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STATEMENT OF THE HOLY SEE AT THE 64th SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY BEFORE THE PLENARY ON ITEM 119: QUESTION OF EQUITABLE REPRESENTATION ON AND INCREASE IN THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL AND RELATED MATTERS

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Here below the statement delivered by H.E. Archbishop Celestino Migliore Apostolic Nuncio Permanent Observer of the Holy See, on 13 November 2009, at the 64th Session of the UN General Assembly before the Plenary on item 119: Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters:

Mr. President,

Among the topics of the reform of the Security Council my Delegation would like to concentrate particularly on the question of the right of veto.

Many valid and clear positions and views have been expressed with regard to the right of veto. At this stage of the intergovernmental negotiations, however, the abolishment of the veto seems to be the least feasible. Hence, its reform is more suitable and realistic.

Experience teaches that there is good reason for advancing positions in favour of reform of the veto with the aim of limiting its exercise. On so many occasions in history its use has slowed down and even obstructed the solution of the issues crucial to international peace and security, thereby allowing the perpetration of violations of freedom and human dignity. Too often it is the failure to intervene that does the real damage.

The reform of the veto is all the more necessary at a time when we experience the obvious paradox of a multilateral consensus that continues to be in jeopardy because it is still subordinated to the decisions of a few, whereas the world's problems call for interventions in the form of collective action by the international community.

Against this background, the Holy See recognizes the importance of the view put forward by other Delegations that the Security Council's permanent members should commit themselves to a practice of not casting a veto in situations where genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, serious violations of international humanitarian law or similar acts are involved.

At the minimum, in an effort to reach a timely and more representative solution for such grave situations, the number of affirmative votes supporting the Security Council's decisions should require the concurring vote of no more than two permanent members. Otherwise, as already suggested by other Delegations, a permanent member could cast a negative vote, stating that voting against a given proposal should not be understood as a veto and that his opposition is not of such a nature as to warrant the blocking of a decision.

Many agree that the permanent members should show great accountability and transparency in using the right of veto. Before casting such a vote, transparency, flexibility, confidence and political will should already have been a part of the drafting process of a resolution, in order to ensure that States are not effectively vetoing texts before they can be considered by the Council. Indeed, knowing that a permanent member would vote against their adoption, many proposed drafts are never formally presented to the Council for a vote. More open dialogue and cooperation between the permanent and other members of the Security Council is crucial to avoid any later obstructions in adopting a resolution. A deeper search for ways of pre-empting and managing conflicts is needed by exploring every possible diplomatic avenue and by giving attention and encouragement to even the faintest sign of dialogue or desire for reconciliation.

The decision to extend, limit or abolish the veto lays in the hands of the Member States and will depend on the broadest possible consensus on one of the options. We trust that such a decision would be right and it would favour transparency, equality and justice, reflecting the values of democracy and mutual trust in the work of the reformed Security Council.

Thank you Mr. President.

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