

His Excellency Mr. António Guterres
Secretary-General of the United Nations
Room S-3700
New York, NY 10017

6 February 2018

Dear Secretary-General,

1 for 7 Billion appreciates the close attention you are giving to gender parity in senior appointments and welcomes that full parity has been achieved in your Senior Management Group.

As you know, 1 for 7 Billion advocates an open, transparent and inclusive process to select the Secretary-General, who deserves to be supported by the strongest possible leadership team selected on the basis of merit alone. Indeed, the General Assembly, in its latest resolution on Revitalization of its work, stressed that: “the process of appointments to senior posts by the Secretary-General ... should be inclusive and transparent...”, underlined “the principles that the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity are the paramount considerations in the recruitment ...of international civil servants” and that “...as a general rule, there should be no monopoly on senior posts in the United Nations system by nationals of any State or group of States” (resolution 71/321).

Since assuming office, you have made a wide range of senior appointments. 1 for 7 Billion would greatly appreciate learning what measures have been put in place to actively search for and appoint the most highly qualified senior officials, especially Under-Secretaries-General, and whether this was done in a competitive and transparent process, regardless of nationality, while also ensuring equal and fair distribution based on gender and geographical balance. We are particularly interested to learn whether measures taken invariably include public advertisements of these posts, with the opportunity for all Member States to put forward highly qualified candidates. We request you to ensure that such practical measures facilitating merit-based appointments will apply to the recruitments of future senior positions, notably the important appointment you will be making this year of a new High Commissioner for Human Rights.

As noted in our letter to you of 6 February last year, we realize that Member States routinely lobby for their nationals to be selected for senior posts and that prominent Member States may expect their nationals to be appointed to some of them. However, permanent members of the Security Council have dominated the selection process and been able to extract promises from previous candidates for Secretary-General in exchange for support, in violation of the letter and spirit of the Charter. In fact, permanent Security Council members have exercised a *de facto* monopoly over some of the most senior UN positions, a range of General Assembly resolutions opposing such practices notwithstanding. We note that a Chinese national was once more appointed on 8 June 2017 to the post of Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, a post held by a Chinese national since 2007. And on 12 May last year, you once more appointed a UK national to become the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, a post held by a UK national since 2007. We would also appreciate knowing what process applied in appointing, on 21 June 2017, a Russian national to the recently created position of Under-Secretary- General of the UN’s Counter-Terrorism Office.

The appointments to two other key senior post, the Under-Secretaries-General of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and of Political Affairs, are due to be made before 1 April this year, when the one-year appointments of, respectively, a French and a US national to those positions will expire. A French national has headed the Department of Peacekeeping Operations since 1997 and a US national has headed Political Affairs since 2007. We urge you to be as transparent as possible in appointing the strongest woman or man to these two posts, solely on the basis of merit and regardless of nationality, after advertising these positions publicly and inviting all Member States to put forward highly qualified candidates.

We would be most grateful for your response.

Yours sincerely,

Handwritten signatures of William R Pace and Yvonne Terlingen.

William Pace / Yvonne Terlingen
On behalf of the 1 for 7 Billion Steering Committee

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1 for 7 Billion is a global campaign supported by organisations and individuals committed to getting the best UN Secretary-General.

The informal steering committee consists of Avaaz, CIVICUS, FES-NY, UNA-UK and WFM-IGP.