

1 for 7 Billion urges Security Council to act now to start selection process of next UN Secretary-General

The *1 for 7 Billion* Campaign urges all members of the Security Council to agree to start the process of selecting the next UN Secretary-General immediately in a transparent and inclusive manner. The Presidents of the Council and the General Assembly should promptly write the joint letter that sets out the entire process and invites presentation of candidates ‘in a timely manner’, as called for in the landmark resolution¹ the General Assembly adopted on 11 September.

This week’s debate in the General Assembly on revitalization of its work reinforced the near universal demand of its members to get under way a new process that will put an end to the secretive manner in which the Secretary-General has been selected by a handful of countries. The overwhelming majority of members, including 120 members of the Non Aligned Movement (NAM) and the 25 members of the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency Group (ACT), highlighted the need to implement the resolution and called for the joint letter to be sent. Delay could jeopardize the significant reforms agreed by all Member States in the consensus resolution, and impede a timely appointment of the highest qualified candidate.

“The President of the General Assembly has repeatedly said he is willing to act swiftly. 1 for 7 Billion regrets that the Security Council seems to be facing obstacles in agreeing to send the joint letter now. The UK is in an excellent position to move this forward and should do its utmost to send the letter during its current Presidency of the Council. Delay is unacceptable. The time to act is now.”

The United States has said that the General Assembly resolution “reflects the efforts of Member States to work together constructively to address the selection process consistent with a clear and straightforward directive”. Significantly, nearly all ten elected Security Council members have pressed for early action to start the process. Angola, Chile, Jordan, Malaysia, New Zealand and Spain made a strong joint statement in the Council on 20 October saying it was ‘not acceptable that the Council has been slow’ in producing the joint letter. Venezuela and Estonia pushed for action within weeks. Egypt, which will join the Council in January, called for expeditious action on the letter.

1 for 7 Billion, the global campaign of over 750 NGOs working to select the best UN Secretary-General, welcomes growing support during this week’s debate for other important proposals to create an open and merit-based process to select the most highly-qualified candidate. The NAM made a strong statement that no candidate should be under any pressure to give posts to a particular nationality in exchange for support, as contrary to the spirit of the Charter. Brazil criticized the process of ‘reserving certain posts for certain countries’ and Costa Rica also opposed the practice.

The NAM called on the Security Council to recommend more than one candidate to the General Assembly for appointment, as did India, Brazil, South Africa and Costa Rica. Russia said it was open to considering the proposal.

South Africa, ACT and Costa Rica called for serious consideration of a single, non-renewable term for the Secretary-General, a proposal that, in 1 for 7 Billion’s view, would help strengthen the independence of the office.

¹ A/RES 69/321 of 11 September 2015