



Resolution 1688 (2009)¹

United Nations reform and the Council of Europe member states

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The United Nations was established sixty-four years ago in order to, according to its charter, “save succeeding generations from the scourge of war”. Born from the ashes of a global catastrophe, the United Nations has succeeded in preventing a catastrophe of such dimensions from occurring again. In addition, credit should be given to the United Nations for its role in reducing the number of, and death toll from, conflicts worldwide, especially since the end of the Cold War.
2. The Parliamentary Assembly considers the United Nations to be the cornerstone for preventing breaches of peace, achieving the resolution of conflicts and building peace and confidence in post-conflict situations. It continues to give the United Nations and multilateralism its unfailing support, as already stated in its Recommendations 1367 (1998) on the reform of the United Nations and 1476 (2000) on the United Nations at the turn of the new century, and in its [Resolution 1373 \(2004\)](#) on the strengthening of the United Nations.
3. Notwithstanding its considerable achievements in preserving peace and international security, the United Nations is in urgent need of far-reaching reform in order to make it more transparent, accountable and capable of facing the global challenges of today’s world.
4. The Assembly notes the numerous reform proposals that have been advanced during recent years and pays tribute to former United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his efforts to promote a comprehensive reform of the organisation.
5. However, the Assembly regrets that there has so far been no reform proposal aimed at improving the democratic character of the United Nations. In this context, the Assembly recalls its well-established position in support of the introduction of a parliamentary dimension of the United Nations, as set forth in its [Resolution 1476 \(2006\)](#) on the parliamentary dimension of the United Nations, in order to improve the transparency, accountability and democratic oversight of the organisation and bridge the gap between the United Nations and the public.
6. The incorporation of a democratic element into the United Nations system has become even more necessary as a response to the process of globalisation: only global governance can face up to its challenges, and such global governance, embodied in the United Nations, must be based on democratic principles.
7. As to institutional reform, the Assembly reiterates its conviction that the role and the authority of the United Nations General Assembly as “the premier decision-making and political body of the United Nations” should be restored. This role could be further strengthened by the introduction, or the reinforcement, of a parliamentary element in the structure of the UN General Assembly, composed of either representatives of the parliamentary assemblies of each country or directly elected representatives.
8. As regards the reform of the United Nations Security Council, which has proved to be the most elusive aspect of the reform effort, the Assembly expresses its support for the idea, as proposed by France and the United Kingdom, of a transitional reform of the Security Council as a way of overcoming the long-lasting deadlock, and welcomes the new impetus in the negotiation process, which started in February 2009.

1. *Assembly debate* on 1 October 2009 (33rd Sitting) (see [Doc. 12018](#), report of the Political Affairs Committee, rapporteur: Mr Gross). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 1 October 2009 (33rd Sitting).



9. The Assembly is anxious to ensure that the protection of human rights worldwide takes precedence over other considerations and therefore believes that any reform of the United Nations Security Council should be such as to enable this body to act swiftly in the case of actual or threatened serious and widespread human rights violations and that its action should not be impeded by the exercise of the right to veto by the permanent members of the Security Council.

10. In addition, the Assembly encourages the holding of negotiations on a reform of the Security Council's working methods outside the framework of the negotiations of a comprehensive reform package. The aim of this reform should be to improve the transparency of the work of the Security Council and make it possible for non-member states to have easier access to it and to be able to express their concerns when they feel that their interests are at stake.

11. In the light of the above, the Assembly recommends that Council of Europe member states reach a common position as regards:

11.1. a transitional reform of the Security Council, based on the establishment of a new category of non-permanent seats, which could be held for a longer period of time than in the current system;

11.2. the prohibition of recourse to the veto in the case of actual or threatened serious and widespread human rights violations;

11.3. a free-standing reform of the working methods of the Security Council, outside the framework of the broader reform process;

11.4. ways to restore the role and the authority of the General Assembly, including by introducing or reinforcing a parliamentary dimension;

11.5. ways to improve the interaction between the Security Council and the General Assembly.

12. The Assembly also invites the governments of Council of Europe member states to co-operate in order to draw up an inventory of all their different reform groups and proposals.