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Elections to fill vacancies in principal organs: election of five non-permanent members of the Security Council

Letter dated 30 June 2016 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

We have taken note of the intention of Italy and the Netherlands to divide between them the term on the Security Council because of the stalemate that arose during the election of non-permanent members on 28 June 2016. We take the position that this is an exceptional situation that will not — at this stage of the Council's work — set a precedent or lead to an arrangement for the “splitting” of the two-year terms, which would have a negative impact on the Council's efficiency and ability to perform its work.

That is what impelled us to write this letter; it should not be regarded as being aimed at the countries whose candidatures are currently being considered by the General Assembly for the last non-permanent seat on the Security Council.

We are of the understanding that the aforementioned arrangement is purely bilateral and does not affect the powers of Member States when voting for candidates. We expect that some may argue that, from a formal standpoint, such a step would not contravene the rules of procedure of the General Assembly and the practice of previous years.

We should like to note that the last time a decision was taken on splitting the term on the Security Council was back in the 1960s, more than 50 years ago. Following the enlargement of the Security Council in 1965 and the introduction of regional representation, the term was never split. Whenever any disputes arose, usually one of the candidates withdrew or a third, “compromise” country was nominated.

There is a reason for this: over the last 50 years the volume of work of the Security Council has greatly increased. The Council holds over 400 meetings a year and adopts scores of resolutions and other decisions. Furthermore, non-permanent members of the Council chair its subsidiary bodies, including the sanctions committees. This requires considerable preparation and a certain amount of time for familiarization with the Council's work.



We therefore believe that splitting the term of office would not be conducive to the sustainable and continued functioning of the Security Council and could compromise its ability to react to crises in a prompt and effective manner. We are gravely disappointed by the inability of Western European and other States to designate a candidate by consensus, which has led to the current stalemate.

We believe that the Council's effectiveness in terms of maintaining international peace and security should remain an absolute priority, not the prestige or domestic political agenda of any particular country. We call on the candidates for the Council to act responsibly and in the interests of the Organization.

We should be grateful if the present letter could be circulated as a document of the seventieth session of the General Assembly under agenda item 112 (a).

(Signed) P. Iliichev
Chargé d'affaires a.i.
