Reform of the Security Council

Hey, I (Anna) will be chairing this debate on Reform of the Security Council and you are expected to submit a Position Paper by the 18th February to be in the running for an award. Click here to find out about what a position paper is: [http://www.gwc.org.uk/mun/2011conference/delegatesMunConf.html](http://www.gwc.org.uk/mun/2011conference/delegatesMunConf.html). Your position paper on this topic should be around 50 words long and sent to me and if you have any questions or want to send your resolution in early feel free to do so.

Although the title of this debate makes it look a bit bland, in this topic you have the opportunity to really shake up the Security Council, and subsequently the whole UN.

What is the Security Council?

The Security Council is the centre of the UN, and all resolutions need to passed by the Security Council in order to come into force. The Security Council is made up five permanent members: China, France, Russia, United Kingdom and United States of America, all of which have the right to veto most resolutions. There are also 10 non-permanent members which are voted in on two-year terms. Currently they are: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Colombia, Gabon, Germany, India, Lebanon, Nigeria, Portugal and Saudi Arabia. The make up for the Security Council has gone unchanged since it was created in 1945. The world has changed since then, and so shouldn’t the Security Council be adapted to reflect this?

So why is reform needed?

- The 5 permanent (P5) members of the Security Council are all nuclear powers, and so it has become known as a ‘nuclear club’. This has led to criticism that the Security Council only acts on the interests of the permanent members. Also, it means that the talk of non-proliferation is undermined as it is clear the nuclear powers get most political influence. Because of this perhaps non-nuclear powers should be included as permanent members.

- The P5 nations veto power could stop any armed or diplomatic response to crisis. Also, the USA’s use of the veto on resolutions critical of Israel has led to many criticisms. There is a general concern that there is a bias - that is reflected throughout the whole UN – that the ‘western’ world has too much control within the Security Council with both the USA and UK, and to a certain extent France, having the veto power. China can also be accused of having too much political weight so that issues such as North Korea and its own human rights record are not properly addressed. It is clear that countries use the veto purely due to their own political agenda’s, for example Russia heavily relied upon it during communism, however with few proposed alternatives it seems set to stay.

- Also, do Security Council resolutions carry enough weight? In Darfur the work of the Security Council was criticised as having little effect, and it has not managed to fully address the situation. Also, Iran (in most countries opinion) is currently breaking the Security Council resolutions, and the sanctions placed upon it are seeming to have little/no effect. How can this be dealt with so the threats and issues facing the world in the 21st century are dealt with?

- The Security Council is outdated, this a view held by many countries. The countries making the strongest bid for permanent seats are Brazil, Germany, India and Japan (the G4).

Brazil’s case for being a permanent member is that Latin America is under represented, it has one of the largest populations, economy and defence budget in the world and is one of the main contributors to the UN peace keeping missions and budget. Germany’s claims are a little weaker, however it is regularly the third largest contributor to UN budgets, has great international influence, and its bid is strongly supported by France.

India’s want to become a permanent member has recently been backed by Obama, and so it has the most likely chance of becoming one, especially with China saying it will not use the veto to stop the move. India is the world’s largest liberal democracy, has huge economy and population, and is one of the great emerging...
powers which look set to become world super powers over the next century. Also, it is a new nuclear power and the ongoing conflict with Pakistan indicates that it should be brought on board in the debates and decisions made by the Security Council.

Japan contributes large amounts to the UN and so seems a likely candidate for a permanent seat. However, China in particularly strongly opposes the move and it could lead to an over representation of Asia with Russia and China already and with the likelihood of India becoming a permanent member too.

There is also no permanent representation of a Muslim-majority country, and with these countries mainly being the ones which feel the UN under represents them, this presents a major flaw in the credibility of the Security Council and the whole UN. However, there are issues over whether this would lead to issues in the Middle East not being strongly dealt with, and should then other religions be represented? Finally, no African country has a permanent seat. With Africa being the 2nd largest continent, having more UN members than any other continent and also generally being non-militarily threatening this again seems unfair.

They are the four main areas of debate, each country will have a strong opinion on this with the P5 generally wanting more limited reform than the other members of the UN. It is clear the Security Council is not perfect, so there is a lot to think about. This is a real chance to engage in how the Security Council, and whole UN works, and on an issue that has been discussed for decades, but that the real UN has never really addressed.

Useful Links


For Country Profiles and lots of other useful information:

- [http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/](http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/)
- [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/country_profiles/default.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/country_profiles/default.stm)

For issues of current international debate:

- [http://www.newint.org/](http://www.newint.org/)
- [http://www.idebate.org/](http://www.idebate.org/)
- [http://www.amnesty.org/](http://www.amnesty.org/)

I hope you feel you know a little bit more about the topic now, but please do more research and remember to write those position papers and resolutions.