

17 April 2006

To: His Excellency Wang Guangya  
Permanent Representative of the People's Republic of China  
President of the United Nations Security Council

Re: Open letter to UN Security Council Member States

Dear Mr President and other Member State representatives,

The selection of the next Secretary-General will be one of the most important international decisions of the next decade and Member States of the Security Council cannot be unaware of the criticisms of the past process. As the Security Council initiates consultations on the appointment of the next Secretary-General, we therefore call on Council members to implement a set of realistic yet imperative provisions to bring the current selection process for the UN Secretary-General in line with improved UN standards of transparency and accountability that ensure the selection of a qualified candidate.

Over the past 60 years the Secretary-General's leadership as chief administrative officer, diplomat, mediator and representative of the UN principles has not only played a fundamental role in shaping the work of the United Nations but has provided a critical public voice on the key issues of peace and security, development, and human rights.

In the past years, international organizations, including the UN, have developed basic procedural mechanisms to enhance the transparency and accountability of international high-level appointments. In light of these developments, civil society groups have become increasingly concerned with the lack of progress in adopting similar standards for the selection of the UN's top official. We note that many governments share this concern.

The selection process for the UN Secretary-General should reflect the highest principles of governance, accountability, and professionalism. As Member States call for a wide range of reforms to enhance the accountability and transparency of the United Nations, it is only logical that they apply the same principles to the selection of the Secretary-General.

During the last year, civil society groups that are strongly committed to upholding the UN Charter and its principles have been working together to develop a basic set of proposals on improving the selection process. Having taken into account a broad range of existing frameworks and studies conducted by experts and governments, we, the undersigning NGOs, call on the Security Council and the General Assembly, as appropriate, to take the necessary steps to ensure that the following four procedures are incorporated into the current selection process for the UN Secretary-General. The purpose of these four proposals is to enhance the transparency, accountability and inclusiveness necessary for the selection of a qualified and effective candidate.

**1. Formal Candidate Qualifications:** In accordance with the basic standards of other high-level international public sector appointments, the UN should establish a formal set of candidate qualifications to guide Member States in putting forward qualified candidates, assessing the relative competencies of the candidates and to guarantee that the selected candidate adequately fulfills the many roles and functions of the UN Secretary-General. Qualifications that should be taken into consideration include the following:

- a. Comprehensive understanding of and demonstrated commitment to the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, including, but not limited to, international law and multilateralism.
- b. Comprehensive understanding of and demonstrated commitment to the three pillars of UN system: peace and security, development and human rights
- c. Extensive experience with the UN system or other complex international organizations
- d. Diplomatic skills and demonstrated vision and leadership, in accordance with the principles of independence, fairness, and impartiality
- e. Multicultural understanding and gender sensitivity
- f. Strong communication skills and fluency in at least one official UN language
- g. Proven openness to working with civil society and other relevant stakeholders

**2. Official Timetable with Systematic Reporting:** The UN should establish a set timetable for nominations, shortlists and final selection accompanied by systematic reporting at each phase, as applied by other international organizations, to provide a more structured, transparent and accountable framework for the selection process. To ensure consistent reporting at each phase in the process, the Security Council should appoint facilitators.

**3. Procedures for Assessment of Candidates:** The UN should establish procedures that enhance the transparency of the selection process to facilitate the dissemination of basic information necessary for an adequate assessment of candidates by all relevant parties. These procedures include the publication of an official candidate list at the end of the nomination phase; distribution of candidate CVs; statements from candidates specifying how they fulfill the necessary requirements; a standardized system of background checks; panel interviews and question/answer sessions with UN member states and, where possible, relevant stakeholders.

**4. Gender and Geographic Diversity Considerations:** Based on the values, principles and priorities of the United Nations, it is important that, in addition to ensuring that candidates meet a number of key qualifications, the selection process be guided by the principles of gender equality and geographic balance. Therefore, gender equality must be considered and the principle of equitable geographic representation must be taken into account in the selection process.

We believe these procedures reflect crucial yet realistic reforms based on the current UN format, practices within existing international high-level appointment procedures and calls from members of the Security Council to enhance the accountability of the UN's management and leadership framework. We recognize that while any or all candidates may not meet the full range of qualifications and diversity considerations, it is important that the process take all factors into account.

Reforming selection procedures for the UN Secretary-General is an ongoing process that will occur over time, but we hope that the Security Council will take this opportunity to initiate a key set of basic reforms. For a full range of resources on the selection process, including expert reports, NGO and government proposals, outlines of other high-level selection processes, and a full description of the four procedures advocated above, please visit [www.UNSGselection.org](http://www.UNSGselection.org).

Yours sincerely,

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