

Canada in the United Nations

November 1989

The Role of the Security Council President

The presidency of the Security Council rotates each month among its Members, in English alphabetical order. Canada's only presidency in its present two-year term on the Council occurred in October of 1989.

The term "President" is applied to the Member State rather than to its representative at Council proceedings. In the case of absence or temporary illness of the usual representative, an alternate representative from the same Member State simply assumes the President's chair.

Double Duty

The President performs a dual role as both the representative of a Member State and as presiding officer of the Security Council. When the Security Council has adopted a position by consensus, the President represents that view on the Council's behalf. In Council meetings, the President speaks as "President," unless specifically stating first that he/she is speaking for his/her country. When speaking as a national representative, the President usually speaks last in a debate.

The basic duties of the President are:

- to call a meeting of the Council "at any time he[/she] deems necessary," or when asked by a Council member or the Secretary-General to do so (Rule 1);
- to approve the agenda for each meeting as provided by the Secretary-General (Rules 7 and 20);
- to preside over Security Council meetings (Rule 19);
- to call upon representatives in the order in which they signify to speak (Rule 27);
- to immediately state a ruling if a representative raises a point of order (if the ruling is challenged, the President must submit the matter to Council for an immediate decision) (Rule 30);

■ A general view of the Security Council in session.
(UN Photo/Milton Grant)

