

TRANSFORMING THE SECURITY COUNCIL

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Excellencies, colleagues, friends, fellow World Citizens,

Thank you, Bill, for your kind introduction and thanks to all present for your participation in this important conference on reform of the Security Council.

My remarks this afternoon will fall mainly under three major headings: first, the non-representative, unjust, and outdated nature of the existing Council; second, the structure of a Council that could be representative, just and capable of periodic change as needed; and third, how a transformed Council might work. I will conclude with a few observations on how to bring about the needed change.

The Existing Council:

To introduce my discussion of the present Security Council, let me relate a story.

Sixty-five years ago, when I was a soldier in Germany, meat was scarce and expensive. But an enterprising butcher put a sign in front of his shop indicating that he had Hasenpfeffer (rabbit stew) for sale at only five marks per kilogram. After ordering

several kilos of Hasenpfeffer, one customer remarked to the butcher, “Herr Schultz, five marks per kilo is awfully cheap for rabbit stew. Are you sure it’s all rabbit? Herr Schultz replied, “Well, to tell you the truth, there is some horse meat mixed in.” “Horse meat,” the customer cried, “How much horse meat?” The butcher responded, “Fifty-fifty: one rabbit, one horse.”

That story, of course, is apocryphal; but it does raise an important question: Why is it that, in some situations, we recognize and laugh at obvious absurdity, while in others, equally absurd, we accept the absurd as normal. By way of illustration, consider the diagram [slide 1] before you, showing, at the same scale, the populations of Cape Verde and India when, in 1992, they were both members of the Security Council. The vote of Cape Verde, with a population of roughly 360,000 counted the same as that of India, whose seat holder spoke for 855 million of his countrymen, one sixth of humanity and almost 2,400 times as many persons as were represented by the figurative rabbit from Cape Verde. If any diplomat questioned this absurdity, I am unaware of his or her doing so.

But whatever the differences between India and Cape Verde may be in the world outside the arena of the UN, within that arena, when any one of the P5 chooses to use its power of the veto, those two nations, along with 190 others, do, in fact, become equals; the power of each of them is reduced to zero.

That is only one among myriad absurdities in the composition and functioning of the Security Council. Here [slide 2] we see a map displaying the number of terms, if any, that each of the 193 UN members has served on the Security Council. Despite the fact that 68 nations, shown in white, have never served at all, at first glance the map appears to present a remarkably even and –one might suppose – fair distribution. Only when it is studied in detail does one perceive the map’s many anomalies. Note, for example, the

fact that the tiny island nation of Mauritius, with a population of roughly a million, twice represented the 53 nations of the African bloc. While this may seem no more absurd than Africa's being represented by the even tinier Cape Verde, it is noteworthy that Mauritius interacts little with other African nations and that more than two-thirds of its population are of Indian or Pakistani origin. In reality, virtually all seat-holders, whether from Mauritius, Cape Verde, India, or any other UN member, promote the interests of their respective nation – or often of a minuscule privileged elite therein – rather than those of their regional Group, not to mention the good of the world as a whole.

In addition to showing the number of Security Council terms served by each UN member nation, the map on view indicates, by color, its total duration of service as a percentage of the number of years of eligibility, that is, of the time since each nation's admission to the organization. It is noteworthy that, apart from the P5, only twelve nations, those shown in orange, have served for more than 15% of their period of eligibility and only two of these for more than 25%: Brazil (29%) and Japan (35%). The inequity in respect to Japan is particularly striking if one compares it to certain members of the P5. Japan's population and gross national income are double those of France and the United Kingdom and its economy is three times as large as Russia's. India, which will shortly become the world's most populous country, served for fourteen years (scoring only 20%), as did its regional rival, Pakistan, and Brazil's regional rival, Argentina.

For want of time, I will indicate only one more anomaly. Note Panama's ten years on the Security Council, compared to seven for its near neighbor, Mexico, which has 33 times the population of Panama. What is the logic of this?

The distribution of Security Council seats is not merely illogical; when considered from one year to another, as in our next slide [slide 3], it often seems bizarre. To make the point, here is a graph showing, since the UN's beginning, the proportion of the world's population included in nations holding Security Council seats and in the UN as a whole. Notice the pronounced year-to-year fluctuations, from a low of 17% for seat holders in 1965, when the Chinese seat was still held by the government in Taiwan, to an all-time high of 58% in 1972, one of only nine years (all of them when India held a seat) in which the Security Council represented a majority of the world's population.

The fluctuations are even more pronounced if one considers only the populations represented by the Council's non-permanent members. In the previously noted low year, 1965, the six non-permanent members – the most populous of which was The Netherlands – accounted for a mere 1% of humanity. With the increase to ten non-permanent members shortly thereafter, the total shot up to 24% in 1967. That proportion was never again reached. Presently, it is a mere 5.6%.

A little noticed, but ominous, trend [slide 4] is the steady decline in the proportion of the world's people living in the P5 nations, the exclusive club that has always run the political show. On average, their rates of natural population growth are significantly lower than those for the world as a whole and not infrequently negative. While China's share of the total is diminishing rather slowly, the relative decline has been much more pronounced for the other four powers, going from 17% in 1946 to only 8% today. This undesirable trend continues, so far as I am aware, without any official recognition or response.

Finally, it is necessary to highlight the pronounced regional imbalances in representation among the five regional groups from which seat-holders are selected [slide 5]. On the slide now before you, bars indicate the average number of persons

represented per seat- holder in each group. Let us look first at the upper of the two graphs, in which the P5 seats are included in the regional totals. Most favored is the Eastern European Group, whose continued existence is an anachronistic relic of the Cold War era. It has two seats and averages 135 million persons per seat. At the opposite extreme is the Asia and Pacific Group, averaging 1.4 billion for each of its three seats. Though home to well over half the world's people, the 53 nations of this Group have only three seats, including that of China, out of the total of fifteen. The ratio between the least and most favored Groups is nearly eleven to one, (Yes, you heard that correctly: eleven to one.)

The far-flung West European and Other Group (including the USA) is close to, but not quite on a par with, Eastern Europe. Neck-and-neck in the middle range are Latin America & the Caribbean and the African Group, each with roughly three times as many persons per seat-holder as in the two mainly European Groups.

The lower graph indicates the changes in representation if one omits the P5 members from their respective Groups. In each of the three regions affected, the population per seat holder rises substantially. The largest increase is in the Asia-Pacific group, bringing it to more than 1.6 billion per seat. Compare this to the 64 million for the United Kingdom alone.

Time constraints preclude discussion of the lack of an equitable or logical allocation of Security Council seats in relation to economic, as opposed to demographic, measures. But I can assure you that the peculiarities are comparably problematic.

To summarize, the system of representation in the Security Council yields outcomes that are often inexplicably problematic, if not downright absurd. Council membership has a huge, illogical and unjustifiable bias favoring nations of the Global North over those of

the Global South. It is an anachronistic reflection of the power-political situation at the conclusion of World War II, albeit with some modest accommodation in response to decolonization and the exigencies of the Cold War. Though the facts are indisputable, they are virtually ignored by most proponents of Security Council reform, whose proposals, by and large, are essentially palliative and pose no fundamental challenge to the existing system.

A Structurally Transformed Council:

In place of the five existing regional groups and a 15-member Security Council, may I now request that you imagine a Council based on twelve regions, as shown here [slide 6], with only one seat per region. The bases for proposing these regions should be, in most cases, immediately obvious. For example, the region designated as the Arab League has a membership identical to that of the present Arab League. Africa South of the Sahara includes the whole of that continent exclusive of the Arab League. The area called Latin America and the Caribbean is identical to the existing UN Group with the same name. Europe constitutes the whole of the present-day European Union plus a handful of states beyond its eastern periphery. And so forth. Most of the regions comprise one large, contiguous land mass. The most striking exception is a fifteen-member region dubbed The Westminster League, a bloc made up of Canada, Australia, New Zealand and twelve small island nations of the Western Pacific.

Based on objective considerations of population and economic strength, three nations – the United States, China and India – are here recognized as single-state regions. Africa South of the Sahara, by contrast, comprises 41 member states. Demographically and economically, the twelve regions also vary greatly. In population, China leads with 20% of the world's total, while the Westminster League, with only 1%, brings up the rear.

Europe leads in GNI, with 31% of the world total, while Africa South of the Sahara ranks twelfth with 1.5%.

Given the marked differences among them, would it make sense for all twelve regions to have equal votes as in the present, largely ineffectual Council? In my opinion, the answer is an emphatic “No.” Rather, to gain credibility, legitimacy and respect, a transformed Council must realistically take into consideration and reconcile the often-divergent interests of both stakeholders and shareholders in the system. By stakeholders, I here refer primarily to the people of the world, the intended beneficiaries of the decisions to be made. By shareholders, I refer to those who will have to bear the burden of paying for those decisions. Without some *quid pro quo*, what incentive will the powerful and wealthy nations of the world have to opt for reform? The entrenched P5 and their favored allies already dominate the world, each within its own sphere of influence. They do so largely through their economic power, but also with the backing of their military might. Why would they be inclined to change?

How best to allocate power fairly and effectively in any complex decision-making system is not intuitively obvious; and I have struggled for decades to devise optimal answers to that question as it relates to various components of the United Nations system. Dozens of my resultant recommendations are provided in my book on transforming the UN system to which Bill Pace referred in his opening remarks. In respect to our present focus, the Security Council, my proposal is encapsulated in a simple mathematical formula for regionally weighed voting that I now put before you [slide 7]:

$$\mathbf{W = (P + C + 8.33\%) / 3}$$

For each region, *W* represents its voting weight, which is the average of three percentages:

The first of these, *P*, represents the region's total population as a share of the world's total. This term of the equation reflects the democratic principle and is, arguably, the least controversial of the three.

The second term, *C*, refers to the total assessed contributions paid to the UN, on time, by all of the region's member states, expressed as a percentage of the total regular budget. (I have here assumed assessment levels directly proportional to each member nation's GNI.)

Third, the constant, **8.33%** (or one-twelfth), signifies the presumed equal worth of all regional perspectives. In practical terms, including 8.33% in the weighting equation would have the effect of pulling up the weight of eight region with below average weight and reducing the weight of Europe, the US, China and India. This would significantly reduce regional disparities and make the proposed system more politically acceptable to most nations that are relatively small and/or economically weak.

The actual weights of all twelve regions [slide 8], as of the year 2010, are shown on the image now before you. They range from a high of 15.9% for Europe to a low of 4.5% for the Westminster League. The ratio between the two comes to roughly 3.5 to 1. Weights would, of course, require recalibration every ten or so years to reflect changes in the demographic and economic fortunes of the member regions. Such flexibility is sorely lacking in the present one nation – one vote system.

Within each multi-national region it would also be necessary to devise some appropriate *intra-regional* weighting system for the individual member nations whereby decisions may be made instructing the regional seat-holder on matters coming before the Security Council. This intra-regional determination of weights should also be responsive to demographic and economic changes and periodically up-dated.

At the global level, the UN must be able to adjust to changes from time to time in the political map. New countries will come into being and existing polities may merge. How, for example, would the present system respond if Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland were to break away from the United Kingdom? Would the UN then follow the precedent set when the Soviet Union broke apart, assigning its P-5 seat to Russia, the largest emergent republic? Could one make an equally valid case for assigning the UK's permanent seat to the rump nation of England? In the flexible system now proposed the question would simply not arise.

Another argument for a flexible system is that it could accommodate changes in political orientation. Suppose, for example, that Turkey were to decide that its interests lay more with Europe than with the West Asian region to which it was assigned. Or suppose that the UK were to decide to align itself more closely with the proposed Westminster League than with Europe. Consider also the prospect that Turkey, the UK and some other states might wish to be simultaneous members of more than one region. None of these scenarios is far-fetched. My proposal specifies two methods for dealing with them. First, a nation unhappy with membership in its assigned region might apply for acceptance into another region and, if found acceptable by that region's membership, be transferred to it. Alternatively, should a nation prefer to be a member simultaneously of two regions, say in both Europe and West Asia in the case of Turkey, it could go through an application procedure similar to the one just noted, but with the understanding that, if approved, its voting strength within each of its two regional homes would be reduced by half, thereby maintaining its overall strength in the global system at its previous level.

Operational Considerations:

As you are aware, far more often than not, elections to the non-permanent seats in the Security Council are uncontested [slide 9]. All too often, the existing regional Groups puts up only as many candidates as there are seats to be filled. Would-be seat-holder nations promote their candidacy in their respective regional caucuses and political bargains are negotiated in the corridors of the UN to nominate specific contenders with little regard for merit or fairness. Transparency is lacking. Surely, the UN can do better.

Here's how. In the system now proposed the three single nation regions, the United States, China and India would pose no problem. Each would name its representative, as is presently done by the P5 members. Each of the multi-national regions would, by a method of its own devising, nominate a slate of from two to five individual candidates, no two of whom could be from the same country. From this slate the General Assembly would, after a stipulated period for campaigning, vote for the candidate of its choice. Votes would be tallied by a ranked-choice system, eliminating candidates with the least number of votes sequentially until one emerged with an absolute majority of all the votes cast. That individual would then become the region's delegate. The runner-up candidate would become his or her alternate.

The method just described would inevitably promote meritocracy in that nations seeking to become seat-holders would put forward their strongest available candidates, knowing that poorly qualified individuals would gain little favor in the regional caucuses selecting the slate of regional candidates and that poorly qualified candidates would have little chance of being elected by the General Assembly in truly competitive elections.

Once a delegate from a multi-national region is selected, a system would have to be in place to guide him, or her, in regard to presenting the region's views on contentious matters coming before the Security Council and on voting on Council resolutions [slide

10]. This will necessitate the formulation by each region of a set of guidance protocols. These would establish methods for expeditiously determining the views of the member nations on matters under consideration and stipulate the means for arriving at decisions that reflect the region's majority position. One or two decades ago, the logistic obstacles in the way of meeting such needs would have been insurmountable. But, with modern transportation and Internet technology, it would be possible to schedule periodic face-to-face meetings of designated foreign ministry staff to deal with the issues at hand, or to set up emergency Skype conferences as need may arise.

Presumably, the protocols devised would specify various qualified majority votes within each region that would instruct the seat-holder in casting the region's vote on specific types of issues. On procedural matters, a simple majority vote – or no vote at all – would suffice. On most substantive resolutions, the seat-holder might be instructed to abstain if regional support for a resolution fell short of a two-thirds majority. For the application of economic sanctions, the required level of support might be 75%. A vote to authorize a peacekeeping mission might be set as high as 85%. The thresholds would be individually set by each region.

All the nations of the world would, at last, have a voice and the power of their voices would have a meaningful and legitimate relationship to their power in the world outside the United Nations arena. I can think of no valid reason why nations of good will should oppose the reforms I propose. It is high time to bring the presently dysfunctional, inflexible and anachronistic Security Council into the 21st Century

Concluding Remarks [slide 11]:

I have said little in this paper about the crucial issue of the P5 veto. Rather, I chose to focus on the insufficiently appreciated, but comparably important, problems of representation, a matter on which I have greater expertise. I am, however, convinced that the veto can be eliminated and have suggested ways of doing so in my previously referenced book. I have heard innumerable times that meaningful reform of the UN in general and the Security Council in particular is impossible, because none of the veto-wielding P5 will ever accept any attenuation of its power. I totally reject that council of despair; and so, my fellow world citizens, should all of you. If you think you can't, you can't. But, sooner or later, a world insufficiently responsive to the injustices and dysfunctional nature of its present political system will have to pay a price, quite likely a catastrophic price, for inaction, tardy action, or settling for tepid, essentially cosmetic changes. Indeed, we are, even now, witnessing the disastrous consequences of the Security Council's inability to act effectively in response to a host of issues in the Middle East and other parts of our troubled planet. What we urgently need is nothing less than fundamental institutional transformation, not merely of the Security Council, urgent though that is, but of our entire system of global governance.

I will close with two quotations. The first is from the Roman philosopher, Seneca, who observed: ***"It is not because it is difficult that we are afraid to act; it is because we are afraid to act that it is difficult."*** And this from Frederick Douglass, a former American slave and later civil rights activist: ***"Power concedes nothing without a demand; it never has and it never will."*** The case for radical change is irrefutable. We must now build effective coalitions of inter-governmental organizations, governmental organizations and civil society agents to demand a workable world. And we must persist in our demands until they are met. Let us move courageously forward.