

UNITED STATES DELEGATION TO  
THE ELEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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Statement by the Honorable Hubert H. Humphrey, United States Representative, in Plenary Session, on expansion of membership of the Security Council.

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I intend to be brief and to the point. We have before us a matter of singular importance -- the expansion of the membership of the Security Council. The Security Council is endowed with particularly important responsibilities. The Member States of the United Nations have conferred on it "primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security". Furthermore, the member states have agreed that in carrying out this responsibility the Security Council acts on behalf of all of us. Any proposal to alter the structure of this crucial organ of the United Nations should, therefore, be approached with considerable care.

The countries of Latin America, in proposing the discussion of this item and in putting forward a resolution calling for an increase of two non-permanent seats, have taken a commendable initiative. This should facilitate our discussions and help us reach a quick decision which will augment the prestige and moral authority of the Security Council, taking into account the increase in membership in the United Nations since the San Francisco Conference.

The problems facing us in increasing the non-permanent seats on the Council revolve around two questions: First, the size of the Council. Second, the question of equitable geographical distribution.

These questions cannot, of course, be completely separated from one another. One has a bearing on the other, just as other factors have an important bearing in our consideration of the structure of the Security Council as a whole. However, for purposes of discussion these questions can be considered separately.

Let us take first the question of size. Since this time last year, the United Nations has admitted 20 new states, many of them from the areas of Africa and Asia, and others from Europe. Both of these areas have been under-represented in the United Nations. Furthermore, even before these new countries were admitted, the United States believed, and acted upon this belief, that the Far East had not been given its proper opportunity to share in the deliberations of the Security Council. The growing strength and vigor of the Asian world makes it imperative that this situation be corrected.

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The United States was, therefore, already well disposed to an enlargement of the Security Council when so many new members were admitted. We feel that it is proper and just, and in the interests of the maintenance of international peace and security that such an increase should take place. We hope the General Assembly will approve the increase now. The members can then proceed with the processes of ratification and the additional members can be promptly elected to the new positions on the Security Council.

The size of the increase has been carefully considered by the United States Government. We have consulted widely with delegations from all parts of the world. We have considered the question in relation to the increase of the United Nations membership and to the responsibility which the Security Council bears -- a great responsibility given to this relatively small and vital organ by the member states "in order to ensure prompt and effective action by the United Nations".

We have weighed the advantages of associating a larger number of nations with the work of the Council against the advantages of a smaller structure which can act quickly and decisively, when not paralyzed by abuse of the veto. We have concluded that an increase of two seats -- one for the countries of Asia, and one for the countries of Western and Southern Europe -- would best contribute to the organization of the Security Council in the pursuit of its functions. We will therefore support the resolution put forward by the countries of Latin America.

While membership on the Security Council is an honor with grave responsibility, all members of the United Nations organization play an important role in the preservation of international peace and security through their participation in the United Nations itself, and especially through the General Assembly. The deliberations of the General Assembly on the situations in the Near East and in Hungary over the past two months have demonstrated how much larger is the role of the General Assembly now on questions of international peace and security than had originally been intended at the time the United Nations was founded.

The question of equitable geographical distribution, which is closely tied to the size of the increase, has also aroused considerable interest. So much so, perhaps, that we are in danger of forgetting that Article 23 of the Charter states that in electing members of the Security Council due regard should be especially paid "in the first instance to the contribution of Members to the maintenance of international peace and security and to the other purposes of the organization". It is because the members of the United Nations have been mindful of this important provision of the Charter that some states have failed to be elected to the Security Council in recent years.

Second, only to this provision, the Charter also provides for special attention to equitable geographical distribution. I have already indicated that one of the reasons we support an enlargement of the Security Council is to provide for more equitable geographical representation from the Afro-Asian area and from Western and Southern Europe.

The distinguished representative of the USSR has indicated his interest in an allocation of a seat in an expanded council to the countries of Eastern Europe. We do not find this concern unnatural. The eastern part of Europe covers a sizeable amount of territory from the area of the Baltic to that of the Mediterranean. With the proposed increase in the membership of non-permanent members of the Security Council, it would be possible to provide for representation to Eastern Europe without denying equitable representation to other geographic areas.

It is rather ironical that the representative of the Soviet Union should accuse the United States and a majority of members of the United Nations -- two-thirds of them, in fact -- with gross violations of the Charter. It ill

behooves the representative of a State which is systematically depriving the Hungarian people of their rights and brazenly flaunting the overwhelming recommendations of this Assembly to accuse others of violations of the Charter.

His charges were made, furthermore, at a time when he was already aware that if the Security Council is expanded, appropriate arrangements might well be agreed upon for an allocation to the eastern part of Europe. The delegate of the USSR surely knows that if enlargement of the Security Council is defeated by his efforts or by failure of members to ratify, not only is a seat for Eastern Europe in jeopardy, but the many new member states of Africa, Asia and Europe may well be denied equitable and effective representation on the Security Council. If the Security Council is not expanded, surely the distinguished delegate of the Soviet Union realizes, on the other hand, that the countries of Asia may well exercise a continuing claim for an existing seat, both on the basis of equitable geographical distribution and of contributions to international peace and security.

The Soviet representative also raised the totally extraneous question of the representation of China in the United Nations. We are all aware that the USSR and some other members do not share the frequently and consistently stated opinions of the majority of the General Assembly on this question.

But, as the distinguished representative of the United Kingdom pointed out earlier in the debate, this issue is not germane to the question before us. We must not allow this issue to be used as a pretext to deprive the new members of the United Nations of their right, under the Charter, fully to participate in the work of the organization. The question relating to the representation of China has already been decided at this session. To reargue this highly controversial issue will not provide fair and equitable representation for the new member states nor assist in expanding the membership of the non-permanent seats.

The United States supports an increase in the non-permanent members of the Security Council in order to encourage broader representation of states and to increase its effectiveness, not to engage in a cold-war exercise.

With respect to the customary allocation of the other seats on the Council -- two to Latin America, one to Western Europe, one to the Commonwealth, and one to Africa and the Middle East -- we are in agreement that the pattern should be retained. As indicated in these comments, the United States Delegation would support an appropriate allocation of all the non-permanent seats in an expanded council, either by a consensus statement by the President, or by resolution, or by some other means acceptable to the members.

Finally, Mr. President, we have also considered the point of view that we should not try to reach a decision at this session. May I say, however, that we sense a widespread feeling that a decision should be taken now. This is a feeling that we share. We are not convinced that further delay or study would materially add to the facts now available or produce any proposals more generally acceptable than the draft resolution sponsored by the Latin American countries. The process of amending the Charter is at best a slow one, and we believe it would be wise to act now so that we might give appropriate recognition as soon as possible to the new members of the United Nations.

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