

Forum: Special Conference devoted to 70th Anniversary of the UN

Issue: Reform of the Security Council

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Introduction & Background Information

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is one of the six principal organs of the United Nations and according to the 24th clause of the UN Charter is charged with the maintenance of international peace and security. Its powers include the establishment of peacekeeping operations, the establishment of international sanctions, and the authorization of military action through Security Council resolutions; it is the only UN body with the authority to issue binding resolutions to member states. The Security Council held its first session on 17 January 1946.

The Security Council sessions are held with the presence of fifteen member states: five permanent members, that also get the ability to use their veto power, and ten non-permanent members, which are elected by the General Assembly for two-year terms. Even though the geopolitical realities have changed drastically since 1945, when the set-up of the current Council was decided, the Security Council has changed very little during this long period. The countries-victors of World War II shaped the United Nations Charter in their national interests, dividing the permanent seats, and associated veto-power, among themselves.

Reform of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) encompasses five key issues: categories of membership, the question of the veto held by the five permanent members, regional representation, the size of an enlarged Council and its working methods, and the Security Council-General Assembly relationship. Member States, regional groups, and other Member State interest groupings developed different positions and proposals on how to move forward in dealing with this contested issue. Any reform of the Security Council would require the agreement of at least two-thirds of UN Member States, and that of all the permanent members of the UNSC enjoying the veto right.

Any reform to the Security Council would require an amendment to the Charter.

According to Article 108 of the Charter:

“Amendments to the present Charter shall come into force for all Members of the United Nations when they have been adopted by a vote of two thirds of the members of the General Assembly and ratified in accordance with their respective constitutional

processes by two thirds of the Members of the United Nations, including all the permanent members of the Security Council.”

Definition of Key Terms

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC)

One of the six principal organs of the United Nations, which is charged, with accordance to the 24th clause of the UN Charter, with the maintenance of the international peace and security.

Permanent members

Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, France, China, and the United States serve as the body's five permanent members, who have veto power.

Veto power

Power to stop any substantive Security Council decision or resolution from being adopted.

Non-permanent members

Members of the Council that are elected on a regional basis for two-year terms.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

All UN Members see the need of UNSC reform, yet different Members have different interests to be taken into account.

Relevant Treaties and UN Resolutions

Draft Resolution for the Expansion of the Council

At a meeting held on 14 September 2015, nearly 200 member countries of the United Nations have agreed that over the next year, they will negotiate the wording of a document that will call for reforming the Security Council, the top decision-making body, which has 15 members.

For the first time, different countries have submitted written suggestions for what the resolution should state in. In what was seen as an attempt to thwart Security Council's expansion bid, the US, China and Russia did not participate in. China has been strongly

opposing the expansion of the Security Council; it reportedly wanted to force a vote on whether the UN should proceed with a one-year discussion on how the reform should be framed, but failed to muster enough support.

The draft resolution calls for the next year's UN Agenda to discuss the "Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council." Once the draft is agreed on, it will be put to vote at the General Assembly, where a two-thirds vote is needed to clear it.

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

The only significant reform of the Security Council passed in 1965. The reform included an increase of the non-permanent membership from six to 10 members.

With Boutros Boutros-Ghali elected as Secretary-General in 1992, the reform discussions of the UN Security Council were launched again. His motivation was to restructure the composition and anachronistic procedures of the UN organ taking into account changes in the international situation.

On 21 March 2005, the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan called on the UN to reach a consensus on expanding the council to 24 members, in a plan referred to as "In Larger Freedom". He gave two alternatives for implementation, but did not specify which proposal he preferred.

The two options mentioned by Annan are referred to as Plan A and Plan B:

Plan A calls for creating six new permanent members, plus three new nonpermanent members for a total of 24 seats in the Council.

Plan B calls for creating eight new seats in a new class of members, who would serve for four years, subject to renewal, plus one nonpermanent seat, also for a total of 24.

Possible Solutions

The reform of the Security Council is a very complicated task, because every change must be adopted by all of permanent members. Possible solutions may be developed in the following aspects:

- Veto reform
- Expansion of Security Council
- Restructuring of the Security Council
- Developing new methods of working