

To all Permanent Representatives to the United Nations:

Thematic debate of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Revitalization of the General Assembly on the selection and appointment of the Secretary-General and other executive heads - 16 April 2018

16 March 2018

Excellency,

1 for 7 Billion welcomes the firm commitment expressed by more than two thirds of the General Assembly membership to start consolidating the major improvements the Assembly made in the process to select the UN Secretary-General, to institutionalize the lessons learned and to make further clarifications and improvements. Speaking in the open General Debate of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Revitalization of the General Assembly (AHWG) on 20 February 2018, dozens of member states and groups – notably the Non Aligned Movement and the Accountability Coherence and Transparency group – underlined the need to start acting now and make further improvements to the selection process.

In our letter to all Permanent Representatives of 8 February in advance of the general debate, a copy of which is attached, 1 for 7 Billion urged you to support the need to adopt a resolution that strongly welcomes and specifies all the historic advances achieved during the 70<sup>th</sup> and 71<sup>st</sup> sessions of the General Assembly and that confirms their application in future processes to select and appoint the Secretary-General. We are now writing to you in more detail in advance of the thematic debate on the selection and appointment of the Secretary-General and other executive heads to be held on 16 April.

In order to effectively consolidate the new process, we believe that the following elements to apply to all future selection processes should be included in that resolution:

- A key and active role for the General Assembly and its President
- Clear selection criteria
- A joint letter by the Presidents of the General Assembly and of the Security Council to initiate the selection process in the year before the appointment by inviting candidacies
- A clear timeline of the process allowing sufficient time for handover to prepare the Secretary-General elect
- Circulation of all candidates' names, their CV's and mission statements
- Informal dialogues and open meetings for Member States with all candidates that are webcast
- Active and substantive participation by civil society in these dialogues
- Regular meetings between the Presidents of the General Assembly and the Security Council with summaries of the outcome
- Reaffirmation of the authority of the General Assembly to draft the appointment resolution and to set the term of office of the Secretary-General

We also requested that the resolution confirms that the new more open, inclusive and transparent selection process should apply to a sitting Secretary-General seeking re-election. However, the new process that requires candidates' participation in open debates with Member States and civil society

has implications for the workload of a sitting Secretary-General who must be able to continue fulfilling his wide range of duties effectively. This requires further consideration and discussion in forthcoming AHWG debates.

1 for 7 Billion also urged you to consider supporting a range of steps, outlined in our letter, to further improve the process. We appreciate that some of these were already addressed by some member states in the course of the general debate, namely: setting a deadline for nominating candidates; the need to clarify processes for the presentation and withdrawal of candidacies; consideration by the Security Council of proposing multiple candidates to the Assembly; a commitment by the Council to promptly publish the outcome of straw polls; improving informal hearings with candidates to give the latter more time to respond as well as further discussion of appointing the Secretary-General for a longer, non-renewable single term of office. The need to update the Oath of Office for the Secretary-General was also raised. We urge you to support and address these issues in more detail in the thematic debate.

Lastly, many states stressed, in the course of the general debate, that the Secretary-General should exercise full independence in making senior appointments on merit. They reiterated their long-standing concern to see an end to the practice of permanent Security Council members extracting promises on senior posts from candidates in exchange for support, resulting in *de facto* monopolies for their nationals to hold such posts successively. This means that the pool of candidates is sharply reduced and that the best candidate may not necessarily be appointed from among the wider UN membership.

1 for 7 Billion applauds the Secretary-General for his efforts to achieve gender parity in senior posts in his Senior Management group. However, it appears that appointments made by the Secretary-General to several key senior posts over the last year confirm monopolies held by permanent Security Council members. We therefore reiterate our call to you to stress the need for the Secretary-General to be completely independent in making senior appointments on the basis of merit alone - taking into account the need for fair distribution based on gender balance and wide geographical basis. We urge that the General Assembly should adopt a resolution that includes a review of the full implementation of paragraph 63 of resolution 71/323 that requires observing the highest standards of recruitment to senior posts in the UN system without the exercise of a monopoly by a state or group of states.

1 for 7 Billion stands ready to provide further information and background on these proposals.

Yours sincerely,

The image shows two handwritten signatures in dark ink. The first signature, on the left, reads 'William R Pace' in a cursive script. The second signature, on the right, reads 'Yvonne Terlingen' in a similar cursive style.

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.