

Election of the Secretary-General – outstanding issues
H. E. Dr. Zsolt HETESY, Deputy Permanent Representative
Permanent Mission of Hungary to the United Nations
New York, 29 February, 2016

Hungary appreciates the new procedural requirements for the selection of the Secretary-General, and the steps taken by the Council and the PGA to implement them. These contribute to predictability, transparency and strengthen the new Secretary-General.

Hungary also supports the balance that the unified General Assembly reinforced for the three important principles, namely geographical rotation, gender balance, and best qualifications.

With six nominations already circulated and with the latest GA letter, the selection process entered into a new phase. Now candidates, Member States, the General Assembly and the Security Council must adhere to, and implement the provisions of resolution 69/231.

Provisions on the selection process must not be revisited by the ad hoc Working Group on 22 March. Any change of those provisions would create uncertainty in the process, and would therefore, be counterproductive.

However, also in line with resolution 69/321 there are certain outstanding issues, where further discussion is warranted.

We are ready to explore whether there is room for consensus on the possibility of having a single non-renewable term for the future SGs, or for the Security Council recommending more than one candidate. We will also see, whether new rules, if any, would be agreed on in such a time so that they would be applicable for the next Secretary-General.

As a starting point, Hungary notes that there are no specific Charter provisions that explicitly govern these issues. These questions are governed by tradition rather than rules.

There is no legal obligation for the Security Council to nominate more than one candidate, while there is nothing that would prohibit such change. Similarly, nothing prohibits or prescribes the introduction of a single term appointment for the SG. Hence, answers to these questions are more political and practical, than legal in nature.

On the number of candidates, there are divergent views. We note that even with more than one candidate, the Security Council would retain ownership of the process. The Council would remain the sole judge of who could move forward from the pool of candidates, and therefore who can be appointed by the GA. Having said that, we see both advantages and disadvantages in making such change.

With regard to the idea related to the longer, single term appointment for the Secretary-General, Hungary supports a full discussion on the advantages and disadvantages of such proposal. In that regard, we appreciate the thorough analysis provided by the 1 for 7 Billion movement, shedding light to many of the pertinent aspects. Hungary notes that the introduction of the single term rule could improve chances for the implementation of principles related to geographical rotation and gender balance.

Fairness dictates that a decision on single term appointment is not taken on a case-by-case basis, but it must become the general norm for the future Secretaries-General to come. We simply cannot imagine a system where the decision barring reappointment comes when the candidates are already known, or at the time of the appointment, when it is tied to the actual future Secretary-General.

We agree with that the current process of re-appointment can be seen as defective, especially after the adoption of resolution 69/231. However, this can be changed since reappointment has also been governed by tradition only. Furthermore, single term appointment is not the only option to cure the deficiencies of the re-appointment process.

Our contention is that from now on, even if we decide against the establishment of one term non-renewable appointment, the reappointment process cannot be the same in the future as it has been for the last 70 years.