



Security Council

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Letter dated 28 August 2023 from the Permanent Representative of Albania to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the pleasure to inform you that Albania, in its capacity as President of the Security Council for the month of September 2023, will hold an open debate on “Working methods of the Security Council”, in connection with the item entitled “Implementation of the note by the President of the Security Council ([S/2017/507](#))”. The meeting will take place on Tuesday, 5 September, at 10 a.m.

In order to guide the discussions on this topic, Albania has prepared a concept note (see annex).

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Ferit **Hoxha**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative



Annex to the letter dated 28 August 2023 from the Permanent Representative of Albania to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Concept note for the Security Council open debate on “Working methods of the Security Council”, 5 September 2023

Background

The Security Council has held annual open debates on its working methods since 2010. These meetings have served to take stock of the evolution of the working methods of the Council and to engage with the wider membership on behalf of which the Council acts, pursuant to Article 24 of the Charter of the United Nations. In line with previous editions, the open debate will serve as a unique opportunity to assess the state of the Council and propose new ideas for the Council to deliver more effectively, more efficiently and more transparently on its primary responsibility to maintain international peace and security.

Against the backdrop of a precarious global context marked by war, conflict and threats to humanity of an existential nature, the Council is looked at with great expectation and hope for a breakthrough. Challenging political dynamics around the globe and within the Council, however, have resulted in division and mistrust, which have critically affected the ability of the Council to meet the hopes and expectations of the international community and the public at large and to discharge its responsibility to maintain international peace and security.

That situation has been reflected in a greater number of procedural votes at meetings of the Council, an increased number of non-unanimous decisions, and the unrestrained use of the veto, thereby impeding the action of the Council in relation to matters that continue to fundamentally challenge international peace and security. Similarly, the Council has increasingly become divided over the use of sanctions as a tool for conflict prevention and resolution, as well as over the participation of civil society representatives in meetings of the Council.

Although they have been traditionally considered a technical and rather obscure area of the Council's work, the working methods of the Council are a means to an end, a key strategic tool to improve its functioning. The working methods of the Council concern critical aspects of its work such as the participation of affected countries and other stakeholders in the drafting of decisions of the Council, the participation of the wider membership as well as other actors in meetings of the Council, the interaction with other principal organs, including the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Peacebuilding Commission, or the overall transparency in and about the work of the Council.

Not surprisingly, in the context of the rekindled impetus to reform the Security Council in 2023, working methods have featured prominently in those discussions as a means to induce reform “from within” the Council to achieve its goals as the principal United Nations body tasked with maintaining international peace and security.

For all the criticism, the Council and its members have relied on the working methods to ensure the continued functioning of the Council during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, to report every month (orally and in writing) on the work of each presidency, to submit the annual report of the Council to the General Assembly before the end of the session, or to invite newly elected members to observe proceedings three months prior to their tenure. To be sure, implementation and compliance with agreed working methods continue to lag. In this regard, the wider

membership has an important role to play with respect to demanding greater compliance and proposing new and practical measures. Notwithstanding the Security Council's autonomy to determine its rules of procedure under Article 30 of the Charter of the United Nations, many of its working methods have been shaped in response to demands and proposals put forward by the wider membership of the United Nations.

In that same spirit and consistent with prior practice, as Chair of the Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions, Albania is organizing this open debate during its presidency of the Council in the hope that renewed discussions and exchanges with the wider membership in the Chamber in 2023 will encourage the Council and its members to reflect on its working methods as a strategic tool to assure greater transparency, efficiency and effectiveness in its activities and actions.

The note by the President of 30 August 2017 ([S/2017/507](#)), commonly known as Note 507, and subsequent notes incorporate measures agreed to by the Security Council concerning its working methods. As recently as August, the Council was able to adopt two additional notes by the President ensuring the orderly conduct of minutes of silence and the continuous functioning of sanctions bodies. These are two important notes towards greater efficiency and effectiveness.

Objectives

This open debate is aimed at deepening the dialogue between the members of the Security Council and the wider United Nations membership in assessing the latest developments in the Council's dynamics, the importance of constant development of its working methods and the identification of possible new areas of improvement regarding the implementation of Note 507 and subsequent notes, as well as the need to develop new notes.

The open debate will serve as an opportunity for the United Nations membership to offer concrete proposals that may contribute to enhancing the efficiency of the Council's working methods, thus enabling the Council to fulfil its primary responsibility effectively and competently for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Guiding questions

In 2022, for the first time in the history of the Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions, the Group issued an annual report ([S/2022/1032](#)). Annex II to the report builds on the work of previous Chairs of the Informal Working Group and outlines a set of selected indicators for identifying possible criteria for the measurement of the implementation of the working methods agreed to by the members of the Council in relation to three main areas, namely, effectiveness, efficiency and transparency.

- What are the remaining gaps in the implementation of Note 507 that should be tackled? How can the Council as a whole, and the Informal Working Group in particular, as a central body within the Council tasked with the mandate to improve the working methods and governance of the Council, both ensure and measure concretely the implementation of the provisions contained in Note 507 as well as in other notes?

In 2023, members of civil society have continued to participate in Council proceedings, albeit at a higher risk to their safety and security. It should be noted that to date, in 2023, the Council has invited significantly fewer female civil society briefers than was the case at the same time in 2022.

- What are some of the measures that the Council could take to ensure the safe and meaningful participation of female civil society briefers in Council meetings while protecting them from retaliation and threats of violence? What are some of the experiences from national, subregional or regional organizations that could inform the Council in enhancing its engagement with civil society as a whole?

In 2023, Council presidencies sought the written advice of the Peacebuilding Commission in relation to country- and region-specific items, as well as in connection with thematic items. That development notwithstanding, participation by the President of the General Assembly or by the President of the Economic and Social Council remains a rare event.

- What is the assessment of the practice developed for requesting and/or receiving written advice from the Peacebuilding Commission? What other measures could be considered to integrate the work of the Peacebuilding Commission into the work of the Security Council?
- What are some additional measures that the Council and its President can consider to maintain regular communication and increase coordination and cooperation with, and interaction among, the principal organs of the United Nations?

In April 2022, the General Assembly adopted resolution [76/262](#) to demand greater accountability when vetoes are cast at the Security Council. As a result, the Council has submitted a total of 4 special reports to the Assembly in accordance with that resolution. In parallel, with few exceptions, Council presidencies have held so-called “wrap-in” and “wrap-up” sessions, the latter often following an interactive “Toledo format”.

- What is the assessment of the mechanism provided for by the General Assembly in resolution [76/262](#) to enhance accountability?
- What other aspects of the Council’s communication with the wider membership, if any, should be enhanced?

In 2023, the functioning of the Council returned to normal after the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, the Council resumed its open debates with the participation of large numbers of speakers. While open debates are a good opportunity for the participation of the wider membership, there is increased criticism about their duration and the lack of tangible outcomes. In addition, paragraph 43 of the Note 507 states the Council’s “commitment to continue to take steps to improve the focus and interactivity of its open debates”.

- What are some of the measures that the Council can take to improve the efficiency of its open debates? What other measures can be considered to enhance the participation of the wider membership in the work of the Council, beyond open debates? How can the wider membership contribute to the efficiency, transparency and effectiveness of the Council?

In 2023, having overcome some of the worst effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Council made a full return to in-person engagement in the Chamber, as well as in consultations. Nevertheless, the Council dispatched only one mission to the field in 2023, compared with 5 in 2019 and 3 in 2018.

- Should the Council go back to conducting missions to the field more often? What other measures should be considered to engage with the people most directly affected by its decisions? In this regard, should the use of technology be explored?

In 2023, the area of sanctions has been intensely debated in the context of conflicts and situations in Africa and beyond. As a result, many Council decisions have been adopted non-unanimously, to the detriment of their effectiveness. And yet, a new sanctions regime was established as recently as October 2022 in an effort to tackle the situation concerning Haiti. At the same time, Member States call for greater transparency and efficiency in the work of sanctions bodies.

- What measures can be taken to improve the effectiveness of the sanctions measures and the efficiency and transparency of the work of the Council's subsidiary bodies, including the strengthening of due process?

Briefers and format

Chair of the Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions, Ferit Hoxha

Member States wishing to participate should inscribe their names on the list of speakers through the eSpeakers module of e-deleGATE. A letter addressed to the President of the Security Council, duly signed by the Permanent Representative or the Chargé d'affaires, a.i., requesting to participate in accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure must be uploaded to the eSpeakers module of e-deleGATE.

Inscription for the list of speakers will open at 9:30 a.m. on 30 August 2023.

The presidency would welcome the use of joint statements, where appropriate, as a means of improving the efficient use of time during the open debate. In accordance with note [S/2017/507](#), all participants and members of the Security Council are encouraged to deliver succinct statements, with non-members of the Council limiting their statements to no more than 3 minutes.

Outcome

While the issuance of an outcome document is not envisaged after the open debate, Albania, in its capacity as Chair of the Informal Working Group, intends to follow up on the interventions made during the open debate and will produce an analytical summary of the proposals made at the meeting, including by the briefers with respect to specific practical proposals put forward during the debate.