

## ITALY AND THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL REFORM IN THE XXI CENTURY

Today's international scenario is profoundly different compared to what emerged from the creation of the United Nations in 1945. There are 193 Member States (MS) now and there is no doubt that after 76 years we need to discuss about the effectiveness of the Security Council, the UN most important body dealing with international peace and security.

The issue of the United Nations Security Council Reform has been on the Membership agenda for almost thirty years. After fifteen years (1993–2008) of unsuccessful negotiations within the Open-ended Working Group (OEWG), the debate passed within the framework of the Intergovernmental Negotiations on Security Council Reform. The divergence of positions on some fundamental points of the reform proposal have so far made it impossible to find an agreement between the MS, despite the general agreement in favor of a reform.

In this context Italy is the “Focal Point” of the “Uniting for Consensus” group (UfC), a group that is actively engaged in the context of the Intergovernmental Negotiations (IGN) on Security Council (SC) Reform. All its members (Argentina, Canada, Colombia, Republic of Korea, Costa Rica, Malta, Mexico, Pakistan, San Marino, Spain and Turkey) are committed to the SC reform process. Italy, on a national basis but also in its capacity of Focal Point of UfC looks forward to further intensifying consultations MS on the issue of the reform of the SC.

UfC's proposal for a new reformed SC is based on the creation of longer-term, non-permanent seats, with the possibility of immediate re-election. This solution can meet the needs of those countries that aspire to



serve for longer periods in SC, in the light of their growing international commitment and, at the same time, offer all 193 countries increased opportunity to serve in the Security Council.

The length of a term for this new category of non-permanent seats, as well as conditions for re-election and duration, can be determined at a later stage. Italy is open to this discussion as soon as we agree on the principles of reform: UfC proposal is not set in stone and we are willing to engage every Country and with all the negotiating groups that share our commitment to achieve a consensual reform, a reform for all.

We believe that this proposal is the most pragmatic and detailed on the table and as a matter of fact UfC has always focused its participation to IGN discussions on the items in the agenda of the single meetings.

UfC MS are neither asking anything for themselves nor aspiring to permanent seats. They are instead working for the common good, a reform for all, a reform of the SC that is beneficial for all MS's and for the UN itself. A comprehensive reform of the SC is a MS's driven process with the IGN at its core, with meetings in their traditional format so as to preserve their distinctive informality and interactivity. It is up to the MS's to decide its course. Trying to impose the will of a few on the majority is against the spirit that should inspire the SC reform process. IGN is the right forum for negotiations: We strongly oppose the narrative that IGN has been totally ineffective so far. This is not true: despite the pandemic we have advanced on many issues: for example, the support for increased representation in the SC of developing Countries, Africa, Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Small States; the strengthened language on improving the Council's working methods; the enhancement of the interaction between the SC and the UN General Assembly (UNGA).



UfC believes that the five clusters of issues which are discussed (categories of members, veto power, regional representation, number of members and working methods, relationship between SG and UNGA) are interlinked and consequently they must be addressed in a comprehensive manner.

An inclusive and transparent IGN process is imperative, taking into account views and positions of all member states. This is essential to achieve the widest possible political consensus. This is not a zero-sum game. And one of the main lessons learned over the years is that the reform process can only succeed if it is reflected as an amendment of the UN Charter that every MS's can approve and ratify, including the Permanent Members (P5).

UfC goal is to make the SC more transparent, more representative, more accountable, more democratic and more effective. In a word, really "fit for purpose".

An evidence of the above can be found in our principled position against new permanent seats which, if allowed in a new reformed SC, would make it:

Less democratic: we believe that all MS's are equal and, consequently, that new members of a new reformed SC should earn their seat as a responsibility and not as a granted privilege;

Less transparent: UfC wants a SC where decisions are taken not by a few but by all its members with no hidden agendas and in a fully inclusive way;

Less accountable: every new member of a new reformed SC should answer to the whole membership, and we doubt that the creation of new permanent seats, possibly with veto power, is the best way to ensure that;



Less effective: it is a proven fact that elected members help make the SC more efficient;

Less representative: if the proposal of some MS's or Groups of MS's went through, 11 permanent members (that is, P5, G4 and the two foreseen by the African Common Position) out of an enlarged SC of 26 would mean that permanent members would account for more than 40% of the SC and that all elected members would serve as little more than passive spectators. Under UfC proposal, instead, everyone benefits, no one is left behind or left out and everyone gains better access to the SC.

As for the veto power, we think that it would be ideal to abolish, or at least significantly limit, this practice. At the same time, though, we recognize the difficulties of changing the present status quo but are definitively against the proposal of expanding the veto power to others, as requested by some MS's or Groups of MS's.

As for regional representation, adding new permanent members to a new reformed SC would be certainly not increase it. In fact, while elected members of the SC must always heed the interests of those they are representing, permanent members - not subject to elections — represent themselves alone. We believe that the only way to achieve equitable regional representation is through periodical elections: that is, one of the pillars of UfC proposal which would lead Africa to become the largest group in the reformed Council, Asia-Pacific to have the highest percentage increase; Latin America and Eastern Europe to double their representation; SIDS and Small States to have at last their own rotation-based, exclusive, non permanent seat.

In particular, UfC fully understands the call of African countries for a strengthened representation of the Continent in the SC in order to help heal



historical injustices: in this regard, we can not but emphasize that UfC's position against new permanent seats has nothing to do with Africa, contrary to what other MS's or Group of MS's has often argued.

Moreover, proposing to add new permanent seats to a new reformed SC would end up heightening the already severe differences between negotiating groups and also within regional groups, and will put the process in a stalemate because it is clear that on the issue there is no consensus within the membership.

Last but not least, the expansion of permanent seats would make the SC not easily adaptable to a changing global scenario: something which is instead badly needed because today's reality is not unchangeable and it is obviously bound to evolve. The SC we forge now will be our legacy to future generations: and the only way to have a SC which constantly reflects the current reality is to have a rotation of its members - that is to have it composed only of new non-permanent members.

We think that there are no procedural short-cuts to artificially pace the process. The only way towards making progress is to build new convergences through bridging our differences. That path was already undertaken in the past and did not bring results. Therefore UfC strongly oppose the idea, put forward by some MS's or Groups of MS's, of starting text-based negotiations (TBN). TBN would only deepen confrontation within the membership and maybe end the IGN altogether. Restarting the process by changing the format or by tabling a new document is not a solution: In fact, a text based negotiation would only crystalize divisions, derail the process of building consensus and eventually jeopardize our entire diplomatic effort.



The "Co-Chairs' Element Paper on convergences and divergences on the question of equitable representation and the increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters" (presented on April 29, 2021) reflects the "Co-Chairs' understanding of the current state of the IGN discussion. It shows that MS' views are still far from reaching the widest general political support needed for the realization of the reform. The document helps us to define those areas where we need to continue our dialogue towards a broader common ground, offering us a good base for our discussions in the next IGN.

We welcome the UNGA "roll over decision" (on June 22, 2021) to continue intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform during the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly.

Thanks to proactive efforts and the commitment of many Member States, we should protect the tangible progress we have already achieved and be ready, inspired by flexibility, to further build upon it next year. The continuation of the IGN is the only way to achieve consensus on Security Council reform. No procedural "short cuts" can replace the hard work of forging the "widest possible political acceptance."

Therefore, Italy and the UfC group looks forward to the continuation of the diplomatic dialogue at the IGN in the 76th session of the UNGA to find more and more convergences, narrow our differences and find a formula for a reformed Council that benefits all, not only a few.

