
12 January 2007

Ambassador Masao Nakayama
Permanent Representative of Micronesia
Chair of Asian States
Permanent Mission of Micronesia to the United Nations
820 Second Avenue, Suite 17A
New York, NY 10017


Dear Ambassador Nakayama,

Congratulations on selecting and appointing the eighth Secretary-General of the United Nations last year. We closely followed the process through the civil society campaign UNSGselection.org. The successful appointment of Mr. Ban Ki-moon presents an opportunity to reflect on the process by which he was selected.

UNSGselection.org has been advocating for a more transparent, effective, and democratic process since we first wrote to you in April 2006 ("Open Letter to UN Security Council and General Assembly Member States," 17 April). While some elements of this year's process maintained the status quo of the traditionally secretive appointment, other aspects showed desired improvements in transparency.

Several changes occurred last year. First, the President of the Security Council asked for formal nominations from Member States. Second, transparency became a more widely shared value. The President of the Security Council communicated its selection plans to the President of the General Assembly, who in turn shared the information with Member States. Member States voiced their desire to learn more about the candidates and to have information on them further in advance of making a final decision. They also expressed the need for even more information about the Security Council's timeline for assessment of candidates and a final recommendation.

These developments, while modest, affected the overall process. Because of this year's procedures, future candidates likely will be expected to campaign for the nomination. This could end the practice by which permanent members of the Security Council identify last-minute, possibly unknown individuals to break deadlocks and come to consensus.



In principle these changes could be positive developments, but the expectation of individual campaigning raises important questions.¹

- If a candidate's success depends on his government's outreach capacity and financial resources, what are the implications for small and even middle-power member states? If they are unable to compete in the campaigning phase, will future Secretaries-General hail only from the major economic powers and other powerful developed countries? The candidate's flexibility during the campaign phase – i.e. the ability to take time for campaigning – is likely also a reflection on the resources of his or her government.
- Has the tradition of selecting a Secretary-General from a small or middle-power country ended with the 2006 selection? Is this the preference of member states?
- Should new measures be introduced to protect the independence of the office of the Secretary-General?
- Do Member States wish to prevent the potential misuse of funds, aid, trade agreements, and gifts by a country which is running a candidate for Secretary-General?² What is the best way to ensure that only the most highly qualified individuals are selected?
- The appointment of a high-level UN official in 1996, and the second-place success of another high-level UN official this year, raises questions on how to avoid conflicts of interest – or the perception of such conflicts – for such candidates. Are there regulations, such as those used by other international organizations, which the General Assembly could adopt in these cases?³

We believe the shifts that took place during the 2006 selection process require new guidelines on the GA's involvement in the identification and assessment of candidates and in the final selection. Even with this year's increased transparency, many Member States felt that they needed more information on candidates, indicating that transparency mechanisms and procedures need to be improved further.

Now that the selection process at hand has been concluded, the UN has a prime opportunity to make advances towards deeper reform of the Secretary-General selection process. Indeed, there is a need to address these questions now, free from the political pressures of an ongoing selection process, so that Member States can discuss the appropriate long-term evolution of the selection process.


Again, in no way do we wish to criticize the campaign by Ban Ki-moon and the government of the Republic of Korea, nor do we intend to comment on the candidacy of Under Secretary-General Shashi Tharoor, nominated by the government of India. Our purpose is to encourage governments within the General Assembly to address issues on the future selection processes for UN Secretary-General, and to take actions that should be completed or at least initiated in the absence of an ongoing campaign for the position.

Several seasoned experts on UN procedures tell us that because of changes in the 2006 campaigns and selection process, the process could change for the long term – to the detriment of the membership and the UN system as a whole – unless governments undertake long-term changes in the near future.

¹ Please note that the following considerations are affected by last year's events but are not meant to reflect on the qualifications of the Secretary-General.

² We have no evidence of impropriety on the part of the Foreign Ministry of South Korea, but we are aware that it is often the case for governments to use their resources to the advantage of their candidate.

³ It is our understanding that Under Secretary-General Shashi Tharoor took a leave of absence and used his own resources to campaign, which are an example of suitable procedures in this situation.



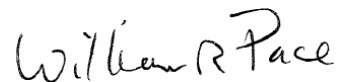
We would like to suggest that an open meeting in the General Assembly of at least a half-day would be a useful way to make progress on this.

The selection process for the Secretary-General sets an example throughout the United Nations and the world. The current process casts a shadow over the Organization's values and reputation. A more transparent, effective, and democratic process would have greater legitimacy, create more trust in the Secretariat among Member States, international organizations and NGOs, and lead to easier negotiations on reform.

This is an initial letter; we likely will write to you again regarding other important aspects of the Secretary-General selection process, but we wished to raise these timely issues with you immediately.

We thank you for considering this letter and would welcome the chance to speak with you about it.

Sincerely,



William R. Pace
Executive Director

Recipients:

- H.E. Sheika Haya Al Khalifa, President of the General Assembly
- Ambassador Vitaly Churkin, Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation, President of the Security Council
- Ambassador Munir Akram, Permanent Representative of Pakistan, Chair of Group of 77
- Ambassador Thomas Matussek, Permanent Representative of Germany, Chair of European Union
- Ambassador Rodrigo Malmierca Díaz, Permanent Representative of Cuba, Chair of Non-aligned Movement
- Ambassador Masao Nakayama, Permanent Representative of Micronesia, Chair of Asian States
- Ambassador Martin Palouš, Permanent Representative of Czech Republic, Chair of Eastern European States
- H.E. José Alberto Briz Gutiérrez, Chargé d'affaires a.i. of Guatemala, Chair of Latin American and Caribbean States
- Ambassador Gilles Noghès, Permanent Representative of Monaco, Chair of Western European and Other States
- Ambassador Aminu Bashir Wali, Permanent Representative of Nigeria, Chair of African States