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Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly

Security Council
Seventy-seventh year

Letter dated 8 September 2022 from the Permanent Representative of Costa Rica to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to convey, on behalf of 27 Member States¹ of the cross-regional group named Accountability, Coherence and Transparency Group (ACT Group), a position paper on the selection and appointment process of the Secretary-General of the United Nations (see annex).

We hope that the position paper, which builds on the non-paper on the selection and appointment of the Secretary-General for the term beginning in 2022 (see [A/75/755](#)), and the lessons learned by the ACT Group from the 2015–2016 selection process (see [A/72/514-S/2017/846](#)), will serve as a useful reference and encourage timely discussion on future selection processes.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 122, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Maritza Chan Valverde
Ambassador

Permanent Representative of the Republic of Costa Rica

¹ Austria, Chile, Costa Rica, Denmark, Ecuador, Estonia, Finland, Gabon, Ghana, Hungary, Ireland, Jordan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Maldives, New Zealand, Norway, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Portugal, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland and Uruguay.



Annex to the letter dated 8 September 2022 from the Permanent Representative of Costa Rica to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council

Following the successful implementation of resolution [69/321](#) during the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly, the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency Group (ACT Group) remains committed to further improving the process. Building on lessons learned during 2015–2016, the membership has continued to refine the working methods of the General Assembly, and the relationship between the General Assembly and the Security Council, to strengthen the accountability, transparency and institutional memory of the Office of the President of the General Assembly, and to improve the selection and appointment process of the Secretary-General.

We welcome several improvements introduced during the seventy-fifth session, including with regard to noting that the United Nations has never had a woman Secretary-General; emphasizing the importance of vision statements and question-and-answer informal segments between candidates for the position of Secretary-General and Member States; clarifying that candidates must have the backing of at least one Member State while encouraging States to work with civil society to identify potential candidates; and underlining the importance of the annual report of the Security Council.

We would like to share the following lessons learned from the seventy-fifth session, which we consider should be the baseline for future negotiations, not the ceiling. The ACT Group looks forward to building on this progress in the seventy-seventh session and beyond, and to cooperating with all parties in future selection processes for a more inclusive, transparent, and efficient United Nations.

Role and authority of the General Assembly

- The General Assembly must continue to play a central role in all future processes for the selection and appointment of the Secretary-General.
- The ACT Group recalls that the General Assembly, with the recommendation from the Security Council, is responsible for the appointment of the Secretary-General. A candidate for Secretary-General should enjoy the widest possible support among the membership, and the active and extensive engagement of candidates with the General Assembly is the most effective way of ensuring this.
- The ACT Group encourages the Office of the President of the General Assembly to continue its role in providing information about the selection process, including by using the official website of the President of the General Assembly to provide information about the candidates, including, but not limited to, the presentation of candidatures, biographies, vision statements, questions and answers and letters of withdrawal, when applicable. The Group also encourages the President of the General Assembly to publicize the outline of the selection process itself, including on the website of the Office.
- Upon appointment, the ACT Group welcomes the continued holding of an informal meeting of the General Assembly with the Secretary-General-designate, convened by the President of the General Assembly, with the aim of assisting them in their preparation for office.

Criteria for nomination

- The ACT Group maintains that, since the United Nations is as an intergovernmental organization, candidates for the post of Secretary-General should have the support of at least one Member State in order for the nomination to be submitted for consideration by the General Assembly. This is now clearly stated in resolution [75/325](#).
- The ACT Group continues to see civil society as an important ally in future selection processes. We welcome the recommendation for future joint letters from the Presidents of the General Assembly and the Security Council to include a call for States to work with civil society and other stakeholders to help identify potential candidates, in particular women. However, efforts in this regard need to be redoubled among others by the Presidents of the Security Council and the General Assembly.
- In resolution [75/325](#), the General Assembly notes, in paragraph 68, that there has yet to be a woman Secretary-General. The ACT Group supports the invitation extended to Member States in that paragraph to bear this in mind when nominating candidates for the position of Secretary-General and strongly encourages Member States to submit candidatures of qualified female candidates. The ACT Group will continue its advocacy for realizing gender equality at all levels of the United Nations.
- The ACT Group calls upon the Presidents of the General Assembly and the Security Council to actively bear this in mind in future selection processes.

Informal dialogues and vision statements

- The ACT Group stresses the necessity to uphold the practice of candidates producing a vision statement setting out clear priorities, as consistent with resolution [73/341](#).
- For the ACT Group, the informal dialogues and meetings with the candidates are a key part of the selection process and help to ensure the selection of the best qualified candidate. The Group encourages the President of the General Assembly to organize informal dialogues between candidates and Member States with meaningful participation from civil society.
- The ACT Group sees room for improvement in the format of the informal dialogues by making them more interactive, such as by increasing the time available for candidates to provide responses and by having the President of the General Assembly playing an active role as moderator. The Group encourages Member States to avoid the duplication of questions. The Group also encourages the President of the General Assembly to publish questions answered in writing on the website of the selection process and to make video recordings of the dialogues easily available on the same platform.

Collaboration between the General Assembly and the Security Council

- The ACT Group welcomes the collaboration between the General Assembly and the Security Council in launching the process and circulating information on the nominated candidates. The Group also encourages the continuation of monthly meetings between the Presidents of the General Assembly and the Security Council and having the summaries of these meetings shared with all Member States.
- Nevertheless, the ACT Group believes that the interaction between the Security Council and the General Assembly during the selection process must be

improved to live up to the expectations of the membership and the highest standards of openness and transparency.

- The ACT Group encourages the President of the Security Council to update the wider membership on developments in each step of the selection process, with full transparency with regard to each step in the decision-making process and results obtained, including from straw polls.
- In addition, and in accordance with the active role attributed to the General Assembly in Article 97 of the Charter of the United Nations, the ACT Group considers that further discussion is needed on the prospect of multiple candidates being nominated by the Security Council for consideration by the General Assembly.

Working methods and timelines

- The ACT Group reiterates the importance of establishing a more specific timeline for the appointment of the Secretary-General.
- While resolution [69/321](#) allows for the presentation of candidates through rounds of informal dialogues at any time during the process, for the sake of legitimacy the ACT Group considers that all candidates should engage in the essential step of participating in informal dialogues with the General Assembly, prior to their inclusion in the considerations of the Security Council.
- The implementation of a structured time frame for the selection process greatly enhanced the selection processes of 2015 and 2016, but there is still progress to made. The ACT Group believes that that a deadline for the presentation of candidatures, as well as for the overall process, must be improved upon.
- The ACT Group proposes an indicative timeline for the appointment of Secretaries-General, as follows:
 - **October of the year preceding the appointment:** joint letter from the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council to all States Members of the United Nations encouraging nomination of qualified candidates;
 - **End of June of the appointment year:** deadline for the completion of General Assembly hearings with all candidates, including interactive dialogues with Member States and civil society;
 - **1 October:** deadline for the Security Council recommendation and the resolution of the General Assembly regarding the appointment of the Secretary-General.

Civil society and other stakeholders

- Civil society has played a valuable role and should continue to be involved in the process. The ACT Group calls for ensuring that civil society can actively participate in informal dialogues with the candidates and encourages candidates themselves to interact with civil society organizations.

Equal opportunity for candidatures

- The ACT Group recalls the prerogative of the General Assembly to draft the resolution for the appointment of the Secretary-General and proposes that the draft resolution be consulted on and finalized at the earliest convenience of the Assembly.

- In line with the oath taken by the Secretary-General, the ACT Group believes that the Secretary-General must exercise complete independence in the selection of senior officials, with due regard to geographical and gender balance. Recalling General Assembly resolution [70/305](#), the appointment process of the executive heads and the Senior Management Group of the Organization should be inclusive and transparent and there should not be a monopoly on or privilege with regard to senior posts by nationals of any State or group of States.

Term of office and term limits

- The ACT Group would like to continue discussing improvements to the oath of office.
 - The ACT Group maintains that a longer, single, non-renewable term for future Secretaries-General could foster a more focused and policy-oriented mandate and should be considered by the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly.
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