



Security Council

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Letter dated 2 June 2021 from the Permanent Representatives of Estonia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to inform you that Estonia, in its capacity as President of the Security Council for the month of June 2021, in collaboration with Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, as Chair of the Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions, intends to hold an open debate on the theme “Agility and innovation: lessons for the future from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic” under the item “Implementation of note by the President of the Security Council ([S/2017/507](#))” on Wednesday, 16 June 2021, at 10 a.m.

In order to help to guide the debate, Estonia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines have prepared the attached concept note (see annex).

We should be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Sven **Jürgenson**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

(Signed) Inga Rhonda **King**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative



Annex to the letter dated 2 June 2021 from the Permanent Representatives of Estonia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Concept note for the Security Council Open Debate on the theme “Agility and innovation: lessons for the future from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic”, to be held on 16 June 2021

I. Background

1. In March 2020, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization. Consequently, restrictions were put in place that adversely affected the Security Council’s ability to meet in person. This situation highlighted that, in addition to functioning transparently, efficiently and effectively, the Council must function with agility. To that end, the term “agility” was introduced ahead of the open debate on working methods, held in May 2020 (S/2020/418), as being a necessary means by which the Council could maintain a state of readiness to convene and make decisions, even when extraordinary circumstances rendered it unable to meet in person.

2. Over the past year, a number of interim measures have been introduced by the Security Council to adapt to those extraordinary circumstances, while maintaining its continuous functioning in accordance with Article 28 of the Charter of the United Nations. Those measures, introduced through letters by successive Presidencies, beginning with the Presidency of China in March 2020, have guided the Council’s continued functioning. The said letters have dealt with, inter alia, voting procedures, videoconferences, the provisional programme of work and arrangements for the compilation and circulation of statements submitted for open videoconference debates. The Council has continued to adopt resolutions and other products, has received high-level virtual participation from various capitals during videoconference meetings and has, on occasion, met in person in the Economic and Social Council Chamber and the Security Council Chamber, when appropriate. Subsidiary bodies have also established ways of carrying on business. In addition, and in an effort to ensure the continued implementation of the note by the President of the Security Council (S/2017/507) and the subsequent notes adopted in 2019 (S/2019/990 to S/2019/997), successive Presidencies have introduced various initiatives and produced monthly written commitments on working methods, whether individually or jointly. The practice of holding virtual monthly briefings on the programme of work and virtual wrap-up sessions has also served to maintain the engagement between the Security Council and the wider membership and reinforced the transparency of the Council’s programme of work.

3. As the Council continues to function under pandemic-related constraints, the Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions has recognized the need to periodically reflect on interim working methods to ensure their continued relevance. In this regard, the Informal Working Group has provided a framework within which discussions on the Council’s interim and extraordinary measures have been held.

II. Objectives and guiding questions

4. The theme proposed for this debate on working methods, “Agility and innovation: lessons learned for the future from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic”, is premised on the need for the Security Council to creatively formulate

and develop its working methods in order to better adapt them to evolving circumstances. Significant to this process is reflection, which must be undertaken with the aim of advancing the Council's overall working methods in the future. Such reflection should extend to the best practices adopted by the United Nations, in general, and by the Council, during the COVID-19 pandemic in particular, and be aimed at assessing how these practices can best be harnessed to enhance the overall effectiveness of the Council upon its return to ordinary functioning.

5. The intent of the open debate is to give the wider membership an opportunity, not only to critically assess the interim measures of the Security Council that have been in place for the past year, but also to share ideas on how the Council may creatively adapt its working methods in order to appropriately suit future circumstances that may affect its operation. Innovation and the harnessing of digital technologies, when appropriate, are essential to the work of the United Nations in delivering on its mandate in a more effective and agile manner. The open debate will be a platform for reflection on the best practices introduced and on those that can be harnessed in the future to maintain continuous functioning.

6. To streamline discussions and facilitate a focused dialogue, members are asked to consider the following questions:

(a) Since the outbreak of the pandemic in March 2020, the Security Council has introduced a number of innovations to maintain effectiveness, efficiency and transparency, including by facilitating the participation of ministers and other high-level officials in Council proceedings by means of virtually held meetings. In this regard:

- What are some of the most important takeaways/lessons learned from this period?
- What are some of the more recently introduced best practices that should be incorporated into the Council's functioning during ordinary circumstances?

(b) Even after there is a return to ordinary functioning, the Security Council must remain prepared for future situations or events that may affect the continuity of its work as much as or more than the COVID-19 pandemic has to date. In this regard:

- What are some of the innovations regarding working methods that have been adopted by the Council over this past year and that have been most welcomed by the membership? What aspects of the working methods need to be improved in the future?
- What other innovations, including digital innovations, could the Council explore and consider for the future?

(c) Striking a balance between transparency and efficiency often entails a discussion on the number of public meetings that the Council holds, as compared with the number of private (closed) meetings that it holds. In this regard:

- Should the balance between public and private (closed) meetings be reconsidered in the light of the virtual meeting formats?

III. Format and submission of statements

7. The open debate will be held on 16 June 2021, in the Security Council Chamber, with the participation of the Council members. Briefers will participate either in person or by videoconference. The statements of the briefers and Council members will be webcast live and archived on United Nations Web TV. Owing to restrictions related to COVID-19, the wider membership of the United Nations will not be able

to participate in the meeting in the Chamber. All States Members of the United Nations that are not members of the Council and permanent observers to the United Nations are invited to participate by submitting written statements through the eSpeakers module on the e-deleGATE+ platform. Member States should transmit their statements in Microsoft Word format with a cover letter, duly signed by the Permanent Representative or Chargé d'affaires a.i. and addressed to the President of the Security Council, no later than the date of the meeting, 16 June 2021. In the spirit of transparency, these statements will be published as part of a compilation document of the Council containing the interventions submitted in connection with the meeting. The names of all Member States having submitted their statements in writing by 5 p.m. on 15 June will be read out at the end of the meeting.

IV. Briefers

8. The following speakers will brief the Security Council:
 - Permanent Representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Chair of the Informal Working Group on Documentation and other Procedural Questions, Inga Rhonda King
 - Co-author of *The Procedure of the UN Security Council*, 4th edition, Lorraine Sievers
 - Executive Director of Security Council Report, Karin Landgren

V. Follow-up actions

9. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, in its capacity as Chair of the Informal Working Group, will produce an analytical summary of the statements made during the meeting, including by the briefers, and those submitted by Member States in writing.
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