

S T A T E M E N T

**by First Deputy Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation
to the United Nations A.V.Konuzin
at the informal consultations of the UN General Assembly
on thematic cluster IV of the report of the Secretary-General:
“In larger freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all”
 (“Strengthening the United Nations”)**

April 27, 2005

Mr. Facilitator,

United Nations is, undoubtedly, the most universal out of the contemporary mechanisms of multilateral cooperation. The unique opportunities provided by it for finding solutions to crises have made the Organization a natural, and often the only channel for neutralizing contradictions, harmonizing and coordinating interests of a wide range of states on the key issues of global and regional stability.

Strengthening the collective security system, envisaged in the UN Charter, is, of course, among the first Russia's priorities in the UN reform. This fundamental document has fully preserved its relevance at this stage. Its revision is unacceptable. On the contrary, today our joint task is to fully engage the legal and political mass of the Charter in the modern environment.

The need to reform the United Nations, first of all, to enhance its operational capacity and effectiveness, to optimize structures of the world Organization and to increase the benefits of its work in all areas are obvious today for everyone. It is important that the UN reform result in a greater unification of the international community around the principles of multilateralism, not in a stand-off between groups of states fraught with dangerous consequences for the Organization's authority and for the unity of the world community as a whole. That is why decisions on fundamental issues should be taken on the basis of a broadest possible agreement between the Member States and the solid framework of international law and the UN Charter. That is why it is necessary to continue to meticulously expand the field of common consent. The Russian Federation is ready to constructively contribute to that.

The Russian delegation consistently supports the efforts aimed at revitalizing the work of the General Assembly. Currently, a significant number of decisions has been accumulated in this sphere. Implementation of these decisions is yet to follow. Enhancing efficiency of this important UN body should be based upon strict compliance with the UN Charter, rational application of the General Assembly rules

of procedure, on pragmatic approach towards given recommendations. In general, we would also emphasize that it is important that the General Assembly, given its representative nature, focus on those major political issues or arrays of interrelated issues which are relevant for all the UN members.

One of the key components of the UN reform is the reform of the Security Council meant to make this main body in the area of security more representative. The position of Russia on specific aspects of the UN Security Council enlargement is well-known and has been repeatedly stated by us, including during the comprehensive discussion of the Secretary General's report by the General Assembly on April 6 – 8 this year. It is necessary to continue the efforts in order to achieve a broadest possible consent on this issue so as to avoid a split in the UN fraught with serious negative consequences for the future of the world Organization. Establishing artificial deadlines can hardly be helpful here.

The Russian delegation agrees with the main direction of the ECOSOC reform mentioned in the report, namely enhancing efficiency of the integrated implementation of the decisions taken at global UN socio-economic conferences, strengthening links between the normative and operational work of the UN system, building Council's capacity in addressing socio-economic problems of post-conflict peacebuilding and development. We positively view the idea of transforming once in two or three years the high-level segment of the substantive session of the ECOSOC into a development cooperation form and holding annual ministerial level assessments of progress towards the Millennium Development Goals on the basis of the ECOSOC.

At the same time we do not see the need for a radical revision of parameters of the ECOSOC functioning or establishing in it "executive committees" or other bodies with limited composition, not mentioned in the effective rules of procedure. We

believe that blurring the structure of the ECOSOC sessions will have most negative consequences for its political role and efficiency of its work.

The Secretary-General's report also mentions the idea of launching this year a Council of Development Advisors comprising two dozens of "leading world scientists, policy-making officials and political leaders". We do not quite see a practical value of this initiative. We do not understand what the outcome of activity of this Council should be and how its relations with the ECOSOC will look like. Nor it is clear on the basis of which intergovernmental decisions this body is going to be established, which funds will be used for its financing, whether this issue was discussed in the Fifth Committee.

It is by far not obvious, in our view, that the proposal to eliminate the UN Commission on Human Rights (CHR) and to establish instead a smaller standing Human Rights Council is well-substantiated. The ad memoir of the Secretary-General has shed some light on the vague aspects of this recommendation. Nevertheless, still there are a lot of open questions, and we will have to discuss them. In particular, we mean some additional criteria of membership in the principal human rights body, which, in our opinion, violates the established rules and principles of electing the UN bodies with limited composition and also runs counter to the UN Charter. It is unclear what the agenda of the new standing Council will be, how often its meetings should take place, what rules regulating its work will be, etc. Mechanisms of the Council's interaction with the General Assembly, its Third Committee, the Security Council and the ECOSOC should also be clarified. It also needs to be specified whether the human rights subject matter will be fully taken out from the ECOSOC domain.

We are confident that the reduction in membership in this human rights body will not remove the known shortcomings of the CHR: politicizing and "double standards". It is obvious that we should not scrap the recommendations of the High-

Level Panel, including the idea of a universal membership in the CHR, which was supported by a majority of the Member States and the High Commissioner for Human Rights. At the same time, we do not rule out the possibility to consider different transformations of the CHR provided that the present number of the Commission's members is preserved or is increased on the basis of a fair geographic representation.

We agree with the Secretary-General that changes in the area of human rights have ripen, of course. However, we believe that it is obvious to conduct further careful study of the respective proposals. Therefore, in our view, it would be inappropriate to force decisions on such controversial issue for the Summit-2005, whose agenda will have a lot of other vital topics. The work of the facilitators on the specificities of the reform in the area of human rights should be as transparent as possible and include equal involvement of all the interested Member-States and regularly informing them of all new proposals or changes.

We agree that creating a Peacebuilding Commission, a Peacebuilding Support Office within the Secretariat to support peace building and a voluntary standing fund for peacebuilding could be one of specific results of the UN Summit in September provided, of course, that their status, functions and modalities are carefully worked out. We are grateful to the Secretary-General for his additional considerations which are now being studied by us. As a preliminary reaction, we could say that to ensure a more effective functioning of the Commission it should be established as an subsidiary body to the Security Council. Its activity should be of advisory nature and be focused on specific countries emerging from crisis. Besides, since UN peacekeeping missions or regional or coalition-based operations authorized by the UN Security Council are in place there, the reports of the Commission should be considered by the Security Council which would submit its conclusions and recommendations to the ECOSOC for a substantive discussion of the issues of post-

conflict rehabilitation, transition to a long-term development and for adopting relevant decisions within its mandate.

Searching for mechanisms to ensure a more efficient, sound and transparent functioning of the Secretariat is one of the fundamental aspects of the UN reform. The concept contained in the report is based on the need for providing the Secretary-General with more authority and flexibility in managing the Organization's resources as well as terminating both the budget micromanagement in the General Assembly and its strict control over the post structure in the Secretariat in exchange for additional measures to be taken by the Secretariat with a view to strengthening accountability and responsibility of its staff and its transparency in general. There can be, in principle, a reason in such approach. Unfortunately, despite the general understanding, at present, in fact, there is no clear-cut system to hold Secretariat's officials accountable for their decisions and the work of their units. We did not find detailed recommendations in this regard in the report either. The ideas to establish a Management Performance Board and "a number of other internal improvements" are not sufficient in our view. More focused and systemic proposals are necessary.

We believe that one can discuss giving the Secretary-General more flexibility in management issues, including budgetary and personnel questions, only when the problem of establishing a transparent for the Member States and well-conceived system to hold managers accountable, approved by the General Assembly, is resolved.

We support the recommendation that the General Assembly should review all of its approved mandates older than five years to see whether the activities concerned are still genuinely needed and whether the resources can be reallocated subject to new priorities. We would not object to a review by the General Assembly of the Office of Internal Oversight Services for the purposes of strengthening its independence and extending its authority.

The proposal about the one-time campaign to stimulate an early retirement of the Secretariat staff needs a closer cost-effectiveness analysis taking into account the Organization's staff policy. There are a lot of vaguenesses here. What can be achieved through the buyout? Is it about cutting respective posts, or correcting past mistakes in the human resources management? How much will the Member States have to pay for this? We would also like to ask the Secretariat to inform us of the relevant experience of other UN system organizations, and, if they did ever resort to buyout, what was the practical outcome of such measure?

At Summit-2005 the Member States, in our opinion, should send a strong message about the need for improving efficiency of the UN Secretariat and increasing the added value of its work, transition from an extensive growth in the number of posts and structures towards a concentration of efforts and resources for priority activities, determined by the Member States, and a greater focus on tangible and specific results, transparency and accountability for decisions taken. The recommendations on administrative and budgetary issues, which appear under the title "Secretariat" in the report, in their present form are quite multidimensional, and, in our view, cannot be submitted for consideration of heads of state and government in September without previous technical study and analysis in the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly. We assume that the reform proposals, when they are agreed upon, should be implemented through a more rational use of financial and human resources and priority-setting in the work of the Secretariat.

We support the proposal to establish a global early warning system for natural disaster, based on existing national and regional capacity.

At the same time, we do not have clarity with regard to the recommendations about the governance of the global environment, in particular with the idea to build "a more integrated structure for environmental standard-setting, scientific discussion and

monitoring treaty compliance”. Given the long-lasting discussions of this issue in the relevant UN fora and absence of an agreement on it, we would deem that it is appropriate not to force its practical application.

We support further deepening of the UN links with regional organizations in accordance with Chapter VIII of the UN Charter, including preparation and implementation of a 10-year plan to assist in building the peacekeeping capacity of the African Union.

As for making amendments to the UN Charter, one should take a cautious approach here. We fully support the Secretary-General’s opinion that the principles enshrined in the UN Charter have not lost their relevance at all, and that this instrument still serves as a solid basis for the entire system of the international relations. That is why measures providing for changes in it and affecting the functioning of the Organization, which do not rest upon consensus or a broadest possible consent, should not be linked to any date or event. We believe that it would be possible to delete Chapter XIII of the Charter (Trusteeship Council) and the references to “enemy States” in Articles 53 and 107 provided that the legal provisions of these Articles will not be retroactively undermined.

We still believe that deleting the Articles concerning the Military Staff Committee would not be justified at this stage. The Russian considerations about possible ways to intensify its work have been repeatedly stated by us, including during the recent informal consultations of the General Assembly on the second thematic cluster of the Secretary-General’s report. In the same context we would accept the possibility to enlarge the Military Staff Committee so that it could include all the members of the Security Council in order to fully engage their national military capacity in addressing the tasks of the UN peacekeeping.

The Secretary-General's proposals deserve a detailed consideration in their entirety without imposing artificial deadlines. On separate issues decisions, based upon a broad consent, better consensus, could be made in the nearest future, even before the high-level meeting in September. We share the opinion of the Secretary-General that the UN summit in September should be crowned with comprehensive and far-reaching decisions. Russia will contribute to that by all means.

Thank you for your attention.