are working against the interests of developing countries, including, in particular, Africa, and are denying them their rightful place in the permanent membership of an expanded Council.

As we have said before, partial or piecemeal solutions are no solutions, since they do not address the core problem, which is an unbalanced representation. We do not support the expansion of only non-permanent seats. Nor do we subscribe to the creation of a third tier of extendable non-permanent seats. It is only by reforming and restructuring the Security Council by bringing in developing countries from Asia, Africa and Latin America and new players from the developed world capable of global responsibility and giving them the continuity and institutional memory of permanent membership will we be able to transform the balance of forces in favour of the political and economic concerns of the vast majority.

Mr Facilitator,

The Secretary-General has called on Member States repeatedly in recent weeks to make 2005 a year of bold decisions. We need to respond positively to this call. More important, we need to make full use of the opportunity thrown up by the report of the Secretary-General to make the changes in the UN and the UN system, both in substance and structurally, that are necessary to make them responsive to the needs, interests, priorities and concerns of the general membership. These changes should enable the Organisation and the international community to address the vulnerabilities and insecurities of all. They should help us put development back on the centre-stage of the global agenda, restore the UN's primacy in dealing with development and endow the UN with the authority to guide the work of other institutions and organisations dealing with aspects of development. The September summit and its preparations should result in substantial outcomes enabling Member States from sub-Saharan Africa to accelerate their efforts in achieving the Millennium Development Goals and

their own development goals. Institutional reform must necessarily encompass expansion of the Security Council by inclusion of new permanent members from developing and developed countries and additional non-permanent seats and improvements in its working methods.

The time available with us is extremely limited. This underlines the importance for all of us to work together and reach early decisions on different aspects of the matrix of issues that we are called upon to deal with. The imperative of ensuring that the 2005 Summit is a resounding success for all Member States, particularly the developing countries, demands no less from all of us. We hope to work together with other delegations in this endeavour. We, on our part, assure you of our full cooperation with other Member States, the President of the General Assembly and the Facilitators appointed by him for various Clusters, as we move ahead towards the September summit.

Thank you, Mr. Facilitator.

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