

General Debate of the Ad-Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the Work of the  
General Assembly: thematic debate on SG selection process

16<sup>th</sup> June 2020

**Accountability, Coherence and Transparency (ACT) statement**

delivered by H.E. Mr. Jürg Lauber, Permanent Representative of Switzerland,  
on behalf of the Group

Mister President,

1. I am honored to take the floor on behalf of the 25 members of the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency (ACT) Group Austria, Chile, Costa Rica, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Gabon, Ghana, Hungary, Ireland, Jordan, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Maldives, New Zealand, Norway, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Portugal, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Slovenia, Sweden, Uruguay, and my own country Switzerland.
2. The ACT Group promotes a more transparent and efficient United Nations, an objective that is subject to a particular stress test under the current circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic. We believe that the process of the Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly constitutes an important avenue towards this goal. We thank the two co-facilitators for assuming the important responsibility of co-chairing this working group and steer our work through these unprecedented times. We trust the co-facilitator's wisdom to suggest the best way forward to conclude the work of the Ad-hoc working group during this session.

Allow me to turn to the thematic cluster under consideration today:

3. The issue of the selection and appointment process is of particular importance for our work during this session. Indeed, COVID-19 or not, the next process is due to conclude in 2021 with the re-appointment of the incumbent Secretary General for a second term or the appointment of a new Secretary General.

4. As many other member States, the ACT Group attaches particular importance to a transparent and inclusive selection and appointment process for the Secretary-General. The process that was carried out in 2015 and 2016 and whose essential elements are enshrined in resolutions 69/321 and 70/305 is the blueprint for any future process. As per the language of resolution 73/341, General Assembly committed itself to explore possible steps to improve the process further and to continue examining innovative ways to concretize further the principles of transparency and inclusiveness. The mandate of resolution 73/341 and the experience of 2015 and 2016, from which the ACT Group drew a compilation of lessons-learned that was circulated to all member States in due course, should be the basis of any further process of selecting and appointing future Secretary Generals.
  
5. The United Nations finds itself in the midst of the most significant challenge since its creation 75 years ago. In the coming years our organization will be at the heart of the global response to the COVID-19 pandemic and our collective efforts to build back better. We have been able to make significant improvements in the selection process which not only enhances the authority of this Assembly, but also the clout of the Secretary-General, having successfully emerged from an inclusive and transparent nomination process, including a sustained open-ended exchange with the membership. Such an exchange on the UN's priorities during these crucial years has never been more important. It can lay the foundation for full ownership of all members of the United Nations on the future course of the organization, to the benefit of all. In this spirit the ACT Group pledges today to help establish such a process, based on past best practices and today's needs.
  
6. Turning more specifically to the forthcoming selection and appointment process, we have a clear blueprint in the case of a selection process with multiple (and new) candidates. Based on the commitment made at OP40 of resolution 73/341, we must also discuss how the process introduced in 2015 and 2016 would apply in

the case that the incumbent Secretary General is seeking re-election and/or with him being the only candidate. The ACT Group would like to make the following three requests in this context:

7. First, the incumbent Secretary-General seeking re-election would have to present a vision statement for the next term and brief the member states on its content. This is mentioned as an option as per OP43 of resolution 73/341; under the scenario of a non-competitive process, it must become a reality in view of the unprecedented crisis that the world and our organization is facing. The global effects of COVID-19 will be with us for years, and it is of utmost importance that the Secretary General can lay out to member States how he intends to continue steering the organization through this crisis.
8. Second, ensuring appropriate interaction with member States in this process will be of equal importance. The COVID-19 crisis is a truly global crisis and no member States nor UN entity is immune to its impact. In such unprecedented circumstances, Member states must have the opportunity to interact with the Secretary General on his vision statement for the next term. Such an inclusive process will be key to take into consideration the views of member States and reinforce the leadership of the SG once he is re-appointed.
9. Third, should the incumbent not run for re-appointment, it is our collective responsibility – as per resolutions 69/321 and 70/305 – to make sure that we are in the position to roll out the process established for a situation with multiple candidates. Relevant information should be made available with sufficient notice for the necessary steps to be taken. As per the ACT lessons learned document, a competitive process should start in October of the year preceding the appointment – that is, this October – with the call for nominating qualified candidates in view of a 1st April (2021) deadline for the submission of candidatures.

10. These measures are fully in line with the mandate and spirit of the afore-mentioned resolutions. They also reflect the most urgent need of our organization, no matter the way forward to conclude the work of our working group during this session. The current global crisis calls for exceptional leadership. Only a truly inclusive and transparent process for the next appointment of a Secretary General – no matter the selection scenario that we are under – can build a common support behind the Secretary General’s vision to steer us through this global crisis and yield him (or her) the appropriate level of leadership. We look forward to engage with all parties and follow-up on our requests through appropriate means.

I thank you, Mr President.