

ROMANIA AND THE UNITED NATIONS REFORM: A COMMENT

*Nicolae Idu**

After Romania joined NATO in 2002 and EU membership has been perceived as more and more feasible, its involvement in U.N. peace-keeping operations and multi-national military activities aimed at preserving international stability has become an important component of its foreign policy. In spite of its financial resources scarcity, budgetary constrains and new nuances in the public opinion on that subject, this line will be escalated once assuming the EU membership obligations. It is equally true that Romania is charged with a certain transatlantic ambivalence, indicating its special security arrangements with the United States. This occurs within the context in which the Union is lacking consensus and coherence on its own international and security policy. But Romania's President, Traian Basescu, stated at the High Level Plenary Session of the General Assembly of U.N. on September 14th, 2005 that "Romania aligns fully with our (European) Union and successive Presidencies that dealt with the U.N. reform". On this occasion, he characterised the U.N. as "the centerpiece of the multilateral system", a collocation in line with the "effective multilateralism", the keyword of the 2003 European Security Strategy whose godfather was Javier Solana.

As a medium-sized country with a European hat, Romania constantly supported the U.N. reform process, advocating for a more efficient use of the organisation's internal resources, eliminating duplications, efficient management of the document flow with the U.N. Secretariat, better use of the human resources, a strict financial control with an emphasis on the assessment of the cost/benefit ratio. According to the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs one can add some other topics, such as reviewing the organisation's mandates, rejuvenating the General Assembly, enhancing consistency of the development, humanitarian assistance and environment systems.

As a member of the Security Council between 2004 and 2005, Romania made a real contribution to enforcing the provisions of the Final Document concerning the regional organisations by promoting a draft resolution on U.N.'s cooperation with regional organisations in stabilisation and post-conflict reconstruction processes. It was the first time in the history of this U.N. body to approach such a subject.

* Nicolae Idu is Director General of the European Institute of Romania.

During this period Romania was also involved in the debates regarding the Security Council reform with a view to increasing its representativeness and efficiency. Currently, the European membership of the Security Council covers more than 30 percent of the voting rights, i.e. U.K. and France as permanent members and Greece, Denmark ('Western European and others') and Slovakia ('Eastern European'). Ulrike Guerot and Antonio Missiroli underlined last year in the *European Voice* that the five countries represent less than one-twelfth of the world population. As it was demonstrated in the past, European countries, particularly France and U.K., do not have the same azimuth when speaking and voting in the Council meetings. Therefore, on medium and long-term, for a country like Romania, ranking seventh among the future 27 Member States according to the nominal voting power, one single seat for EU in the Security Council could be a solution to maximize its influence on world-wide politics. On the other hand, this would be in line with Romania's initiative to promote regional organisations' involvement in U.N. affairs, including the opportunity for a better representation of Asia and Africa in the U.N. structures.

During the elections for one of the first formal results of the U.N. reform process, Romania got - on May 9th, 2006 - the Human Rights Council membership. An important task and test for the Council will be the setting-up of the *universal periodic review system* to investigate and assess the *human rights standards* around the world. Romania does not agree with the claims on the lack of credibility of the Council and the consequent relocation of this function outside of the U.N. structures. However, according to the 2006 *Index of Economic Freedom*, published by The Heritage Foundation and The Wall Street Journal, one can note that less than half of the U.N. membership is economically "free" or "mostly free". Indeed, who is judging whom?

Romania assumes that protection against security threats is not anymore just about taking them up with resolute action and sustained investments. For President Basescu this is "the rationale for Romania's joint endeavours with partners and allies in shouldering stabilisation and reconstruction in Iraq and Afghanistan". There are over 2,000 Romanian peacekeepers on duty around the world, which places the country as a major contributor in a wide range of U.N.-mandated and U.N.-authorised operations. As a future EU Member State, Romania would not encourage the displacement of EU Rapid Reaction Force around the world without the consent of the U.N., but it is in favour of setting up a rapid consultation procedure in order to align the EU troops actions with the U.N. decision principles and objectives. The increasing threats of international terrorism in Europe could at a certain stage change the rules of the game and under these circumstances Romania will not avoid to align itself to the new realities.

