

NGOs challenge world leaders on opaque and outdated process to select UN Secretary-General

Grassroots groups from across the world have written to all UN Member States to call for an open, fair and inclusive process to select the best possible candidate for Secretary-General of the UN.

Signatories include Avaaz, Amnesty International, CIVICUS, Equality Now, FEMNET, Forum-Asia, Global Policy Forum, Lawyers Committee on Nuclear Policy, Social Watch, Third World Network, Women's Environment and Development Organization, the World Federalist Movement-Institute for Global Policy and the World Federation of United Nations Associations.

The letter coincides with the launch of the [1 for 7 Billion campaign](#), which is calling for an end to the secret deals and horse-trading that see five countries hold sway over an appointment that affects all the world's people.

The appointment process has barely changed during the past 70 years. At present:

- No formal criteria are used
- There is no timetable for the process or proper scrutiny of candidates
- The Security Council decides on the candidate in secret and produces just one name for the rest of the UN's membership to rubberstamp
- Each of the five permanent members (P5) can veto any candidate. The current state of P5 relationships could result in a race to the bottom for the lowest-common denominator candidate
- Backroom deals are not uncommon, for example, states seeking promises from candidates on other senior UN appointments
- To date, no woman has ever held the post or been seriously considered for it

Geared towards producing a compromise candidate, the process falls far short of the UN's own standards and ideals, current practice at other international organisations and basic recruitment standards. Without reform, it risks undermining the credibility of the UN at a time when it is needed more than ever, to tackle the growing raft of challenges – such as climate change, extremism, pandemics and conflicts – that need global cooperation and leadership.

[1 for 7 Billion](#) and its partners around the world are calling for:

- A process that aims to produce the best possible candidate
- Formal selection criteria that reflect best practice in equality and diversity
- Greater transparency, including a clear timetable and official shortlist
- Open sessions that enable all states, and other stakeholders, to interact with nominees and have input in the process
- Candidates to submit vision statements and to undertake not to make promises on specific appointments prior to their confirmation
- More than one candidate to be put forward by the Security Council
- A single term of office to help the Secretary-General pursue longer-term aims without the disruption of re-election campaigning

Contact

- More information and details on who's backing the campaign: www.1for7billion.org
- International media contact: William Pace at WFM-IGP on info@instituteforglobalpolicy.org or +1 646-465-8520
- UK media contact: Ben Donaldson at UNA-UK on donaldson@una.org.uk or +44 20 7766 3448

Quotes from campaign supporters

"The next Secretary-General should be a man or woman of exceptional gifts and character, but it remains to be seen whether U.N. members have any interest in improving the haphazard lottery that passes for a selection system, which would be rejected as a bad joke by any serious institution in the private sector. With no open search procedure, no criteria, no vetting of candidates, no statement of intent, no interview, and a list virtually restricted to those who have declared themselves, it is something of a miracle that the United Nations has been as well served as it has. Ability,

authority, and leadership capacity, rather than political convenience, must take priority if the United Nations is to shoulder its increasingly vital responsibilities.” **Sir Brian Urquhart, former Under Secretary-General**

“After twenty years of debate and discussion, it is time the General Assembly mandate its President to implement better procedures for the appointment of the Secretary-General. The procedures adopted 68 years ago are woefully outdated. Member States, the international public and media deserve to know who the nominees are, what their positions on crucial issues are, and what their qualifications are. The States should do the voting, but “We the People...” should be consulted – the selection of the UN Secretary-General directly impacts the work of tens of thousands of NGOs representing billions of people.” **William R. Pace, Executive Director WFM-Institute for Global Policy.**