

Thematic debate of the Ad-Hoc Working Group on the  
Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly on the “Selection and  
appointment of Secretary-General and other executive heads”

9 February 2023

Accountability, Coherence and Transparency (ACT) statement

President,

I am honoured to take the floor on behalf of the 27 members of the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency (ACT) Group.

Thank you for convening today's thematic debate. The ACT Group promotes a more transparent and efficient United Nations. We believe that the process of the Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly constitutes an important avenue towards this goal. We express our full support to the Co-Chairs, H.E. Egriselda Lopez, Permanent Representative of El Salvador, and H.E. Mitch Fifield, Permanent Representative of Australia, for the programme of work of the AHWG during the seventy-seventh session and thank them for their leadership.

The ACT group considers the 2015-2016 process a landmark of positive developments that enabled a more inclusive and transparent selection process for the first time in the history of the UN. ACT seeks to consolidate the standards and guiding principles already established for the selection and appointment process, in this regard, we recall the ACT position paper, non-paper and “Lessons learned” document on the selection and appointment of the Secretary-General of the United Nations which were transmitted to the PGA and the President of the Security Council and circulated to all member States on 8th September 2022, 17th February 2021 and 5th October 2017 respectively. (These documents are registered as General Assembly documents A/76/950, A/75/755 and A/72/514) These must be seen as the baseline, not the ceiling, for further strengthening the appointment processes.

Guided by the provisions of Article 97 of the UN Charter and as reflected in resolutions 69/321, 70/305, 73/341, 75/325 and other relevant resolutions reaffirming the role of the General Assembly, ACT calls for the adoption of the following proposals, which can act as a point of reference for future selection processes:

## **Official call for nominations**

A clear, predictable and transparent timeline should be put in place well in advance. Agreeing an indicative timeframe for the process would ease procedural burdens and improve the clarity of the process for Member States and candidates alike. Therefore this session is particularly important as the process of selecting the new Secretary General should start well in advance. Candidates must be submitted by at least one Member State, in accordance with OP56 of Resolution 75/325 and in line with the ongoing practice. ACT encourages the early presentation of qualified candidates as late nominations do not allow sufficient time for a full evaluation.

## **Timeline**

The ACT group has proposed the following timeline for future processes:

- October of the year preceding appointment: Joint letter from the PGA and the PSC to all Member States encouraging nominations of qualifying candidates.
- March 31<sup>st</sup> of the appointment year: deadline for the submission of candidatures to enable sufficient time for candidates to consult widely and communicate their vision.
- June 30<sup>th</sup> of the appointment year: deadline for the completion of General Assembly hearings with all candidates.
- October 1<sup>st</sup> of the appointment year: deadline for the Security Council recommendation and the resolution from the General Assembly regarding the appointment of the SG, in order to allow the SG-designate sufficient time to prepare for the job.

## **Participation of women**

Noting that there has never been a female Secretary-General, the ACT Group welcomes the acknowledgment of this historical disparity in General Assembly resolution 75/325, in paragraph 68: “Notes that there is yet to be a woman Secretary-General and invites Members States to bear this in mind in the future, when nominating candidates for the position of Secretary-General”. The ACT Group firmly supports the invitation extended to Member States in the aforementioned paragraph and strongly encourages Member States to submit female candidates. The ACT Group calls on the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council to reinforce this call for future processes.

## **List of candidates**

The ACT Group welcomes General Assembly Resolution 75/325 encouraging Member States to “publicize the call for nominations, including with civil society and other stakeholders with the aim of identifying potential candidates”. In this vein, the ACT Group calls on all states to work with civil society and other stakeholders in a timely manner to identify qualifying candidates and bring them into the official selection process.

A joint General Assembly/Security Council list of candidates should be issued on a rolling-basis once nominations are presented, containing the names (in alphabetic order), the member state or states nominating the candidacy, vision statements, and CVs.

The ACT Group also welcomes the decision of some candidates during the 2015/16 selection process to voluntarily disclose any funding sources they have relating to their candidature. We believe this adds an indispensable element of transparency to the selection process and such practices should become condition sine qua non for the future processes.

**Role of the General Assembly.** The General Assembly, as the main, most democratic, and representative body of the UN should exert a stronger, more assertive, and decisive role in the selection and appointment of the Secretary-General. ACT group calls the President of the General Assembly (PGA) to engage directly with candidates, and encourage the Security Council towards a more inclusive and transparent selection process, among other relevant developments.

In addition, and in accordance with the active role attributed to the General Assembly in Article 97 of the Charter, the ACT Group strongly encourages discussion on the prospect of **multiple candidates**, being nominated by the Security Council for the General Assembly’s consideration.

#### **Informal dialogues/candidate hearings**

- The ACT Group stresses the need to uphold the practice of candidates timely producing a vision statement setting out clear priorities, consistent with resolution 73/341.
- The ACT Group encourages the President of the General Assembly to again organize informal dialogues between candidates and Member States. It is essential that the candidates engage with member states in timely, frank and open dialogues on the world’s most pressing challenges and their vision of the role of the organization. In this sense, a paragraph that mandates this type of open hearing with the General Assembly

must be part of all resolutions on the revitalization of the General Assembly for future processes.

- For the next processes, the ACT Group recommends improving the format of the informal dialogues by making them more interactive, for example by increasing the time available to candidates to provide responses, by allowing states supplementary questions based on the candidate's responses and by having the PGA play an active role, including by seeking to avoid the duplication of questions. The ACT Group also sees value in an expanded role for civil society and other stakeholders during informal dialogues with candidates including through a greater number of questions and the possibility of live participation as opposed to pre-recorded questions.
- The ACT Group encourages the consideration of other possible ways to assess the level of General Assembly support for the candidates throughout the process as well as opportunities to facilitate engagement between candidates and other UN Headquarters around the world.

### **Term.**

The ACT Group invites all Members States to consider the merits of establishing a single, longer, non-renewable term for future Secretaries-General.

The ACT Group calls on the Security Council to enhance transparency during its deliberations on candidates. In a competitive scenario, the ACT Group encourages regular updates from the President of the Security Council to the wider membership on developments in the selection process. The practice of straw polls whose results were not officially disclosed cast a shadow over the process and should be curtailed. In order to ensure the UN's wider membership is kept well informed and to promote principles of transparency and coherence, the results of any deliberative mechanism should be officially announced.

### **Civil society**

- The ACT Group recognizes the important role played by civil society that strongly advocated for changes in the 2015-2016 selection process and encourages civil society to continue providing important contributions towards improving the selection process of the Secretary-General.
- ACT also acknowledges the participation of civil society and other stakeholders in previous Secretary-General processes, including by publicizing the call for nominations, enhancing knowledge of candidates through informal events, participation in the

informal dialogues and mobilizing public interest in the role of the Secretary-General. The ACT Group encourages continued contributions in this regard.

- The ACT Group further advocates an enhanced role for civil society and other stakeholders in future selection processes including by working with states to identify qualified candidates, pursuant to General Assembly Resolution 75/325.
- ACT also encourages candidates to interact with civil society organizations and other stakeholders to communicate their vision for the role and respond to feedback.

**Selection and appointment of executive heads of the United Nations.** In line with the provisions of the Charter and the oath taken by the Secretary-General, the ACT Group believes that the Secretary-General should exercise full independence in the selection of any senior official. The best practices established in the selection of the Secretary-General should be fully applied in the selection and appointment of executive heads of the United Nations, inter alia transparency of the merit-based selection process, geographical and gender balance. The practice of reserving certain senior appointments for nationals of a particular Member State should be discontinued, in line with General Assembly resolution 46/232.

President,

We must continue to build on Resolution 69/321 of 2015 and Resolution 70/305 of 2016, and other relevant documents mentioned, which constitute the framework of the significantly improved, inclusive and transparent process of selection and appointment of the current Secretary General. The ACT group looks forward to continuing discussions on this topic.