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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,

Thank you for this opportunity to discuss the next steps in our efforts to ensure a transparent and effective procedure for the election of the Secretary-General, and to safeguard the **central role of the General Assembly assigned to it by the UN Charter**. We also thank the President of the General Assembly for his efforts in preparing the interactive dialogues with the declared candidates, and for including civil society. These dialogues will allow us to set a new standard for public scrutiny in this process, and to choose the best candidate. As many others, we would be very pleased if a woman turned out to be this best candidate. We are glad to see the existing **nominations of women** and hope that other States will follow suit.

It is encouraging to see the positive dynamic of the discussions on the appointment of the next Secretary-General. Still, our work on designing the process is not complete yet. There are important questions which deserve serious and urgent consideration. "We have always done it this way" is not a good motto for an organization that just turned 70. Our goal must be to do better than we have done in the past.

Single term

Our discussion on 29 February showed that many Member States share our view that the Secretary-General should be appointed for a single, non-renewable term. This will make sure that the she or he will not be distracted by considerations of a possible re-election. Of course any Secretary-General will continue being exposed to all kinds of pressures in the line of duty. But there should be **no room for pressure that relates to the incumbent's professional future**. The Secretary-General would remain accountable to the Security Council, the General Assembly and other intergovernmental organs – accountable to the membership as a whole, rather than to a few States. This is a first important argument in favor of the single term approach. Secondly, a single term would allow the Secretary-General to **develop and implement a comprehensive vision for the term of office**, with a clear starting and end point. Thirdly, it would **enhance rotation in the office among the regional groups**, which is such an important element in the current appointment discussions. Last but not least, a single term would make it easier for the Secretary-General to **appoint senior managers on the basis of merit only**, in accordance with Article 100(2) of the Charter.

These are clearly strong arguments in favor of a single term approach. Such an approach is obviously meant to bring about a lasting improvement in the interest of the organization and not to be limited to the upcoming appointment. We have not heard many convincing arguments against a single term so far: Some have argued that seven years is too long for a bad Secretary-General. But appointing a bad candidate is not an option irrespective of the length of term – and we would hope that those who have it in their hands to make a recommendation to the General Assembly would agree. On the **duration of the term**, we think that it should be longer than five years for the incumbent to develop and implement the vision to which I referred earlier. Seven years would therefore be an adequate duration in our view. But we have also heard some arguments in favor of a slightly shorter term, and there is certainly merit in discussing them.

Multiple candidatures / voting

Just as it remains the prerogative of the General Assembly to decide on all aspects of the appointment decision of the Secretary-General, it remains the prerogative of the Security Council to decide on all aspects of its recommendation. There is certainly **no obstacle to the Council recommending more than one candidate**, and some Council members have indicated an interest in this option. Having the General Assembly choose from a number of equally strong candidates would certainly strengthen its role, and a **proper election is in keeping with the letter and spirit of the UN Charter**.

Procedure

It is important to ensure that none of these preferences are seen as reflecting on any particular candidate or indeed region. It will therefore be key to **decide these procedural elements in a generic manner that will apply also in the future**, until otherwise decided. In practical terms, there is a need to come to an understanding on these questions as soon as possible. Such an understanding should ideally be reached before the Security Council issues its recommendation, and could then be incorporated – in a generic manner – in the appointment resolution.

Co-Chairs,

We believe that the General Assembly's increased stewardship in the selection process will make it easier for the best possible candidate to advance and to be recommended by the Security Council. Equally, it is our strong conviction that the General Assembly must do all in its power to give the future Head of the United Nations the tools to move this organization forward. Let us do so based on what is best for the organization, and not simply on what we have done in the past. I thank you.