

Statement by State Minister for Foreign Affairs YAMADA Kenji,  
at the Security Council Open Debate  
on “New Orientation for Reformed Multilateralism”  
14 December 2022

Mr. (Madame) President,

I would like to begin by commending your initiative in leading the discussion of this timely and forward-looking topic today. I would also like to thank Secretary-General António Guterres and President of General Assembly Kőrösi Csaba for their insightful contributions.

Mr. (Madame) President,

The credibility of the United Nations is in jeopardy due to the aggression by Russia, a permanent member of the Security Council, against one of its neighbors. The UN Charter drafters would never have envisaged such a situation. But it is the harsh reality, and the Security Council has not been able yet to stop it.

It is this sense of urgency that has brought me here from Tokyo. We have to restore confidence in the UN. We have to strengthen the entire United Nations. Reform of the Security Council is an integral part of the whole picture.

Mr. (Madame) President,

Let me focus on Security Council reform. My message is simple. Reform is possible and achievable.

First, we need to take action. I am sure that most Member States believe that Security Council reform is necessary and important, but when it comes to actually starting negotiations, some say it is too early. I cannot help asking myself when we will be ready after debating this issue for almost thirty years. I believe the time is ripe now. What is truly needed now is not a discussion for the sake of discussion, but action toward reform. We can immediately launch

negotiations, with a text on the table, in the Intergovernmental Negotiations in order for Member States to narrow the differences in their positions. There can be "no reform without negotiation." We cannot have compromise or convergence between the various positions without negotiation. We can do it, and let us begin.

Second, the Member States have already reformed the Security Council once, and I believe we can do it again. In 1963, the General Assembly adopted a resolution proposing an expansion of the non-permanent members of the Council. Even though two permanent members voted against, and two abstained, all five ultimately ratified it to respect the will of the General Assembly. What matters in the General Assembly is each one of the Member States, who collectively form the will of the General Assembly.

Mr. (Madame) President,

The world has changed dramatically since the founding of the United Nations. The membership has quadrupled since 1945, and the issues facing the Security Council have become more complex and diverse. We need to correct the historical injustice that there are no permanent seats for Africa, even as Africa accounts for about half of the regional agenda of the Council. We should not hesitate to update the UN Charter to reflect the reality of today, not that of 77 years ago.

The calls for reform have grown stronger this year. Some 70 Member States, far more than in previous years, referred to Security Council reform in their General Debate speeches in September. A majority of the permanent members now support reform. I am aware that more and more African leaders are now calling for Security Council reform in an ever more passionate tone. Next year will mark the 60th anniversary of the previous reform. We have the Summit of the Future to be held in 2024, and 2025 will be the 80th anniversary of the founding of the UN. These milestones remind us that the windows of opportunity are wide open.

Mr. (Madame) President,

While the General Assembly makes its effort to reform the Council, this Council can do more than just wait. Members of the Council can and should improve the transparency and efficiency of this body by improving its working methods. Japan supports all the initiatives to limit the use of veto, including those by France and Mexico, the United States, and the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency group. Japan also welcomes the adoption of General Assembly resolution 76/262, initiated by Liechtenstein, which requires permanent members to face more accountability for their exercise of the veto. Japan is willing to explore further measures with Member States.

Mr. (Madame) President,

Let me conclude by expressing Japan's determination to further contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security as a member of this Council starting from next month.

I thank you, Mr. (Madame) President.

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(715 words)