The L-69 UN Security Council Reforms Event
December 13, 2023
13:15 – 16:00 Hours
ECOSOC Chamber, United Nations, New York

The Charter of the United Nations was signed on 26 June, 1945 at the conclusion of the UN Conference on International Organization in San Francisco, and came into force on 24 October 1945. This provided for the creation of, inter alia, the Security Council, which was to be comprised of 5 permanent members and 6 non-permanent members who were to be elected by the General Assembly for a period of two years.

The international community today stands at a critical juncture. The emergence of transnational security challenges, the breakneck speed of technological advancements, and supply chain disruptions, coupled with the reversal or slowdown of globalisation and the pressure of climate change have created new challenges for nations worldwide. The global consensus that used to underline the spirit of international collaboration has frayed in recent years impairing the ability to tackle many vital questions that can enrich peace and strengthen security. This has created a crisis of credibility for the United Nations (UN)-led multilateral framework, particularly for the UN Security Council (UNSC).

Besides, the composition of the UNSC reflects the power balance of a bygone century. For the Global South, it is a perpetuation of the colonisation project, whereby the burden of the two World Wars was borne by the colonies, while the privileges of peace benefited the colonisers and their allies, placing them in exalted positions of power. In subsequent years, as great power relations waxed and waned, so did the UNSC’s functioning. Almost eight decades later, faced with new power shifts, the composition of the UNSC has become anachronistic. It is devoid of representation from Latin America, Africa or small island states and very limited representation from Asia.

Undoubtedly, the UNSC is in urgent need of an overhaul and reconfiguration to be more representative, more effective, more coherent, and more accountable. Over the years, this imperative for reforms has only been accentuated. However, this reform process has not yielded substantive results. Even the lone reform – an increase in the non-permanent membership from six to 10 members – happened during the heydays of the Cold War. Since then, calls for reforms have met with the empty rhetoric of reforms. It was in December 1992, that the General Assembly adopted RES/47/62 that called for the inclusion in the provisional agenda of the General Assembly’s 48th session the item entitled “Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council.” Yet, not an inch has been conceded on reforms.

These dynamics demand that it is time to bring in new voices to debate, deliberate and decide on the issue of UNSC reforms. The status quo is not the answer. The future of the UN and its role is thoroughly linked to the progress made on this subject. Therefore, we must recalibrate our efforts as a global community and make
sure that discussions on the reforms are infused with fresh voices and perspectives from geographies that are likely to contribute significantly to a stable and prosperous future.

One such compelling proposition for reforms comes from the L69 Group of Developing Countries from Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific (Small Island Developing States) which has pressed for reforming the UNSC to better reflect contemporary geopolitical realities and to enhance its legitimacy, effectiveness, and implementation of its decisions. Furthermore, the grouping argues for an expansion of the Council, in both permanent (6 additional seats, bringing the total to 11) and non-permanent (6 additional seats, bringing the total to 16) categories of membership, with equitable geographical representation. Specifically, it has emphasised that Africa, given the historical injustice, needs to be fully represented, in line with the Common African Position. The regional representation proposed by the L-69 grouping is as follows:

- **Permanent Member Category:**
  - Two (2) permanent seats for African States
  - Two (2) permanent seats for Asian-Pacific States
  - One (1) permanent seat for Latin-American and Caribbean States
  - One (1) permanent seat for Western European and Other States

- **Non-Permanent Category:**
  - Two (2) non-permanent seats for African States
  - One (1) non-permanent seat for Asian-Pacific States
  - One (1) non-permanent seat for Eastern European States
  - One (1) non-permanent seat for Latin-American and Caribbean States
  - One (1) non-permanent rotating seat for Small Island Developing States (SIDS) across all regions.

The L.69 remains fully supportive of the Common African Position, as espoused in the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte declaration, and recognizes that these two documents are mutually reinforcing. As such, the L.69, in line with the calls of the African Group, advocates that reference to the Common African Position is incomplete unless both documents are acknowledged.

The L.69 believes that the veto should be abolished; however, the group also recognizes that, so long as it exists, any expansion of the Council must grant new permanent members the same rights and privileges enjoyed by existing members. This is the only way to ensure genuine equity and justice. Failure to extend these privileges risks further exacerbating the inherent structural imbalances that currently exist.

The L-69 expects that the ongoing Intergovernmental Negotiations process on UNSC reform will commence negotiations based on a single consolidated text, to deliver concrete outcomes within a fixed time frame. The introduction of the African Union in the G20 at the **New Delhi Summit** was a historic moment, which the UNSC reform process must leverage.
Global governance institutions need to be reformed and reshaped, and the UNSC reforms occupy a paramount position in this endeavour. Any lack of progress in the reform of the UNSC will create disenchantment not just with the body but also with the UN itself. The 2024 Summit of the Future is expected to generate productive discussions about UNSC reforms. However, it cannot be the only remedial measure. These reforms must be implemented within a two-year timeframe to preserve the sanctity and legitimacy of the Council.