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**GENERAL ASSEMBLY DEBATE ON
THE REFORM OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL**

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Mr. President,

We thank you for convening this meeting. Our Heads of States and Governments in September committed themselves to continuing the efforts to achieve an early decision on the reform of the Security Council and requested the General Assembly to review progress thereof. This meeting is in line with this commitment.

Mr. President the statement made by the Secretary-General that no reform of the United Nations would be complete without the reform of the Security Council remains true. The UN Charter has placed a significant responsibility on the Security Council for the maintenance of international peace and security. This responsibility gives the Council a far-reaching impact on the lives of many people in the world. This, therefore, gives urgency to the efforts to expand and transform the Security Council. South Africa believes that the objective of the reform should be that of creating a Security Council which is truly representative of the membership and able to respond effectively to international crises as mandated by the Charter of the United Nations.

Mr. President, this debate comes at a time when the threats associated with the current international security environment have exacerbated the difficulties confronting the Security Council. These threats include, among others, the spread of terrorism and the fear of the use weapons of mass destruction. The crisis in the Middle East also contributes to this instability. However, the manner in which these threats are dealt with, within the Council is still far from being comprehensive. The exercise of the veto by the P5 makes the resolution of these threats a prerogative of the few. Therefore, the reformed Council should be able to address our collective security concerns in an even manner and be accountable to the entire membership of the United Nations.

Mr. President, there are various proposals on this issue and in our view any proposal that seeks to reform the Security Council has to equally address both the enlargement and the improvement of its working methods. These two aspects cannot and should not be separated. We need a comprehensive reform that will make the Security Council more representative, more effective and more democratic. It is for this reason that my delegation is opposed to any approach that addresses only one element of the reform of the Security Council. Equally any approach that seeks to differentiate between representation from other regions and Africa will also not be appropriate. Africa has to be represented in the Security Council in the same capacity as other regions.

Mr. President, there have been calls to continue the discussion of the expansion of the Security Council within the OEWG. The Working Group was established because Member States recognised the need to reform the Council, but we all know how disappointing it has been that, since its establishment, the Working Group has remained deadlocked, particularly on the vital issue of enlarging the Security Council. Therefore when the Heads of State took the decision to intensify the efforts of resolving this issue, as part of the overall reform of the UN, they were aware of the futile discussions in the OEWG. By requesting this body to find common ground, the Heads of States and Governments recognized that the OEWG had outlived its usefulness and a new reality had to come into place. The General Assembly would, therefore, be failing in its responsibility if it were to delegate the reform of the Council back to the Working Group.

Mr. President, the AU Summit in Banjul has reaffirmed Africa's demand of two permanent seats with veto rights and five non-permanent seats on the expanded UN Security Council. Africa's position is informed by the fact that, inter alia, it is the only continent without permanent representation in the Security Council despite the fact that the agenda of the Council is predominantly African. However we are also cognisant of the fact that the decision for the reform of the Security Council will have to be taken by the General membership of the UN. It is for this reason that we welcome this debate because it provides an opportunity for all of us to find a common ground on the reform of the Security Council.

Mr President, my delegation believes that in the spirit of cooperation the reform of the Security Council is possible. We hope that the political will displayed during the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council will prevail and enable us to address this imbalance. We as Member States have the responsibility to ensure that the Security Council remains the universal vehicle of our efforts in the maintenance of peace and security, by taking that bold step of its reform. The time has come to arrest the erosion of the Council's credibility and seek agreement on the composition and working methods of a reformed Council. Let us create a Security Council that will serve us all in the context of the new geopolitical realities.

Thank you.