

UN Debate on SG selection – overwhelming calls for change signal 20-year stalemate could be broken.

Monday's debate of the *Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the General Assembly* saw a near universal demand for transforming the way in which the UN appoints its next Secretary-General.

32 member states and the EU spoke at the debate, voicing broad support for many of the concrete proposals made by the 1 for 7 Billion Campaign.

"Not only did an unprecedented number of states speak, but their statements were stronger and - crucially - more detailed, setting out concrete, practical proposals to make the process more transparent and inclusive. We believe this spells the end of the outdated and opaque process that hasn't been updated since 1946," said Natalie Samarasinghe, of the United Nations Association of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UNA-UK); one of over 150 NGOs worldwide that belong to the 1 for 7 Billion movement. The impact of the campaign was visible during the debate, with Liechtenstein, Mexico and Brazil making specific reference to it.

Nearly all states backed the need for a clear timeline and open exchanges with candidates. The majority (21 in total) called for female candidates to be seriously considered this time. No woman has ever held the UN's top job.

Significantly, 10 states, including Brazil and Malaysia called for an end to the "rubberstamping" function of the General Assembly, urging the Security Council to give the UN's wider membership a real choice by putting forward more than one candidate.

Eight states, including Algeria, on behalf of the 120 member states of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) supported consideration of a single, non-renewable term for the next SG.

The Council's "backroom deals" with candidates also came under fire, with Algeria, on behalf of the NAM, India, Nicaragua, Brazil and Indonesia, calling for a merit-based appointment without pressure on candidates to make promises on other senior appointments.

Highlights of the debate included particularly strong statements made by the NAM, Costa Rica and India on the need for the Security Council to present more than one candidate. The Accountability, Coherence and Transparency (ACT) group, representing 27 states laid down a practical guide for action, proposing a joint letter by the Presidents of the General Assembly and the Security Council to open the selection process with a call for nominations and an end date.

In another welcome development, Canada reintroduced its important 'non-paper' on the selection of the Secretary-General, calling for substantive reform in the UN's 70th anniversary year.

Vague statements made by the EU and Germany were particularly disappointing.

Predictably, only China, Russia, and the United States, three of the five Security Council members with the power to veto candidates, made statements in favor of the status quo. France remained vague. The UK displayed some leadership, proposing a clear 'structure' in the recruitment process, including a deadline for candidate declarations and a timetable for appointment.

"Yesterday's debate is an excellent basis for negotiating a strong resolution, cementing an open and inclusive appointment process. The job of the SG is one of the most challenging and influential in the world, affecting the lives of 7 billion people. We must now push hard to translate words into action in the tough negotiations that lie ahead."