

Interview with Andrey I. Denisov, Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the UN for Izvestia newspaper published on 19 August 2004

Question: August is a month for vacations. But "the dead season" for the Permanent Representatives to the United Nations has been extremely hot...

Answer: The United Nations has no vacations and holidays. This August does not allow anyone to relax under the circumstances of the currently tensed international situation. There are no breaks even at the time of the Olympic Games, though the United Nations last year suggested bringing back the oldest tradition. At present, the most hurting points are Iraq, Afghanistan, the Middle East, Kosovo and Sudan.

Question: The Security Council has accepted the decision to prolong its peace-keeping mission in Iraq for a year. What are the political grounds for this decision?

Answer: The next year will be crucial for Iraq. Elections will be held, the country's administration and bodies of representative power will be formed, and, the Constitution is to be developed. The United Nations will assist the Iraqis at every stage of these activities. By the way, the one year term has been introduced by Secretary-General K. Annan.

Question: Who will ensure security of the United Nations personnel in Iraq?

Answer: The peace-keeping forces, which are representing the American and British coalition but act on behalf of the United Nations. Of course, the Security Council realizes the difficulty of ensuring security of the United Nations personnel in Iraq. A year ago, 23 UN officers were killed in Baghdad. Now the majority of the United Nations officers stay in Jordan. But the United Nations has to go to Iraq, this is the only way.

Question: What are the prospects for holding an international conference on Iraq - the issue, on which Russia recently insisted?

Answer: The question remains to be on the agenda. If the national conference is successful, it is going to become a bridge for the World Forum on Iraq, in which not only various Iraqi political forces will take part, but also other countries, as well as regional and international organizations.

Question: On the verge of the military campaign in Iraq, the Security Council was the arena of harsh confrontation between the USA and certain countries of Western Europe. Were the contradictions overcome?

Answer: I think the relations between the permanent member states of the Security Council have become more mature. Attempts to bypass the will of the United Nations, as we can see, lead only to the situation when the conflict continues and becomes more entangled.

Question: Afghanistan, like Iraq, is preparing for elections. What help can the United Nations provide for this country?

Answer: The confrontation in Afghanistan is rather harsh. But it is hidden and it manifests itself in separate acts of terrorism. The threat, which comes from the members of Taliban, is still great. More than 30 representatives of local bodies of power were killed by them. Still, there is an atmosphere of some stability, though fragile, in Afghanistan. In any case, it is incommensurate with the anarchy which reigned there at the beginning of the 90s, The United Nations will do everything to carry out the scheduled presidential elections successfully.

Question: Recently, Russia has become the head of the Anti-Terrorism Committee of the United Nations. What are the Committee's functions?

Answer: The Anti-Terrorism Committee is an auxiliary organ of the Security Council. The imperative to create this Committee has been discussed immediately after the acts of terrorism on 11 September. Russia is heading the Committee till the end of this year. The Committee does not deal with the struggle against specific

terrorist organizations. Its task is to monitor the world's efforts to prevent the terrorism threat.

Question: The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has recently requested the United Nations to establish order in Kosovo. What can the Security Council do to prevent ethnic purges?

Answer: Russia does not see any improvements in the situation in Kosovo. Murdering of the Serbs in March and at the beginning of this summer were not just an outbreak of emotions. It was a planned attempt to conduct an ethnic purge of non-Alban population of Kosovo. This nullifies the basic principle of the settlement of the conflict - the creation of multi-ethnic community in the region. This task is difficult to resolve. The Albans reject any ethnic groups, not only the Serbs. As a result, the non-Alban communities live in a more extended isolation than it was the case during the last three years. However, this does not mean that international organizations should put up with the present situation. Efforts must be made to unlock the situation: to ensure guarantees of security for all residents of the region, bring back the refugees, and create even conditions for normal life.

Question: It looks like that the situation in the Middle East does not provide grounds for optimism among the members of the Security Council?

Answer: There is a plan for settlement of the situation - the so-called Road Map". The Security Council unanimously condemn the attempts of Israel to violate the agreements and start the construction of new settlements near Jerusalem. The idea of the so-called Security Wall is rejected by the world community as well. But condemning these actions is not an end in itself. Efforts must be made to fulfill the tasks put forward in the Road Map.

Question: Has the question related to resolving the South Osetia problem been raised by the Security Council?

Answer: This is an internal conflict of Georgia. There have been no indications that it could become a subject of consideration by the UN Security Council. Russia doesn't see any necessity in this for the time being since this crisis can be settled by political means.

Question: Some resolutions of the Security Council sound rather harsh. For instance, it was almost an ultimatum on the part of the SC to request Sudan to disarm its paramilitary formations accused of acts of violence against local residents.

Answer: At the beginning of the month, when Russia became the Chairman of the SC, the Darfur crisis in Sudan came on scene. It was almost a humanitarian catastrophe. The Security Council gave the Sudanese authorities 30 days to disarm its paramilitary formations.

Question: Is the Security Council going to use sanctions against Sudan in case the situation there does not improve?

Answer: Using sanctions is like using a scalpel, it is a delicate tool. When used, sanctions can make the situation irreversible. By the way, the text of the resolution does not contain the word "sanction". It only says that if the situation is not controlled, the UN SC will have to employ more resolute measures.