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SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE CHARTER OF THE UNITED NATIONS AND ON THE STRENGTHENING OF THE ROLE OF THE ORGANIZATION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, 74th SESSION

Briefing by the Senior Political Affairs Officer of the Security Council Affairs Division, Security Council Practices and Charter Research Branch, Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs on the Repertoire of the Practice of the Security Council

20 February 2020

1. **Esteemed Chairperson, distinguished members,** I am most grateful for this opportunity to provide the members of the Charter Committee with an update on the status of the *Repertoire of the Practice of the Security Council* and related activities. By way of introduction, I wish to refer you to the report of the Secretary-General on the *Repertory* and the *Repertoire* (A/74/194) of 18 July 2019.
2. My remarks today will serve to provide you with an overview of the progress made by the Security Council Practices and Charter Research Branch of the Security Council Affairs Division in the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs since we last had the honour of briefing this Committee on 21 February 2019. I would also like to briefly reflect on our achievements in the context of the overall objective of the *Repertoire*.
3. **Distinguished members,** by its resolution 686 (VII) of 5 December 1952, the General Assembly mandated the Secretary-General to undertake the publication of the *Repertoire of the Practice of the Security Council* as one of the ways and means for making the evidence of customary international

law more readily available. At the time, it was anticipated that within ten years of the establishment of the United Nations, Member States would hold a General Conference to review the Charter of the United Nations, pursuant to Article 109 of the Charter, and that the *Repertoire*, among other documents, would provide a useful basis in this regard.

4. Although the Charter review conference was never held, since its first volume was published in 1954, the *Repertoire* has provided an authoritative overview of the Security Council's contribution to the advancement of customary international law. The *Repertoire* includes comprehensive analytical summaries of the Council's interpretation and application of the Charter and its own Provisional Rules of Procedure. The material covered ranges from an overview of all agenda items before the Council (in Part I); to coverage of procedural matters such as the format of meetings, voting, participation and conduct of business (in Part II); constitutional issues such as the Council's interpretation of the Purposes and Principles of the Charter, its functions and powers (in Part V), its relations with other organs of the United Nations (in Part IV); as well as Council decisions and discussions in pursuit of the pacific settlement of disputes (in Part VI), enforcement action (in Part VII) and the mandates of the diverse array of subsidiary bodies established by it (in Parts IX and X).

5. The *Repertoire*'s rich content offers a comprehensive insight into the Council's history and how it has given life to the Charter over the past 75 years based on the changing nature of conflict and the growth of multilateral cooperation in the area of peace and security. The practice of the Council reveals a sophisticated and ever-evolving understanding of its role as provided in the Charter in the context of multi-faceted and

interconnected conflicts and situations.

6. I invite you to visit the website of the Security Council, where the history of the Council's proceedings has been duly chronicled in the *Repertoire* for the benefit of Member States and the public at large, made searchable and systematized – both chronologically and by topic. The *Repertoire* constitutes a fundamental tool for Council and non-Council members alike, for new delegations as well as for seasoned diplomats.
7. **Distinguished members**, today, as a result of our progress over the past several years, for the first time in its 67-year history, the *Repertoire* is being produced on a contemporary basis. The main focus of our work over the past twelve months has been the simultaneous preparation of the 21st and 22nd Supplements of the *Repertoire*, the first single-year editions of the publication, respectively covering the years 2018 and 2019. The advance version of the 21st Supplement (covering the year 2018) was posted online in October 2019 and we are on course to having the advance version of the 22nd Supplement (covering the year 2019) completed at the same time this year by October 2020. Before October and over the coming months, we will be releasing the various parts as they become available.
8. I would like to highlight that in line with our new methodology for covering contemporary practice, we have already commenced our preparatory research and drafting work on the 23rd Supplement covering the year 2020.
9. The aim of this ambitious schedule has been to ensure that the invaluable

information of the practice of the Council is made available to the broader membership as soon as possible. In order to ensure the sustainability of this contemporary approach, additional financial support from Member States has been and remains absolutely critical. Indeed, voluntary contributions have enabled us to implement efficiency-enhancing initiatives and benefit from the availability of additional human resources. This has included strengthening our collaboration with other Secretariat departments in the preparation and publication of the *Repertoire*, namely the Department of General Assembly Conference Management (DGACM), the Department of Global Communications (DGC), and the Office of Information and Communications Technology (OICT).

10. In terms of publishing, to date, published versions of the Supplements covering the period from 1989 to 2015 are available online in all six official languages. We are expecting the 20th Supplement (covering the period 2016-2017) to be available early this year. Thanks to our enhanced collaboration with DGACM, we are succeeding in shortening the time lag between the completion of Supplements and their eventual publication in all six official languages. Indeed, we are aiming at consolidating an ambitious 22-month schedule from the closing of the period to the actual release of the hard copy of the Supplement.

11. Besides the *Repertoire*, the website of the Security Council offers a broad range of other information sources, including tables, graphs and statistical data providing different overviews and analyses of the practice of the Council. The Branch has explored the use of modern technologies with a view to enhancing information tools, in particular to improve visualization and user interaction. In August 2019, we launched a new interactive

information platform, the Field Missions Dashboard, which is now available on the website. The Dashboard allows users to navigate the mandate of active United Nations peacekeeping operations and special political missions. The project was a collaboration between DPPA, DPO and the United Nations Volunteers and the result of over ten years of work in the Branch on tracking and systematizing Security Council mandates of field missions.

12. Most recently, in early January 2020, the Branch launched the fully revamped *Highlights of the Security Council Practice*. As most of you know, the *Highlights* is an annual online publication which has been published since 2011 offering the most comprehensive snapshot of the activities of the Council over the past year relating to meetings, missions, agendas, decisions and voting, as well as subsidiary bodies. With the help of an external consultant and building on our close collaboration with OICT and DPO, the new *Highlights* platform offers a visually appealing representation of data and enhanced user interactivity. Similarly, the Branch has released early this month a revamped version of the *Monthly Highlights of Security Council Practice*, enabling Member States and the public at large to monitor the activity of the Council with regard to meetings, consultations, hours spent and outcomes. The new platform allows for a comparative year to date analysis dating back to 2012.

13. As in the past and subject to the availability of resources, we will continue to make more information products available in the coming year to enable Member States and the public at large to become more acquainted with the work of the Security Council and the central role it exercises in the maintenance of international peace and security.

14. **Esteemed Chair, distinguished members,** the progress made in the preparation and publication of the *Repertoire* would not have been possible without the contributions received to the Trust Fund for the Updating of the *Repertoire* established by the General Assembly in resolution 54/106 of 9 December 1999. Thanks to the funds available in the Trust Fund, the Branch was able to utilize additional resources to those of the regular budget to advance the timely completion of the 20th and 21st Supplements, respectively for the periods of 2016-2017 and 2018, and the preparation of the 22nd and 23rd Supplements for 2019 and 2020, on a one year-cycle.
15. In this connection, we are truly thankful for the contributions made to the Trust Fund since our last briefing in 2019 by China, Ireland, Singapore and Ukraine. We would also encourage Member States to consider the sponsorship of Associate Experts for the Branch. In this regard, we are particularly grateful to Italy and the Republic of Korea for their sponsorship of Associate Experts this past year and to Sweden for its commitment to sponsor an Associate Expert for the Branch later this year.
16. These funds have allowed the *Repertoire* team to close the gap between coverage of past and contemporary Council practice. At this stage, given the deepening financial constraints of the Organization, unless the Trust Fund is replenished and resources secured to reinforce the work of the Branch, the progress achieved so far may prove unsustainable. The increasingly dynamic and complex practice of the Security Council presents a growing challenge for the Branch in preparing the *Repertoire* and ensuring its timely publication. We count on the membership to continue to support the *Repertoire* as an essential tool for understanding

and contributing to the work of the Security Council.

17. **Esteemed Chairperson, distinguished members,** we welcome and look forward to your feedback on our work. I would like to underscore that, beyond updating you on the latest progress as part of this briefing, the Security Council Practices and Charter Research Branch stands ready to support the wider membership with information and guidance on all procedural and constitutional aspects of the current and past practice of the Security Council.

Thank you.