

Procedure for Appointing the U.N. Secretary-General

The term of current Secretary-General Kofi Annan will expire on 31 December 2006. Between now and then, a new Secretary-General needs to be selected by the Security Council and confirmed by the General Assembly. Here are the procedures of how a Secretary-General will be selected.

A. In the Security Council, the recommendation of a Secretary-General goes through the following three stages:

1. The establishment and circulation of a list of candidates by the President of the Security Council.

- The President of the Council draws up a list of candidates on the basis of written nominations from member countries (currently 191) or regional groups and circulates it among Council members. The list may be updated if and when necessary.

2. The search for consensus in informal settings.

- To arrive at a consensus decision, informal consultations take place among Council members, especially among the P5, any of whom can exercise a veto to defeat a candidate.

- When there are a large number of candidates, secret straw votes or ballots may be conducted to see whether Council members "Encourage" or "Discourage" a candidate. Note, however, that there is no rule (to request) or standing practice for the P-5 to do this. It is up to the Council members to agree on a specific method.

3. The adoption of a recommendation in private meeting(s).

- To formalize its decision, the Security Council holds one or more private meeting(s), attended by Council members and a limited number of Secretariat staff.

- The Council chooses its candidate by vote in secret ballot(s) and recommends his/her appointment to the General Assembly by a resolution adopted unanimously. The ballots for P5 members are marked "Permanent member" and "Non-permanent member" for the other members.

- The decision of the Council is communicated to the General Assembly by letter from the Council President to the President of the General Assembly.

- A communiqué which may indicate the results of the votes taken by the Council and the stage reached by the procedure is issued after each private meeting.

B. In the General Assembly:

After the President of the General Assembly is informed by letter of the candidate for Secretary-General, the Assembly considers the recommendation and votes on it by secret ballot, or by acclamation. The appointment of the Secretary-General is confirmed by a majority of the members present and voting, known as a simple majority, in the Assembly meeting, unless the Assembly itself decides that a two-thirds vote is necessary.