

**ROYAL INSTITUTE
FOR
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

**EXPERT SEMINAR ON GLOBAL THREATS,
CHALLENGES AND CHANGE**

**COMMENTS
BY
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Mr President,
Distinguished Members of the Panel,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like first to thank Lord David Hannay and Gareth Evans for their presentation of the Panel's report. In my comments, I will not try to address the entire report. Allow me however to make a few remarks on issues of importance for Belgium.

1. The UN as an instrument of global governance

The “new collective security consensus” suggested by the High Level Panel – which clearly encompasses issues of development - should lead us to reassert the role of the United Nations as an indispensable regulator of global relations. Of course, there are other fora for global issues, and not all issues need to be dealt with at the global level. The United Nations, in its various spheres of activity, provides a universal framework in which relations between States can be organized in order to deal with threats to international security, in the broad sense put forward by the Panel.

It is for us to make the best use of this instrument and to make sure that its functioning is flexible enough to respond to a fast evolving international environment. UN Conferences have to my mind been a very apt instrument in this regard and we should examine whether their working methods could inspire the General Assembly. It is also for us to make sure that the UN carries the necessary legitimacy and sense of ownership by governments. Last but not least, we have to ensure that all its members, with the same level of determination, implement its decisions.

2. Abuse of human rights and lack of good governance: another “threat”?

We welcome very much the recognition by the Panel that the violation of Human Rights and the lack of good governance compound inequalities, cause tension and fuel conflict. We welcome the mainstreaming of Human Rights in the prevention

approach recommended by the report. The Panel's proposals on the responsibility to protect should, in our mind, apply not only to violations of humanitarian law but also to massive violations of Human Rights, which involve large-scale killings. We feel that the Panel's report, implicitly at least, acknowledges that Human Rights violations are a major threat to peace and security. And the same can be said of prolonged bad governance.

3. Regional organizations

The panel makes a strong case for the deepening of the relationship that the UN has established with regional organisations in particular in the area of conflict management. Based on our experience within the European Union, we feel that the complementarity and the subsidiarity between the global and the regional levels in other areas need further elaboration

4. The role of the General Assembly

The Panel report focuses on security and does not address in depth the role of the General Assembly. The debate on the reform of this main organ of the Charter has become a permanent feature of the work of the GA itself. We strongly believe that change can only come from a greatly simplified and better targeted agenda, with a strong political content, that will draw the attention of public opinion and ensure the close involvement, the active participation and a substantial input from governments.

5. The case for ECOSOC

We have taken note of the Panel's view that "*decision-making on international economic matters, particularly in the areas of finance and trade, has long left the United Nations and no amount of institutional reform will bring it back*". But the Panel adds "*And yet the United Nations does have potential assets in the areas of economic and social development. First the United Nations is the only place where the issues of peace, security and development can be addressed together at the global level. Second, the United Nations has unrivalled convening power (...)*

Third, the United Nations shows that it has strong grass-roots support for its goals and can thus mobilize public opinion in their favour.

Together with Germany, Belgium has made proposals for reforming the Economic and Social Council, with the aim to give it back the means to fulfil the missions assigned to it by the United Nations Charter. Allow me to present briefly the thrust of this proposal based on our conviction that a strong and more effective ECOSOC can be conceived within existing structures.

In order to achieve this we propose to take action in a number of areas:

Building Bridges:

- Reinforcing institutional links between Ecosoc and the Security Council, based on article 65 of the Charter; as the Panel underlines, the link between peace and security on the one hand and economic, social and environmental development is evident. At present, there are very few instances where a dialogue takes place between Ecosoc and the Security Council
- Consolidating the links with the Bretton Woods Institutions and WTO, in order to promote policy coherence in favor of human development
- Enhancing the role of the private sector and civil society, since governments alone will not be in a position to respond to the challenges of globalization.

Focus on country situations

- Ecosoc should focus particularly on post conflict situations and countries, that have a direct link with current events

New Methods of Work

- ECOSOC's schedule of meetings should allow for greater flexibility in order for it to be able to react to unfolding events. It should also allow for the possibility of private meetings
- ECOSOC's decisions could take a more binding character and voting should not be excluded
- We should make better use of the existing rules of procedure of ECOSOC

Improvement of management structure and oversight functions

- The present composition of ECOSOC with 54 members is a rather heavy one for rapid reaction. A steering committee, supported by an efficient secretariat, should be able to act as a catalyzer.
- The Chief Executive Board should be involved more actively, and the heads of agencies should have a right of initiative, with a view to balance the coherence between Governments and the Secretariats of the UN system.

These are in short our views of the reform for ECOSOC. They are inspired to a great extent by the functioning of the Security Council. These changes can only be implemented if there is a clear political will on the part of Member States to make the best use of the organs of the Charter for reaching operational decisions. We feel that the recommendations of the Panel concerning the creation of a Peace Building Commission and of a Committee on the Social and Economic Aspects of Security Threats stem from the same concerns.

I do not wish to take more of your time. I hope that we will be able to engage in a meaningful debate on all aspects of the Panel's report.