

SC members an opportunity to negotiate and build consensus in a private, confidential atmosphere, free from the scrutiny of other member states, the public and the media.

The resort by the SC to this form of conclave diplomacy, particularly when it involves the P-5 only, has led to charges of secrecy and a lack of transparency in SC decision-making. Efforts are being made by some SC members, mostly non-permanent ones, to increase information flow from these informal meetings to the wider UN membership; providing, for example, briefings to non-SC members on the status of negotiations in informal consultations.

### **1. *Informal Consultations:***

The preferred vehicle for SC meetings are the so-called "informal consultations" which occur almost daily. While informal consultations are not official meetings of the SC as such, they are the forum in which most Council business is done, including matters which used to be dealt with in formal meetings (e.g. deliberations on peace operation mandate renewals, and sanctions reviews). The SC's Provisional Rules of Procedure do not apply to these meetings. Informal consultations are often preceded by "experts" or working-level meetings which serve to prepare the groundwork for consultations, including initial negotiation of draft texts (e.g. resolutions, statements). There are a variety of formats for informal consultations. The most important (and frequent) are "informal consultations of the whole", involving all 15 SC members, and chaired by the SC president.

#### **a) *Informal Consultations of the Whole***

Key features of these meetings include:

- Absence of official records, though members of the Secretariat, including the SG are in attendance;
- Non-SC members cannot attend (except on rare occasions);
- Have no statutory basis, but have acquired de facto official status;
- Held in the "Consultation Room", not the SC Chamber;
- Have become increasingly formalized, though the distinction between informal consultations and formal SC meetings has been rigorously maintained;
- The program of work for informal consultations is proposed by the president.

#### **b) *Informal Consultations other than Consultations of the Whole***

##### ***Caucus Groups:***

Various SC sub-groupings or caucuses such as the P-5, the P-3 (USA, UK, France), NAM, and the EU, also hold informal consultations. These meetings follow their own format and are coordinated internally. The SC president plays no role in these fora.