

"Friends" and "Contact" Groups:

Other variants of the informal consultation include so-called "groups of friends" or "contact groups". These ad hoc groupings, which are not restricted to SC members, are established from time to time to coordinate resolution of a particular conflict or problem. The most recent contact group is the one on Bosnia composed of France, Germany, Italy, Russia, the UK and the USA and its SC subsidiary, the so-called Coordinating and Drafting Group, which includes non-permanent SC members.

Groups of friends have been established inter alia on Haiti, Georgia, El Salvador, Guatemala and most recently, the Central African Republic. All of the above informal groupings play key roles in preparing draft SC resolutions and statements on the situation with which they are concerned. As part of this process, they will consult with other SC members in the effort to achieve a consensus text or position.

Arria Formula Meetings:

These meetings provide an opportunity for an exchange of views between the SC and non-Council members, including individuals, states and non-state actors (e.g. a visiting foreign dignitary; a non-state party to a conflict). Generally, these meetings are convened and chaired not by the SC president but by another member of the SC. The Secretariat is usually not present, providing a confidential, informal setting. If there is no consensus among the full SC to hold an Arria meeting, SC members may offer to host the meeting at their own mission for those interested in attending. A variant of the Arria formula is the so-called "Somavia Formula" which allows the SC members to hear from NGOs.

Troop Contributor Meetings:

Initiated in response to the increase in UN peacekeeping in the 1990s, these are informal meetings between members of the SC, troop-contributing countries (current and prospective) and the UN Secretariat. They are jointly chaired by the SC president and the Secretariat, and address issues surrounding current and future peace operations.

According to Bailey and Daws, almost any informal meeting related to the SC's work that involves one or more SC member could be classified as an informal consultation.

2. Formal Meetings:

Formal meetings of the Council occur less frequently, perhaps once or twice per week. All Council decisions are officially adopted, whether by consensus or by vote, during formal meetings. The SC increasingly tends to eschew public debates on controversial issues, preferring the less visible, more confidential environment of informal consultations. The decision to hold a formal meeting, its agenda and its outcome are usually pre-agreed during prior informal consultations. Formal meetings