Setting a Democratic Example:
The challenge of selecting Kofi Annan's successor

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Summary: Arguably one of the most important elections in the world, the selection process for the UN Secretary-General should reflect the highest principles of governance, accountability, and professionalism. While reform of selection procedures is an ongoing process, each of these principles could be better applied now, in order to set the democratic example that will make all areas of UN work more effective. The selection procedures in practice today are based on a combination of written rules and practice that have developed through precedent and tradition. The procedures allow the five permanent members of the Security Council to dominate the selection. This is preventing the office of Secretary-General from evolving with the needs of the organization and today's challenges for the post. Much is at stake, as tension between large donor countries and the majority poor countries has become an obstacle to effective UN work and overall reform efforts.

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1   Introduction

By 31st of December 2006, Kofi Annan will complete his tenure as the seventh Secretary-General of the United Nations. In selecting his successor, the 192 countries that make up the UN are faced with one of their most important decisions in ten years. Private and public discussions on the candidates and the selection mechanisms have taken place, an informal vote on five candidates was held in the Security Council, and intriguing rumors have been in play for months.[1] Attention on the "race" has been piqued earlier this year than in the past, partly because the current selection is occurring alongside efforts to reform the UN's work and how it is managed. The context of reform has two implications: the next Secretary-General will undertake a daunting work load in accomplishing the agreed reforms; and, the process of selecting him or her is expected to reflect the principles and spirit of reform taking hold throughout the organization. The latest round of calls for reform of the Secretary-General selection process began to sound in early 2006 from civil society and Member States.

Following an introduction to the urgency of reform, this briefing paper will discuss the role of the Secretary-General, the current selection process, shortcomings with this process, and proposals for reform, including a global civil society campaign for an improved selection process.

Arguably one of the most important elections in the world, the selection process for the UN Secretary-General has been criticized for a failure to reflect the highest standards of governance, accountability, and professionalism. Reforming selection procedures is a long-term, ongoing process, but it would be possible to apply these principles now, setting a democratic example that will make all areas of UN work more effective.

The urgency of reforming the selection process for Secretary-General stems from two fundamental challenges for the UN. The first problem is structural. Any effective intergovernmental body requires a functioning system of checks and balances. In the UN, the Secretary-General can serve this purpose as an objective consultant, independent mediator, and chief administrator.

The Secretary-General's role is particularly crucial in regards to negotiating the balance of power between the main UN bodies, the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council. However, the selection process as it currently stands plays right into the increasing tensions between the General Assembly and the Security Council. The Security Council has the primary role in selecting a candidate upon which the General Assembly is then asked to provide a "rubber stamp" of approval. In this manner the selection process revolves more around the self-interests of the five permanent members of the Security Council than the merit of the candidate. Because of this situation the UN is more likely to get a compromise candidate based on the political agendas of the main powers than a leader capable of demonstrating objective leadership. The Secretary-General's ability to act as a check on the politicized, self-interested actions of Member States within the UN is thus highly compromised because of his or her being selected in an undemocratic manner. Because only a few states have a final say in the selection, the process exacerbates mistrust and casts the office of the Secretary-General in a skeptical, politicized light.

The second problem relates to the values promoted by the UN. To advance principles of democratic governance effectively throughout the world, the UN must reflect them in its own organization. The Secretary-General is the only "elected" official within the Secretariat, a situation which makes the selection an important process with which to practice the principles it preaches. Its current failure to do so creates a perception that the UN practices a double standard. It is not surprising that decisions on difficult reform issues have been badly delayed due to mistrust and resentment from the developing world, which is consistently marginalized in the UN system by the major donor countries' large influence over decision-making. Until the Organization starts to address this perceived hypocrisy, its efforts towards internal reform will continue to have sub-optimal results. For example, consultations in the General Assembly on reviewing old and outdated UN mandates have become intensely politicized, a frustrating cycle fuelled by mistrust and spite, due to a few powerful countries' calls to reviewing mandates that other countries hold precious. This has resulted in a direct refusal by many countries to discuss the mandates.

The selection of the UN's top official is an important place to begin to address the organization's current democratic deficit.

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[1]   As of 15 September 2006, five candidates were officially nominated: Ban Ki-Moon (South Korea); Surakiart Sathirathai (Thailand); Jayantha Dhanapala (Sri Lanka); Shashi Tharoor (India); and Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Hussein (Jordan). Most recent information about candidates can be found at http://www.unsgselection.org/content/current-candidates/.

2 The Role of the Secretary-General

The role of the Secretary-General has come to be defined both by the basic responsibilities assigned by the Charter, and the applied practices of the seven Secretaries-General in UN history. According to the UN Charter, the Secretary-General is responsible for carrying out the functions entrusted to him/her by the Security Council, General Assembly, Economic and Social Council, and other UN organs. The General Assembly and Security Council have entrusted the Secretariat with special diplomatic and operational functions, with which the Secretary-General is responsible for carrying out the two main bodies' decisions, within the general terms outlined in Resolutions and the Charter. S/he has the authority to bring to the Security Council's attention matters which he/she feels threaten the maintenance of international peace and security. Further, the Secretary-General has the ability to use his/her "good offices" to serve as a mediator in conflict situations. While the Security Council authorizes the peacekeeping missions and the General Assembly approves funds, the Secretary-General often plays the essential role of engaging with and mediating between the conflicting parties.

This basic job description does not prescribe the relative weight given to each role. Indeed, in addition to filling these numerous roles that are complex in and of themselves, the UN Secretary-General is also responsible for striking a delicate balance between them. As Dag Hammarskjöld expressed in 1953, "to explain, interpret and defend the United Nations to the peoples of the world is one of the important duties of his office. But he should never do this in such a way as to contravene his obligations as representative of all Member nations and to the principles of the Organization."[2] This is no less difficult to achieve today than it was during Hammarskjöld's term.

Each of the previous Secretaries-General have had to interpret their job description in the context of their personal strengths and the political circumstances of their day. The first Secretary-General, Trygve Lie, immediately challenged the purely administrative interpretation of the Secretary-General post, stressing his role both as a leader and mediator. Since then, Secretaries-General have utilized their "good offices" as a means of preventing the rise, escalation, and

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[2] From Dag Hammarskjöld's address to American Association for the United Nations, New York, 14 September 1953.

spread of international disputes and conflicts. Dag Hammarskjöld's strengths as a diplomat and mediator in international crises further defined the role of the Secretary-General as a chief international arbiter. U Thant and Kurt Waldheim played less overt roles in crisis resolution, while Javier Pérez de Cuéllar's tenure was marked by a mediating and negotiating role as he managed the aftermath of the Falklands War, peace efforts in Central America, and negotiations for Namibia's independence, the conflict in Western Sahara, and in Cyprus. Boutros Boutros-Ghali's role as an executive as opposed to an administrator incurred the opposition of the United States, which vetoed Boutros-Ghali's second term.

Table 1: The United Nation's Secretaries-General (1946-2006)

Name	Country and Region	Tenure
Trygve Lie	Norway (Western European and Other States Group)	1946-1952
Dag Hammarskjöld	Sweden (Western European and Other States Group)	1953-1961
U Thant	Burma/Myanmar (Asian Group)	1961-1971
Kurt Waldheim	Austria (Western European and Other States Group)	1972-1981
Javier Pérez de Cuéllar	Peru (Latin American and Caribbean Group)	1982-1991
Boutros Boutros-Ghali	Egypt (African Group)	1992-1996
Kofi Annan	Ghana (African Group)	1997-2006

Kofi Annan introduced the post of Deputy Secretary-General in an attempt to manage the various duties that now fall upon the office of Secretary-General. Annan is considered an accomplished diplomat and mediator, first and foremost, but he has initiated important managerial reforms as well. The controversies during his tenure, however, raised questions about his executive function and provided some Member States with the opportunity to push for a recasting of the role of the Secretary-General as primarily managerial. Other states worry that a weaker Secretary-General will end up serving as an instrument for the powerful states, rather than balancing their priorities with those of

smaller members. This is the political context of the current struggle over the definition of the office of the Secretary-General.

3   The Selection Process

The current selection process is guided by the UN Charter and several Resolutions of the General Assembly, as well as by conventional practice.

According to Article 97 in Chapter 15 of the UN Charter, the Secretary-General "shall be appointed by the General Assembly upon the recommendation of the Security Council." Historically, candidates' names have been submitted to the Security Council either officially through nominations by the candidate's home country or unofficially. A country can also nominate a non-national. The Security Council then holds closed consultations to consider candidates and has utilized a system of straw polling to determine where support lies. Nominations are subject to the veto and thus must gain the support of all five permanent members of the Security Council. A candidate must gain an affirmative vote of nine members of the Security Council, including concurring votes of the permanent members, in order for a nomination to go forward to the General Assembly.[3]

Resolution 11/1 also requested the Security Council to submit only one candidate for consideration by the General Assembly to discourage debate over the nominees. A simple majority vote in the General Assembly is sufficient for the appointment of the nominated candidate, unless the General Assembly decides otherwise, in which case it can require a two-thirds majority. Both the nomination and appointment occur in private meetings and votes are taken by secret ballot.

In 1997 the General Assembly resolved (A/51/241) to make full use of its power of appointment, noting also that the President of the General Assembly can consult with Member States to propose candidates to the Security Council. It also states that "the process of selection of the Secretary-General shall be made more transparent," with due regard to regional rotation and gender equality. It stops short of establishing concrete provisions to enhance transparency. The Resolution also included a decision to consider imposing a single-term limit on the position – a non-renewable term of either five or seven years – before the selection of the Secretary-General to succeed Kofi Annan. This proposal has not yet found its way into a Resolution.[4]

The other document of relevance to the selection process is the informal "Wisnumurti Guidelines" which were adopted during the Security Council presidency of Indonesia's Ambassador Nugroho Wisnumurti in November 1996 and applied during the decision to recommend Kofi Annan in December 1996. The Security Council subsequently decided to use the Wisnumurti Guidelines as a reference document for future Secretary-General selection processes.

The Guidelines state that it is desirable for the Council to reach consensus on its recommendation, but if that is not possible without delaying the decision, then a vote should be taken.[5] Also according to the Guidelines, meetings about the candidates should be private – restricted to heads of delegation and few officers. Third, the Council is expected to recommend just one candidate to the General Assembly.[6] The Guidelines suggest a procedure for straw polling to allow the Security Council to informally assess support for each candidate at any time during the selection process (a variation on which has been used in this year's selection). Finally, the Guidelines state that any member of the Security Council can submit a candidate for consideration. By convention, however, candidates should not be nominated by a permanent member of the Secu-

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[3]   This rule is based on General Assembly Resolution 11(1), which was written when the total Security Council members numbered 11, and so it originally stipulated that a candidate needed seven affirmative votes. As of 1963 when the Council grew to 15 members, the affirmative vote of nine is necessary, according to the 1963 amendment to Article 27 of the UN Charter.)

[4]   Establishing a single term was discussed by the General Assembly's Ad Hoc Working Group on General Assembly Revitalization, which drafted a Resolution including revised procedures of Secretary-General selection. However, the single-term proposal did not gain enough support to be included in the final Resolution that was adopted on 8 September 2006.

[5]   The Guidelines take as their legal basis UN Charter Article 97, Rule 48 of the Provisional Rules of Procedure of the Security Council, and Rule 141 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly.

[6]   The legal source of the precedent for only one candidate to be recommended by the Security Council to the General Assembly is Resolution 11(1). However, Resolution 11(1) is not named as a legal basis of the Wisnumurti Guidelines. The Guidelines, therefore, would seem to assume tradition as a sufficient precedent for the single-candidate practice.

Current Process, Opportunities for Change		
Written rules of selection	**Precedents, Traditions, and Unofficial written guidelines**	**A more democratic selection process, still within bounds of the Charter, could:**
• The General Assembly appoints the Secretary-General based on the recommendation of the Security Council (UN Charter, Article 97) • The Security Council should submit just one name to the General Assembly for approval (GA Resolution 11(1)) • Secretary-General appointment discussions and decisions should be held in private (Rule 48 of the Provisional Rules of Procedure of the Security Council) • The General Assembly shall consider the Security Council's recommendation by secret ballot in a private meeting (Rule 141 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly) • The process should be more transparent and appointment should be made as early as possible (GA Resolution 51/241)	• Regional rotation – General Assembly Resolution 51/241 calls for "due regard" to be given to regional rotation, as well as to gender equity • The Secretary-General should not come from a country with permanent membership on the Security Council • The Secretary-General serves a five-year term which can be renewed once • No formal timeline must be followed; last-minute candidates are considered • The position encompasses both administrative and leadership roles, including mediator, political judgment, and should embody the principles and ideals of Charter – wrote the Preparatory Commission in 1945 • A straw poll, or a series of straw polls, can be used by the Security Council to informally assess support for each candidate • Nominations are made by Member States and submitted to the Security Council for consideration before they are presented to the General Assembly.	• Establish set timelines for the selection process, including a deadline for nominations. • Release an official candidate list at end of the nomination phase, including identification of nominating party for each candidate • Distribute candidate CVs and statements from candidates specifying how they fulfill the necessary requirements • Standardize background checks • Hold panel interviews and question-and-answer sessions with Member States • Allow relevant stakeholders (NGOs, civil society, media, parliamentarians, private sector, etc.) to conduct question-and-answer sessions with candidates • Establish a search committee to identify candidates • Impose a single term limit on the position, of either five or seven years • Could request the Security Council to recommend more than one name to the General Assembly for a vote

rity Council in order to avoid a centralization of power.

None of the above rules or traditions provides a job description for the position, and no formal qualifications have been defined for candidates.[7]

4 Shortcomings with the Current Process

The current process, as described above, is undemocratic. The selection process for the UN Secretary-General differs from other international high-level selection processes largely in that it fails to meet basic procedural standards of transparency, accountability and legitimacy. Standard guidelines, established by organizations such the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development and the World Trade Organization in the selection of their high level officials, include general timelines for the selection process, basic candidate qualifications, procedures for assessing candidates, and a system of reporting to the broader membership. The current selection process for the UN Secretary-General lacks these basic mechanisms that ensure legitimate assessment. The process has

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[7] See Security Council Report's 21 June 2006 Update Report on Secretary-General appointment, for analysis of candidate qualifications based on a 1945 report by the United Nations Preparatory Commission.

therefore been highly susceptible to the veto powers and political interests of the permanent members of the Security Council, which have used their veto powers to eliminate candidates with majority support. These five countries, then, have excessive power over the selection. The situation has inspired political bargains and trades – "reciprocal arrangements" – between Member States in order to advance one candidate over another. Such a system gives priority to influential states, marginalizing small member states with less to offer. Further, when reciprocal arrangements occur, considerations of the candidates' qualifications are sidelined, leaving a post of highest importance to a game of favors and trades. This virtually results in a situation where a candidate will not be chosen for his or her qualifications. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, for example, was opposed by the United States due to his strength and independence as Secretary-General. The current process gives the Security Council unrestricted authority, particularly in the selection process, undermining the important role the Secretary-General plays within the entire UN framework.

In addition to the ultimate decision resting with five powerful states, the process has four specific flaws.

First, without a deadline, candidates can emerge at the very last minute, leaving insufficient time for the member states to learn about their qualifications. The lack of a timeline, in other words, favors "dark horses" (unexpected candidates that are brought out near the last minutes of the race, so as to avoid scrutiny), which undermines transparency and the democratic process. Other organizations, taking the view that their highest posts are too important to be filled in an undemocratic way, recently have improved their selection processes. In this sense the United Nations lags far behind.

Second, due to the post WWII makeup of the permanent members of the Security Council, the current process arguably contributes to the North-South tensions that are undermining progress at the UN. Some argue that one of the "core" disagreements of the recent management crisis at the UN was a struggle over "people versus dollars." So-called major "donor" governments argued that their positions as donors should have greater weight and indicated that their funding was contingent on the result of the reform process. Member States of the Global South argued that they represented the majority of the world's people and should be proportionally important in decision-making. Given that donor countries make up the majority of the five permanent members of the Security Council, the Council's selection of the candidate for Secretary-General might add to this North-South tension and further tips the scale towards imbalance among UN Member States.

Third, the process does not reflect the evolution of the UN over the past five decades. The Secretary-General is no longer just an administrator and consults on a wide range of issues beyond peace and security. But Member States have no job description or candidate qualifications to consult. Disagreement persists over what the UN Secretary-General should be, which makes it more critical to have the qualifications for the role clarified, decided upon, and on paper before states consider individual candidates.

Fourth, the current process encourages regional rotation at the expense of other considerations. The principle of regional rotation has been invoked especially in the last two selection processes and has been supported almost unanimously by Member States this year. It is seen as a way to ensure regional equity. However, regional rotation can inhibit the emergence of the best-qualified candidates, which should be every State's priority. Further, the principle of regional equity has come to override that of gender equity. Both were enshrined by the General Assembly as factors to be considered in Resolution 51/241, and yet there has never been a female Secretary-General.

5   Proposed Changes

"…is it possible for the Secretary-General to resolve controversial questions on a truly international basis without obtaining the formal decision of the organs? In my opinion … it is possible for the Secretary-General to carry out his tasks in controversial political situations with full regard to his exclusively international obligation under the Charter and without subservience to a particular national or ideological attitude."[8]

How can Dag Hammarskjöld's confidence be validated today? A number of proposals from member states and civil society point the way to a more democratic, transparent, and effective process, that would produce a Secretary-General with both independence and impartiality, thus upholding the principles at the core of the UN.

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[8]   Dag Hammarskjöld , Oxford University, 30 May 1961.

- General Assembly Revitalization: At the World Summit in September 2005, leaders promised to strengthen the General Assembly as "the chief deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations." The General Assembly's role in selecting the Secretary-General was one of three areas of focus for the Ad Hoc Working Group on General Assembly Revitalization. One of the main proposals was to allow Member States to submit their nominees to the General Assembly. The Assembly could then authorize the nominees and pass them on to the Security Council for consideration but in the process the Member States would gain more information about the candidates than under the current process. This mechanism was supported by the Non-Aligned Movement, and a version of it appeared in the final Resolution adopted on 8 September 2006.[9] Other clauses referred to the need to increase inclusiveness and transparency in the identification and appointment processes; the importance of regional rotation and gender equity; a request that candidates "present their views to all Member States of the General Assembly"; the need for sufficient time for Member States to interact with candidates before the final selection is made; and a reiteration that the Secretary-General should be appointed no later than one month before the beginning of his or her term.

- Canada non-paper: An informal proposal was circulated to the General Assembly by Canada in February of this year to redress the lack of transparency and inclusiveness in the selection process. Canada's proposal builds on General Assembly Resolution 51/241 of 1997– reiterating the idea of involving the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council in the selection process. The proposal by Canada includes six key points on improving the selection process: a formal articulation of desired candidate qualities; systematic means for identifying potential candidates such as a search committee; means for

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[9] Paragraph 19 of Resolution A/60/999 reads: "Without prejudice to the role of the principal organs as enshrined in Article 97 of the Charter, encourages the President of the General Assembly to consult with Member States to identify potential candidates endorsed by a Member State and, upon informing all Member States of the results, to forward these results to the Security Council."

Member States to hear from and thus assess candidates in advance; deadlines for candidacies; and consideration of a single term in office so that the Secretary-General's actions are not defined by a bid for reappointment. This proposal was incorporated into the recently adopted Resolution on the Revitalization of the General Assembly described above. In the course of negotiations on the Resolution many of the non-paper's key features were diluted or lost, but the question of greater General Assembly participation in the selection process generated notable interest and support from Member States.

- India proposal: At a meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in May 2006, the government of India proposed changes to the Secretary-General selection procedures in General Assembly Resolution 11(1) and 51/241. The Indian proposal called for 1) more than one candidate to be submitted to the General Assembly by the Security Council, 2) greater inclusiveness in the process, 3) allowing for the use of a simple majority in the General Assembly only – without the General Assembly's current freedom to require a 2/3 majority, and 4) a rule by which only the General Assembly – not both the General Assembly and Security Council – can modify the terms of appointment of the Secretary-General. In sum, the Security Council would remain the primary body in the selection process but would submit multiple candidates to the General Assembly for the final selection. This proposal was regarded with skepticism by many who worried that the person eventually selected will have a "split mandate" because of a division in the General Assembly during the debate and vote; she or he could end up being regarded as "Africa's Secretary-General" or "Asia's Secretary-General" or "the West's Secretary-General." However, if multiple candidates for General Assembly consideration resulted in the emergence of more information about each of them, this could enhance transparency and strengthen the democratic nature of the process. India's proposal, which had both strong supporters (the Non-Aligned Movement, with 115 members, agreed to it back in late August 2006) and opponents (Canada, the European Union, the United States), was debated in the negotiations on the Resolution on General Assembly Revitalization; only its inclusiveness clause was incorporated into the final version (A/60/999, Paragraph 18)

- Sir Brian Urquhart and Erskine Childers Proposals: A cluster of proposals for an Improved Secretary General Selection Process, written in 1992, highlighted the idea of limiting the Secretary-General's tenure to a single seven-year term. A single term limit allows the Secretary-General to act with more independence, free from concerns about renewal of the term. Other key elements specified publicizing the timeline and rules of selection, the mechanism for checking background and assessing qualities, a well organized search, deliberate inclusion of women candidates, and an end to individual campaigning.[10]

- United Nations Association of the United States of America (UNA-USA) proposal: A report compiled by UNA-USA on Secretary-General selection makes a wider set of recommendations: gender equality must be an important criterion; the General Assembly must play an expanded role through the President, who can actively seek candidates to then recommend to the Security Council; Member States should have opportunities to consult with candidates; the Security Council should appoint a nominating committee; candidates should announce and run jointly with their Deputy Secretary-General candidates; candidates should submit a "platform" and communicate how they propose to address the UN's most pressing issues. It also finds that the Security Council should recommend multiple candidates to the General Assembly, in line with India's and the Non-Aligned Movement's proposal (see above).

- Time for a Woman campaign: This "women's action" organized by the NGO Equality Now has identified a sampling of 18 well-qualified women to illustrate the availability of female candidates. The campaign asks the public to contact Ambassadors to stress the importance of seeking qualified female candidates and improving the proportion of women in UN leadership positions.

- Civil society campaign: Under the auspices of the UNSGselection.org campaign, a global civil society campaign for a more de-

mocratic, transparent, and effective selection process, 34 NGOs have come together to support a call for improved yet feasible reforms to the selection process. The campaign drew on a broad range of existing frameworks and studies conducted by experts and governments, including the above proposals, to develop a set of realistic provisions for implementation during the current selection process to bring it in line with improved standards of transparency and accountability that ensure the selection of a qualified candidate. The campaign has called on the Security Council and the General Assembly, as appropriate, to take the necessary steps to ensure that the following four procedures are incorporated into the current selection process:

A. Qualifications: In accordance with the basic standards of other high-level international public sector appointments, the UN should establish a formal set of candidate qualifications to guide Member States in putting forward qualified candidates, assessing the relative competencies of the candidates and to guarantee that the selected candidate adequately fulfills the many roles and functions of the UN Secretary-General. Qualifications that should be taken into consideration include the following:

- Comprehensive understanding of and demonstrated commitment to the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, including, but not limited to, international law and multilateralism.
- Comprehensive understanding of and demonstrated commitment to the three pillars of UN system: peace and security, development and human rights
- Extensive experience with the UN system or other complex international organizations
- Diplomatic skills and demonstrated vision and leadership, in accordance with the principles of independence, fairness, and impartiality
- Multicultural understanding and gender sensitivity
- Strong communication skills and fluency in at least one official UN language
- Proven openness to working with civil society and other relevant stakeholders

B. Official Timetable with Systematic Reporting: The UN should establish a set timetable for nominations, shortlists and final selection accompanied by systematic re-

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[10] Brian Urquhart and Erskine Childers, *A World in Need of Leadership: Tomorrow's United Nations,* 2nd rev. ed. (Uppsala, Sweden: Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, 1996)

porting at each phase, as applied by other international organizations, to provide a more structured, transparent and accountable framework for the selection process. To ensure consistent reporting at each phase in the process, the Security Council should appoint facilitators.

C. Procedures for Assessment of Candidates: The UN should establish procedures that enhance the transparency of the selection process to facilitate the dissemination of basic information necessary for an adequate assessment of candidates by all relevant parties. These procedures include the publication of an official candidate list at the end of the nomination phase; distribution of candidate CVs; statements from candidates specifying how they fulfill the necessary requirements; a standardized system of background checks; panel interviews and question/answer sessions with UN member states and, where possible, relevant stakeholders.

D. Gender and Geographic Diversity Considerations: Based on the values, principles and priorities of the United Nations, it is important that, in addition to ensuring that candidates meet a number of key qualifications, the selection process be guided by the principles of gender equality and geographic balance. Therefore, gender equality must be considered and the principle of equitable geographic representation must be taken into account in the selection process.

Each of these proposals represents positive changes to the current process. While they are difficult to achieve, because some of them are seen as compromising the power of the permanent five members of the Security Council, they are not impossible. A reformed process is a necessary step in addressing the North-South tension that currently defines the bulk of discussions at the United Nations.

6 Conclusion: Setting a Democratic Example

The highest international civil servant has been chosen in an undemocratic, discredited manner for too long. Civil society and many Member States are justified in worrying that the Security Council would recommend a weak and compliant Secretary-General for the next five or even ten years. The perception that the Secretary-General serves the permanent members and donor countries is a serious matter, which weakens the status and role of the Secretary-General, and has begun to undermine UN reform efforts.

Many states that otherwise would support increased accountability and streamlined management are hesitant to do so under a Secretary-General seen as beholden to a few powerful states. If the Secretary-General is selected through a transparent and accountable process, the prospects of having an independent Secretary-General will improve.

Democratic governments should support a process to choose an independent individual demonstrating strong adherence to the UN Charter, the principles and vision of the UN, and transparency and accountability; procedures for selection should reinforce these qualities.

This is possible. The Charter allows for changes to the selection procedures, and the obstacles to change are mainly political. With three out of the five permanent members, and ten of the 15 total members of the Security Council being considered democracies, the Council should illustrate the way of good governance by adopting the precedents discussed here..

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Further Reading:

ReformtheUN.org – Website and news service providing up-to-date information and resources about UN reform

UNSGselection <www.UNSGselection.org> – Campaign for a more democratic, transparent, and effective selection process for the UN Secretary-General

Security Council Report <www.securitycouncilreport.org> – Research studies and update reports on the appointment of a new Secretary-General

Center for UN Reform Education <www.cure.org> – Promoting discussion on ways to reform the UN system

President of the General Assembly <http://www.un.org/ga/president/60/summitfollowup/ index.html> – Information on each follow-up issue to the September 2005 World Summit

UNSG <www.unsg.org> Private blog monitoring the candidates for the Secretary-General position

More information is available on
www.fes.de/globalization