

Ban Ki-moon backs Security Council expansion

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United Nations: UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said Wednesday that he backs the expansion of the Security Council to adapt to the dramatic changes in the world and the General Assembly was moving in the right direction towards that goal.

"I have always favoured expanding the Security Council in order to make it more broadly representative and democratic and transparent," Ban told reporters here. "The world has changed and considering such huge, dramatic changes in the international community, the Security Council should also be able to adapt to this changing situation."

Referring to the Assembly's endorsement of the negotiating text for the reform discussions, he said, "I think this kind of process, even though it has been taking long (time) and (is a) very slow process, is, I think, the right direction."

In a landmark move on Monday, the Assembly unanimously adopted the decision of its outgoing president, Sam Kahamba Kutesa, which included the negotiating text. It cleared the way for the reform process to go forward. For several years China and a group of countries led by Italy and backed by Pakistan had worked against the introduction of a negotiating text, effectively holding up the reform efforts. In his final hours as president, Kutesa was able to break the deadlock and get it through.

Mogens Lykketoft, who took over as the Assembly president on Tuesday, pledged to continue with the reform process.

On another matter of particular interest to India, Ban called for a transformation of the UN peace-keeping operations. He admitted that "today's crises highlight the failures of long-established peace and security and development responses."

A high-level panel on peace-keeping that he had appointed had recently given its report. In the light of its recommendations, Ban said he was wanted to put an urgent emphasis on conflict prevention and mediation, and deeper partnerships with regional organisations - which India has advocated - in addition to improving the speed and agility of UN peace-keeping and political missions.

India is the single largest contributor of troops to UN peacekeeping operations. More than 8,000 Indian troops, police and experts are participating in 11 of the 15 current operations.

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