

Proposals for an Improved Secretary General Selection Process

Authors' Summary from *A World in Need of Leadership*

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**Revised Version, p. 33
Uppsala: Dag Hammarskjold Foundation, 1996**

1. As the highest policy-making organ of the United Nations and as the ultimate appointing body, the General Assembly should adopt a comprehensive resolution establishing a single seven-year term and all key features of an improved process of appointing the Secretary-General. With adoption of a seven-year single term such matters could be discussed in the General Assembly without embarrassment to the incumbent Secretary-General.
2. If the General Assembly decision is too close to the expiration of the present term, the incumbent could be invited to accept a short extension.
3. The essential elements of an improved process are:
 - serious consideration by governments of the necessary qualifications for the post in light of world conditions and probable future demands on the UN
 - a single seven-year term
 - an internationally publicized announcement of the commencement of the selection procedure and a call for nominations
 - internationally publicized rules and timetable for nominations and the minimal required documentation
 - a mechanism for checking records and assessing qualities, background, etc.
 - a timetable that fully allows for a proper worldwide search, refinement of a list of candidates, four weeks of public exposure of this short list, and for the General Assembly to fulfill its responsibilities
 - a well organized search for the best qualified candidates worldwide, not excluding but giving no undue significance to self-nominated or nationally-sponsored candidates
 - the inclusion of women candidates in the search
 - the cessation of the practice of individual campaigning for the Secretary Generalship which will be considered disqualifying behavior
 - a process for contribution of suggestions for the office by all governments, parliaments and the public and for their comments on the short list from the first stage of Security Council search

- a full and transparent accounting by the Security Council of its discharge of its responsibilities in the selection including record of all informal and formal votes
4. The search group, to be established by and to report to the Security Council, should be representative of the Council's non-permanent and permanent members. It should be authorized and provided with resources to seek information and advice from any source.
 5. The search group would examine the qualifications and background of all nominees, with the option to interview them and, if necessary, to conduct a wider search again for candidates. It should consult with the regional groups.

The aim of such arrangement would be to produce a broader and better choice of candidates and avoid a desperate last-minute search for a compromise candidate, and to give more weight to the views of all member governments, and the public worldwide.

It will be argued by some that the above suggestions constitute a complicated alternative to a relatively casual process which on balance has not worked too badly in the past, and that they will only cause unnecessary work, trouble, and even embarrassment to potential candidates. However, no serious assessment of the overall history of the post of Secretary General could lead to the conclusion that the present manner of selection has been adequate. It has not.

[The authors go on to say on p. 35]

The best selection procedures will, however, be useless without the will and the sustained interest of governments in making them work. Obviously there is no perfect or infallible system, but the risks can be greatly reduced by a stronger emphasis on the main objective, finding the best candidate for the job.