

**1 for 7 Billion Reaction to the Zero Draft Resolution of the Ad Hoc Working Group  
on the Revitalization of the General Assembly (75th session)**

9 June 2021

Six years ago on 11 September 2015, the General Assembly adopted resolution 69/321 setting out a more open, inclusive and merit-based process to select the Secretary-General. The resolution was negotiated in the Ad Hoc Working Group on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly (AHWG), which has - more or less - proposed resolutions covering this theme every year since the 62nd session.

Having worked with Member States to secure this landmark resolution, [1 for 7 Billion](#) - a global coalition of over 750 organisations - was delighted to see its implementation in 2016, including through: a joint letter outlining the process from the Presidents of the General Assembly and Security Council (PGA and PUNSC respectively); the setting out of selection criteria; the publication of candidates' names and vision statements; and informal dialogues in the General Assembly. The impact of these measures was widely recognised at the time, with some [ambassadors](#) noting that António Guterres' strong dialogue performance contributed to his appointment.

We were also pleased to see these elements applied to the process that took place this year, at the end of Mr Guterres' five-year term, and we welcomed his submission of a vision statement and dialogue in the General Assembly.

**Missed opportunities**

We believe these gains should represent the floor, not the ceiling, for appointments to this crucial role.

Since 2016, we have advocated for the best practices developed - for example, the inclusion of civil society in dialogues - to be maintained and built upon. We have also called on Member States to discuss proposals that are supported by a significant proportion of the UN's membership but which were not addressed in the 2015 resolution, notably a single (non-renewable) longer term of office and the presentation of more than one candidate to the General Assembly.

Last year, the AHWG was not able to proceed with a substantive resolution due to COVID-19 disruption (it did not address the selection process at all). As a result, Member States had little opportunity to discuss how resolution 69/321 should be applied at the end of the incumbent's five-year term.

They also did not have an opportunity to discuss scenarios that might arise, such as the individuals without state backing announcing their intention to stand. Nor were they able to consider outstanding issues from previous negotiations.

Disruption also contributed to the late dispersal of the PGA and PUNSC letter outlining the process - which was not sent until February this year. This again left little time for discussion of developments.

**The 2021 resolution - a chance for progress**

Mr Guterres has now been recommended by the Security Council for a second term and is due to be confirmed by the General Assembly on 18 June. This session's AHWG process offers an important opportunity for Member States to address the above while the issue is fresh and interest in the selection process is high. The best way to ensure clarity ahead of the anticipated 2026 process is to make substantive progress on outstanding issues in this year's resolution, not least due to the proposed move to biennial resolutions.

We welcome the zero draft's assertion that the "selection and appointment of the Secretary-General and other executive heads" be retained as a core cluster of work for the AHWG.

We further welcome the reference to the incumbent's engagement with the measures agreed in 2016, now institutionalised for scenarios where an incumbent is eligible to be re-appointed:

*"[The General Assembly] notes with appreciation the presentation of a vision statement by the incumbent Secretary-General, and the briefing to the Member States on its content, and encourages holding question-and-answer segments with engagement of Member States and representatives of the civil society"*

However, we encourage Member States to use discussions in the coming weeks to address five key issues:

### **1: Clarity on the requirements for nomination**

This year, we have seen some confusion as a result of individuals putting themselves forward without nomination by a Member State. This has placed the PGA in an awkward position, left the individuals in question in an uncertain position, and generated negative press around the selection process. See [1 for 7 Billion's discussion paper](#) for more detail.

It is vital that states use this resolution to clarify matters.

#### 1 for 7 Billion's recommendation:

The UN Charter ascribes a role to both the Security Council and General Assembly in the appointment process. To be a successful candidate – and, ultimately, an effective Secretary-General – individuals must be able to attract significant state support, including in both these bodies.

The UN Charter opens with the words "we the peoples". Nearly 8 billion people worldwide are affected by the Organization's work. We therefore believe that civil society, youth and other stakeholders must play a role in the nomination process. We would also like to see further discussion of selection criteria in addition to what was outlined in Resolution 69/321 – see our [paper](#) on this for more info.

We propose:

1. The General Assembly makes clear that in order for an applicant to become an official candidate, and therefore be listed on the PGA's website or take part in an informal dialogue, they must be nominated by one or more Member States.
2. In their joint letter kickstarting the process, the PGA and PUNSC should encourage Member States to work with civil society and other stakeholders in a timely manner to identify potential candidates and bring them into the official selection process

#### Proposed language:

*[The General Assembly] Affirms that in order to be considered a candidate for the position of Secretary-General, nominations should be supported by at least one member state.*

*[The General Assembly] Recognising the desirability of an inclusive selection process with a diverse field of highly-qualified candidates from all regions, encourages the Presidents of the General Assembly and Security Council to include in their joint letter a call for states to work with civil society and other stakeholders to identify, and where relevant, nominate potential candidates on the basis of the criteria set out in Resolution 69/321.*

*[The General Assembly] Acknowledging the need for a well-structured process with sufficient time for the identification and nomination of potential candidates, encourages the Presidents of the General Assembly and Security Council to send a joint letter formally starting the next selection process no later than October of the year before the end of the Secretary-General's term of office.*

### **2: A longer, non-renewable term for future Secretaries-General**

The UN needs leadership of the highest quality and moral authority if it is to remain the leading international organization to tackle major world crises in the 21st century. The Secretary-General needs to be able to act decisively in moments of crisis and have the political space to act effectively.

However, the current practice whereby Secretaries-General are appointed for a five-year term once renewable has created dependency on the veto-carrying members of the Security Council. At least three former postholders have spoken about working under the shadow of pressures to be re-appointed.

A non-renewable term longer than five and less than ten years would strengthen the hand of future postholders, giving them the necessary political space and freeing them from the distraction of re-appointment. She or he would also be perceived as more independent, for example, when undertaking mediation.

A single term would also allow for more innovation, for the more frequent appointment of individuals from different regions and backgrounds, and for more regular testing of the office against evolving challenges - the global context of 2021 is markedly different from that of 2016, for instance.

A significant number of Member States already vocally support this proposal. See [here](#) for a list of supporting states and [here](#) for more on the proposal.

#### 1 for 7 Billion's recommendation:

The term of the Secretary-General should be limited to a single, non-renewable period of seven years.

#### Proposed language:

*[The General Assembly] Decides to appoint the 10th UN Secretary-General for a non-renewable term of seven years.*

### **3: Multiple candidates**

The UN Charter underlines that "the Secretary-General shall be appointed by the General Assembly upon the recommendation of the Security Council" (Article 97). However, the number of candidates to be considered is a matter that the General Assembly has addressed and feels competent to address, as is clear from the wording of resolution 11(1) adopted in January 1946 which states: "It would be desirable for the Security Council to proffer only one candidate for the consideration of the General Assembly....". Many Member States believe that this 75-year-old resolution is outdated and that the General Assembly should request to be presented with more than one candidate before making an appointment.

#### 1 for 7 Billion's recommendation:

The General Assembly should ask the Security Council to honour the spirit of Article 97 of the UN Charter, as well as established best practice for senior appointments at the UN, by bringing an end to convention of recommending a single candidate for Secretary-General for the General Assembly to rubber stamp. Instead, a shortlist of at least two candidates should be recommended, including at least one woman, to give the General Assembly a meaningful say in the process.

#### Proposed language:

*[The General Assembly] requests that the Security Council recommend a shortlist of at least two candidates, at least half of whom should be woman.*

### **4: An end to back room deals and monopolies on top jobs**

The process of "ringfencing" certain senior roles for nationals of certain Member States is incredibly damaging to perceptions - internal and external - of the Organisation and is contrary to General Assembly resolution 46/232. Yet at present, six members of the Senior Management Group are of the same nationality as their predecessor.

#### 1 for 7 Billion's recommendation:

Given the strength of feeling that exists within the UN membership on this issue, we encourage the General Assembly to reiterate the importance of resolution 46/232 and call for it to be observed.

#### Proposed language:

*[The General Assembly] Reiterates the importance of Resolution 46/232 which states "no national of a Member State should succeed a national of that State in a senior post and there should be no monopoly on senior posts by nationals of any State or group of States" and calls for it to be observed in all senior posts.*

## **5. The oath of office**

The oath of office is an important symbolic step for all appointments and re-appointments of Secretaries-General. We are concerned that references to the oath have been deleted, which appears inconsistent with past resolutions and could put at risk this important aspect of the process.

[Click here](#) for the UN News article describing Ban Ki-moon re-taking the oath ahead of his second term.

### 1 for 7 Billion's recommendation:

We call for the original language on the oath to be reinserted, upholding the tradition that all Secretary-General appointments, whether ahead of their first or second term, must take an oath of office.

### Proposed language:

*[The General Assembly] Decides that the Secretary-General-designate shall take an oath of office before the General Assembly during a swearing-in ceremony, as detailed in the annex to the present resolution;*