



SECURITY COUNCIL REPORT

UPDATE REPORT



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Update on the Appointment of the Secretary-General of the United Nations

The Security Council has confirmed its earlier decision – reported in our *Special Research Report* of 21 June 2006 (See also our *Special Research Report* of February 2006) - to begin the actual selection process for the new Secretary-General in the month of July.

A communication to the President of the General Assembly from the President of the Security Council confirms that the first “straw ballot” will take place in the second half of the month and sets out some of the guidelines which will apply. Interestingly, it speaks of “...conducting straw polling...” which is open to the interpretation that there may be only one poll in July or, alternatively, that there may be a succession of polls.

There are a number of interesting features to this decision:

- First, the Council seems to have decided to proceed cautiously. Rather than setting out a fully defined set of guidelines, it seems to be leaving open the possibility of successive refinements of the process, as events unfold.
- Secondly, the Council has established a clear requirement for nomination of candidates. Candidates will only be considered for inclusion in the “straw ballot” if the name of the candidate has been presented to the President of the Security Council by a Member State. (It is understood that at time of writing three of the four announced candidates have been so nominated)
- Thirdly, the straw ballot will include an innovation. It will allow Council members to signify one of three options:
 1. “Encouragement”
 2. “Discouragement”
 3. “No opinion expressed”

In the past, there were only the “encouragement and “discouragement” options. Apparently there was a desire by at least one Council Member to have the option of abstention and this is now reflected in the process.

- Fourthly, at this stage the straw ballots will not differentiate between permanent members and elected members. Accordingly, the impact of the veto will remain veiled.
- Fifthly, there is nothing in the note from the President of the Security Council which suggests that the field will be limited to the candidates whose names are in the first straw poll. It seems that it will be possible for additional candidates to be nominated. This is another matter which seems to be deliberately left open.
- Sixthly, only very limited information will be made available by the Security Council regarding the results of the “straw ballot”. The process will be conducted in Informal Consultations. Because these are not official meetings of the Council, the Provisional Rules of Procedure do

not apply and there will not be a public communiqué. In other respects, however, the spirit of the Provisional Rules will apply, especially regarding the confidentiality of the outcome.

- Seventhly, while the results of the ‘straw ballot’ will be made available to the candidates and their Permanent representatives, each candidate will only get the result of their own tally of votes. They will not be told the results for other candidates. They will however be given a sense of their overall ranking because each candidate will also receive :
 1. A statement of the highest number of votes received by a candidate
 2. A statement of the lowest number of votes received by a candidate

Implications

The Security Council decision is interesting because it is provisional and open to evolution and because it contains some innovative features as described above.

But perhaps the most significant feature of the decision is that it seems to reflect a sense that the process should operate at this early stage in a very discreet and sensitive way. This may stem from the belief that such an approach is most likely to contribute to a voluntary narrowing of the field. The indicative scores, given privately to candidates, along with the anonymous “highest” and “lowest” scores, are likely to show candidates if they have any realistic chance of success. A significant number of “discouragements” may result in the candidate or candidates with the lowest scores deciding discreetly to withdraw. On the other hand, if the votes are equally spread then further rounds of straw polls are likely relatively soon.

And, as indicated above, the door seems to remain open to new candidates being nominated by member states at any time.