



US WOMEN'S CAUCUS

Feminist Advocacy at the UN

FACT SHEET

ELECTION OF THE UNITED NATIONS SECRETARY-GENERAL 2026

The United Nations will choose a new Secretary-General this year to succeed the current head, António Guterres, as he concludes his tenure in December 2026. The US Women's Caucus would like to see a woman elected to this significant global position. This Fact Sheet lays out the process that will be followed in electing the next Secretary-General.

Over its 80 years, the United Nations has never been led by a woman despite the availability of many competent candidates experienced in global leadership. The UN General Assembly has called repeatedly for the election of a female Secretary-General as a way to increase equal and fair gender balance in executive appointments to the United Nations. We believe a female Secretary-General would bring a fresh legitimacy and credibility to the United Nations, especially in the eyes of the world's women and girls.

UNITED NATIONS CHARTER

The Secretary-General is appointed by the General Assembly upon the recommendation of the Security Council, as outlined in the UN Charter Article 97.

Article 97

The Secretariat shall comprise a Secretary-General and such staff as the Organization may require. The Secretary-General shall be appointed by the General Assembly upon the recommendation of the Security Council. He shall be the chief administrative officer of the Organization.

LETTER OF INVITATION

The Secretary-General election process begins in the last quarter of the year preceding the end of the Secretary-General's term, with a **letter of invitation** to UN Member States from the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council.

President Annalena Baerbock of the General Assembly and President Michael Imran Kanu of the Security Council issued that letter on 25 November 2025 (<https://www.un.org/sg/sites/default/files/document/2025-11/pgs-psc-joint-letter-2025-2026.pdf>).

The letter states the **qualifications** required for the candidates: The position requires "the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity and a firm commitment to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations." In addition, candidates should have "proven leadership and managerial abilities, extensive experience in international relations and strong diplomatic, communication and multilingual skills."

In keeping with previous UN GA resolutions, the letter encouraged nominations of **women**: "Noting with regret that no woman has ever held the position of Secretary-General, and convinced of the need to guarantee equal opportunities for women and men in gaining access to senior decision-making positions, Member States are encouraged to strongly consider nominating women as candidates."

The letter spelled out the **process** of nominations, based on previous UN GA resolutions. They may only take place once the letter of invitation has been issued. A candidate must be nominated by a Member State or group of states; and each state or group of states can only nominate one person. With the nomination, each candidate must present a vision statement, a CV, and a financial disclosure.

A Member State nominates a candidate by sending a **letter of nomination** to the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council, who then notify all Member States of the candidates. The President of the General Assembly is expected to arrange for webcast interactive dialogues with the candidates.

The letter encouraged candidates holding UN positions to consider suspending their work temporarily to avoid any appearance of conflict of interest.

NOMINATIONS

All nominee materials, including vision statements, CVs, and financial disclosures are available on the UN Secretary-General Selection page (<https://www.un.org/en/sg-selection-and-appointment>). Interactive Dialogues with four of the candidates were held on April 21-22, 2026 and can be found on the Selection page.

November 25, 2026	Letter of invitation sent to UN Member States opening up nominations process.
November 26, 2025	Nomination of Rafael Mariano Grossi by Argentina.
February 2, 2026	Nomination of Michelle Bachelet Jeria by Chile, Brazil, and Mexico.
March 2, 2026	Nomination of Macky Sall by Burundi.
March 3, 2026	Nomination of Rebeca Grynspan Mayufis by Costa Rica.
March 11, 2026	Nomination of Virginia Gamba by the Maldives.
March 25, 2026	Withdrawal of nomination of Virginia Gamba by the Maldives.
March 25, 2026	Withdrawal of nomination of Michelle Bachelet Jeria by Chile. Her nomination by Brazil and Mexico remains in effect.
May 11, 2026	Nomination of María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés by Antigua and Barbuda.
June 25, 2026	Nomination of Carolyn Rodrigues Birkett by Guyana.
July 24, 2026	Nomination of Olara Otunnu by Uganda
August 17, 2026	Nomination of Ivonne A-Baki by Tonga

DECISION PROCESS

Following the UN Charter, the Security Council assesses the candidates for Secretary-General and sends its choice to the General Assembly, that then votes on the Security Council recommendation. The Security Council has 15 members: 5 permanent members who hold a veto, and 10 members who are elected by the General Assembly for two-year terms. In 2026, the following Member States are on the Security Council and will vote on the Secretary-General:

Permanent members:	China, France, Russia, United Kingdom, United States
Elected members:	Bahrain, Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Greece, Latvia, Liberia, Pakistan, Panama, Somalia

July 2026	The Security Council begins its deliberations which in the past have included a series of informal straw polls to gauge interest. Members vote by secret ballot to encourage, discourage, or express no opinion on the candidates. A "discourage" vote from a Permanent Five member indicates a possible veto in the eventual official vote and may cause a candidate to withdraw. Straw poll results are not officially released but typically have been leaked to the press rapidly.
Oct-Dec 2026	The Security Council takes an official vote to recommend a candidate to the General Assembly. All permanent members of the Security Council must vote in the affirmative as well as four additional members. In the past, a single candidate has been recommended. In 2016, the last time a new Secretary-General was elected, there was support in the Security Council to recommend more than one candidate to the General Assembly. However, in the final 2016 vote, only one candidate was given the Security Council recommendation. The General Assembly may vote to accept the candidate or ask the Security Council to continue its deliberations. However, the General Assembly has always accepted the recommendation of the Security Council. Once the General Assembly accepts a candidate, the President of the General Assembly arranges a swearing-in ceremony.
January 1, 2027	The new Secretary-General begins his or her five-year term of office.

CANDIDATE BIOGRAPHIES

Michelle Bachelet Jeria	https://www.ohchr.org/en/about-us/high-commissioner/past/michelle-bachelet-jeria
Rafael Mariano Grossi	https://www.iaea.org/about/rafael-mariano-grossi/biography
Rebeca Grynspan Mayufis	https://unctad.org/about/office-of-the-secretary-general
Macky Sall	https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Macky_Sall
María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés	https://www.un.org/humansecurity/maria-fernanda-espinosa-garces/
Carolyn Rodrigues Birkett	https://www.un.org/sg/sites/default/files/document/2026-06/carolyn-rodrigues-birkett-cv-en.pdf
Olara Otunnu	https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/en/about/the-mandate/special-representative/olara-otunnu
Ivonne A-Baki	https://thedialogue.org/expert/ivonne-a-baki

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

A/RES/69/321: Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly, adopted **11 Sept 2015**.

Para 38: "Stresses the need to ensure equal and fair distribution based on gender and geographical distribution" in the selection of the SG and other executive heads; and "invites Member States to consider presenting women as candidates for the position of Secretary-General."

A/RES/70/305: Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly, adopted **13 Sept 2016**.

Para 39: "Reaffirms paragraph 38 of 69/321, and welcomes the presentation of a significant number of women for the position of ninth Secretary-General of the United Nations."

A/RES/77/335: Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly, adopted **14 Sept 2023**

Annex 1: "Oath of office of the Secretary-General: I, [name], solemnly swear to exercise in all loyalty, discretion and conscience the functions entrusted to me as Secretary-General of the United Nations, to discharge these functions and regulate my conduct with the interests of the United Nations only in view and in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, without seeking or accepting any instructions in regard to the performance of my duties from any Government or other authority external to the Organization."

A/RES/79/327: Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly, adopted **5 Sept 2025**.

Para 40: "Underlines the importance for candidates to embody the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity, and a firm commitment to the purposes and principles of the Charter."

Para 41: "Recalls paragraph 59 of resolution 77/335, and reaffirms previous resolutions on continued efforts towards achieving equal and fair distribution in terms of the gender and geographical balance with regard to appointments of executive heads of the Organization, including the Secretary-General."

Para 42 (c): "Noting with regret that no woman has ever held the position of Secretary-General, encourages Member States to strongly consider nominating women as candidates."

Appointing the next Secretary-General: The relevance of regional rotation:

<https://www.scprocedure.org/chapter-7-section-5o>

An historical overview of past practices relating to regional rotation in SG appointments.

The Ultimate Guide for the Upcoming Secretary-General Race (1 for 8 Billion NGO)

<https://passblue.com/2025/11/18/the-ultimate-guide-for-the-upcoming-un-secretary-general-race/>

Policy Profiles of Secretary-General Candidates (1 for 8 Billion NGO)

<https://passblue.com/sg-candidates-home/>

1 for 8 Billion Campaign News

<https://1for8billion.org/>

US feminists collaborating to advance human rights and gender equity for women and girls worldwide
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