



**PERMANENT MISSION  
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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

AD HOC WORKING GROUP ON THE REVITALIZATION OF THE WORK OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

**STATEMENT BY MR. STEFAN BARRIGA**

MINISTER, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE, CHARGE D'AFFAIRES A.I.

Co-Chairs,

Already 20 years ago, the General Assembly decided that “the duration of the term or terms of appointment, including the option of a single term, shall be considered.”<sup>1</sup> We are therefore glad to finally begin this discussion today. The following strong arguments for the General Assembly to appoint the next Secretary-General for a single, non-renewable term of perhaps seven years should be considered.

- A single term will make it easier for the next Secretary-General to **perform her or his duties without undue influence** from any Member State, as foreseen by Article 100 of the UN Charter. She or he will not have to please any Member State, big or small, in view of a possible re-election. To quote Sir Brian Urquhart and Erskine Childers: “an incumbent Secretary-General clearly desiring to be reappointed may be subject to undesirable pressures: some have been, and some have yielded to them.”<sup>2</sup>
- Taking the helm of the organization with full certainty of the duration of the term of office will allow the Secretary-General to **develop and implement a far-reaching vision**. She or he will be able to formulate policy goals and to develop timelines to implement

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<sup>1</sup> General Assembly resolution 51/241, annex, para. 60.

<sup>2</sup> Urquhart, B. & E. Childers, „ A World in Need of Leadership: tomorrow’s United Nations,” Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, 1996, p. 30.

them. Seven years seems a very good timeframe to this end.

- The possibility of re-election is not, in itself, a meaningful mechanism of accountability. The General Assembly has never refused to re-appoint a Secretary-General. Re-appointment has only failed due to vetoes cast by permanent members of the Security Council – it has thus been primarily to these five States that a Secretary-General seeking re-election was accountable. True accountability comes from the Secretary-General's interaction with intergovernmental organs. And of course a single-term Secretary-General will **continue to be accountable** to the Security Council in implementing its mandates on peace and Security, and to the General Assembly on a broad range of matters, including on the budget and structure of the Secretariat.
- Many Member States have expressed their concern about the appointments to **senior management positions in the Secretariat** – some of which seem to be reserved for nationals of a few States. A Secretary-General who does not have to worry about re-election would be less likely to give in to the pressure exercised by these States and instead appoint senior managers on the basis of merit, in accordance with Article 100(2) of the Charter.

As for the **length** of the single term, it would have to be long enough to allow the incumbent to develop and implement the vision to which I referred earlier. Prominent thinkers seem to have settled on seven years as a period of time that would meet that requirement. We believe that seven years would be an adequate term length, but are open to discussing this matter further.

The **procedural questions** related to the single term have been addressed in a non-paper circulated to all Member States by Costa Rica, Estonia and Liechtenstein. Additional copies are available at our three delegations' desks, but here are some of the most pertinent highlights: the length of the term and the question of re-electability fall squarely within the purview of the General Assembly which, according to Article 97 of the Charter, appoints the Secretary-General. This is an issue the General Assembly can and should address in its

resolution appointing the next Secretary-General – there is no need to take this issue up in a preceding resolution. It is imperative, therefore, that there be sufficient time, after the Security Council makes its recommendation, for the General Assembly to draft the appointment resolution in a transparent and consultative manner.

Co-Chairs,

Appointing the next Secretary-General to a single, non-renewable term alone will not guarantee that we end up with the best possible person for the position. It does, however, go a long way towards creating the conditions for independence and effectiveness. By appointing the next Secretary-General for a single, non-renewable term the General Assembly would put its own stamp on this process, rather than just rubberstamping it, as in the past. We hope that the membership will give serious consideration to this proposal and look forward to continuing this discussion.

I thank you.