

Security Council Elections 2026



Baiba Braze (right), Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia, and Sanita Pavljuta-Deslandes, Permanent Representative of Latvia to the United Nations, attend the 73rd plenary meeting of the General Assembly on the election of non-permanent members of Security Council (3 June 2025)
UN Photo/Manuel Elias

2026, No. 6
2 June 2026

This report is available online at securitycouncilreport.org.

For daily insights by SCR on evolving Security Council actions please subscribe to our "What's In Blue" series at securitycouncilreport.org or follow us on X: @SCRtweets and LinkedIn: Security Council Report

Introduction: The 2026 Elections

On 3 June, the 80th session of the UN General Assembly is scheduled to hold elections for membership of the Security Council. The five seats available for election in 2026, according to the regular distribution among regions, will be as follows:

- one seat for the African Group (currently held by Somalia);
- one seat for the Asia-Pacific Group (currently held by Pakistan);

- one seat for the Latin American and Caribbean Group (GRULAC, currently held by Panama); and
- two seats for the Western European and Others Group (WEOG, currently held by Denmark and Greece).

The five new members elected this year will take up their seats on 1 January 2027 and will serve until 31 December 2028.

- 1 Introduction: The 2026 Elections
- 2 The 2026 Candidates
- 5 Potential Council Dynamics in 2027
- 7 The Process of Election
- 8 Regional Groups and Established Practices
- 10 Becoming a Candidate
- 10 Campaigning for the Council
- 11 UN Documents on Security Council Elections
- 12 Useful Additional Sources
- 12 Annex I: Rules and Process for Election to the Council: Relevant Charter Provisions and Rules of Procedure
- 13 Annex II: Historical Background
- 14 Annex III: Results of Recent Elections for Non-Permanent Members of the Security Council

The 2026 Candidates

Seven member states—Austria, Germany, Kyrgyzstan, the Philippines, Portugal, Trinidad and Tobago, and Zimbabwe—are currently running for the five available seats. Austria, Germany, and Portugal are vying for two WEOG seats, while Kyrgyzstan and the Philippines are competing for the single Asia-Pacific Group seat. The other two candidates are running in uncontested elections known as a “clean slate”. Six

out of seven candidates have served on the Council previously: Germany six times, the Philippines four times, Austria and Portugal three times, Zimbabwe twice and Trinidad and Tobago once. Kyrgyzstan has never served on the Council.

The table below shows the number of seats available by region in the 2026 election, the declared candidates, and their prior terms on the Council.

REGION	SEATS AVAILABLE IN 2026	CANDIDATES AND PRIOR COUNCIL TERMS
Africa	1	Zimbabwe (1983-1984, 1991-1992)
Asia-Pacific	1	Kyrgyzstan (none) The Philippines (1957, 1963, 1980-1981, 2004-2005)
Latin America and Caribbean (GRULAC)	1	Trinidad and Tobago (1985-1986)
Western Europe and Others Group (WEOG)	2	Austria (1973-1974, 1991-1992, 2009-2010) Germany (1977-1978, 1987-1988, 1995-1996, 2003-2004, 2011-2012, 2019-2020) Portugal (1979-1980, 1997-1998, 2011-2012)

African Seats

Three non-permanent seats are always allocated to Africa. One seat comes up for election every even calendar year, and two seats are available during odd years. Although there have been exceptions, elections for seats allocated to Africa are usually uncontested, as the African Group maintains an established pattern of rotation among its five sub-regions (North Africa, Southern Africa, East Africa, West Africa, and Central Africa), as described in greater detail below.

This pattern has been interrupted on several occasions, such as when Mauritania, Morocco, and Togo ran for the two open African seats in 2011. Nigeria and the Gambia contested one seat in 2013, but the Gambia dropped out of the race before the election. In 2020, Djibouti and Kenya contested the single available seat, which Kenya won in the second round of voting. In 2021, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) entered the race in early May but withdrew in early June in favour of Gabon, which was the AU-endorsed candidate. Most recently, Madagascar, Mauritius and Tanzania were briefly candidates in 2024, but all three dropped out of the race before the elections, leaving Somalia as the sole candidate in 2024.

Zimbabwe is running unopposed for the Southern Africa seat, which rotates with the Eastern Africa seat currently held by Somalia according to the African Group’s rotation pattern. The selection and endorsement of candidatures for the African Group take place within the AU structures. At the 44th Ordinary Session of the AU Executive Council in February 2024 [EX.CL/Dec.1264(XLIV)], the body endorsed Zimbabwe’s candidature for the Council 2027-2028 term.

Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe became a member of the UN in 1980. It has since served twice on the Security Council (1983–1984 and 1991–1992).

Zimbabwe has campaigned under the slogan “Advancing 21st Century Solutions for Global Peace and Security through Multilateralism”. Emphasising its foreign policy principle of being a “Friend to All and an Enemy to None”, Zimbabwe has highlighted its role as a bridge-builder, particularly in representing African and Global South perspectives. It positions itself as a proponent of peaceful coexistence, sovereign equality and dialogue-driven diplomacy, grounded in the UN Charter and international law.

The 2026 Candidates

If elected, Zimbabwe has indicated that amplifying Africa's voice in Council deliberations and outcomes would be a central priority, alongside advancing multilateral responses to contemporary security challenges.

During its campaign, Zimbabwe has prioritised the promotion of international peace and security through peaceful settlement of disputes and action to address the root causes of conflict, recognising the positive effect of the latter on efforts to ensuring sustainable development. Zimbabwe describes itself as an advocate for UN support of the AU's "Silencing the Guns in Africa" strategy, particularly measures aimed at countering terrorism and combating organised crime.

Zimbabwe also has a strong interest in promoting the women, peace and security agenda, recognising the critical role of women in conflict prevention, peacebuilding and conflict resolution. In line with this commitment, women now constitute nearly fifty per cent of Zimbabwe's deployed military and police personnel serving in different UN missions.

As at 31 March 2026, Zimbabwe had contributed 36 military and police personnel deployed in UNMISS (26), UNISFA (6), MONUSCO (3), and MINUSCA (1).

GRULAC Seat

Two non-permanent seats are allocated to Latin America and the Caribbean, with one coming up for election every year. Since 2007, there has been an informal understanding among GRULAC members to avoid contested elections. This followed the 2006 election for the GRULAC seat for the 2007–2008 term, contested between Guatemala and Venezuela, which was inconclusive after 47 rounds of voting between 16 October and 7 November. Panama was elected in the 48th round as the compromise candidate. Since that election, candidates for the GRULAC seat have run unopposed, with the exception of 2019, when Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, which was the GRULAC-endorsed candidate, won the seat with 185 votes, after El Salvador submitted its candidacy just days before the 7 June election and received only six votes.

This year, Trinidad and Tobago is running unopposed for the seat currently held by Panama. The country's candidacy for the 2027–2028 term has received the endorsement of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

Trinidad and Tobago

Trinidad and Tobago became a member of the UN in 1962 and has since served once in the Security Council (1985–1986).

Trinidad and Tobago has campaigned under the slogan "Building Consensus for the Realization of Sustainable Peace and Security", reaffirming its commitment to the purposes and principles of the UN, including the maintenance of international peace and security, the peaceful settlement of disputes, respect for the rule of law and the promotion of sustainable development.

It has highlighted its bilateral partnerships across the Caribbean, Latin America and other regions, positioning itself as a constructive and reliable international partner.

During its campaign, Trinidad and Tobago has underscored three priorities: the women, peace and security agenda; combating the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons; and addressing the implications of artificial intelligence (AI) for global security.

If elected, Trinidad and Tobago seeks to ensure that the

perspectives of women and girls are reflected in the Council's activities. It has underscored the importance of addressing gender-based and conflict-related violence, including by promoting gender-responsive security and early warning systems.

Drawing on its experience as a small island developing state and member of GRULAC and CARICOM, it has positioned itself as a country that brings practical insight into the challenges faced by states situated along trafficking routes. It describes itself as an advocate for coordinated solutions and approaches aimed at addressing the root causes of armed violence and combating the illicit trafficking of small arms.

Trinidad and Tobago has underscored the importance of inclusive governance of AI and emerging technologies, stressing the need for all states, including small island developing states (SIDS), to contribute to global frameworks. It has also committed to supporting international cooperation to address the implications of these technologies for international peace and security.

Trinidad and Tobago is currently not a troop- or police-contributing country.

WEOG Seats

Two seats on the Council are allocated to the Western Europe and Others Group. These seats come up for election every even calendar year. This year, Austria, Germany and Portugal are competing for two available seats currently held by Denmark and Greece. Since Security Council Report (SCR) published its first elections report in 2006, there have been eleven elections for WEOG seats, of which seven were contested.

Austria

Austria became a member of the UN in 1955 and has previously served on the Security Council three times (1973–1974, 1991–1992 and 2009–2010).

Austria's campaign has centred on strengthening multilateralism through partnerships, dialogue and trust, grounded in the UN Charter and international law. It presents itself as a bridge-builder, underscoring its military neutrality, its hosting of UN institutions and international negotiations, and its commitment to conflict prevention, mediation and inclusive cooperation.

During its campaign, Austria has stressed the importance of strengthening peacekeeping through "networked multilateralism" and closer UN cooperation with regional organisations, including support for African Union (AU)-led operations. It has highlighted its contributions to capacity-building and innovation in peacekeeping, particularly for environmental sustainability. It has also prioritised peacebuilding, including its links with counter-terrorism, referencing its support to the Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund (PBF).

If elected, Austria intends to promote the climate, peace and security agenda through "green diplomacy", including by expanding climate finance and supporting the UN Climate and Security Mechanism, building on its role as the mechanism's joint steering committee co-chair in 2025. It would also support humanitarian disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation, and regulation of emerging weapons technologies.

Other focus areas of its term if elected would include strengthening the rule of law and civilian protection in international peace and security, as well as the women, peace and security and children and armed conflict agendas.

The 2026 Candidates

As a founding member of the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency (ACT) Group and former co-chair of the Intergovernmental Negotiations (IGN), Austria supports reforms to improve the Council's transparency, accountability and representativeness, including redressing the historical injustice against Africa.

As at 31 March, Austria had contributed 174 military and police personnel deployed in UNIFIL (161), MINURSO (4), UNTSO (4), UNFICYP (3), and UNMIK (2).¹

Germany

Germany became a member of the UN in 1973 and has since served on the Security Council six times (1977–1978, 1987–1988, 1995–1996, 2003–2004, 2011–2012 and 2019–2020).

Germany has anchored its campaign in the principles of respect, justice and peace, stressing its commitment to multilateralism, international law and inclusive cooperation. It positions itself as a reliable partner with a longstanding record of contributions to peacekeeping, peacebuilding, humanitarian assistance, climate action and development.

During its campaign, Germany has committed to promoting a UN system that better reflects contemporary realities and enables meaningful participation by all member states in multilateral decision-making. It has highlighted its diplomatic network and partnerships with regional organisations as part of its commitment to inclusive multilateralism. It has also underscored the importance of engaging with civil society and communities affected by issues under discussion in Council deliberations.

Germany has stressed its commitment to the UN Charter and international law, and its intention to strengthen conditions for stability through humanitarian assistance, development cooperation and climate action. It has also stressed the need to ensure meaningful youth participation and gender equality in peace and security processes, particularly through the women, peace and security agenda.

If elected, Germany intends to promote conflict prevention and peacebuilding, highlighting its role as recent chair and current vice-chair of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) and a PBF donor. Germany has also expressed its support for the evolution of peacekeeping operations, building on its role as host of the 2025 Peacekeeping Ministerial. Addressing the root causes of instability, including inequality, human rights violations, terrorism and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons has been flagged as another priority.

As at 31 March, Germany had contributed 198 military and police personnel deployed in UNIFIL (180), UNMISS (9), UNFICYP (5), and MINURSO (4).

Portugal

Portugal became a member of the UN in 1955 and has since served on the Security Council three times (1960–1961, 1997–1998 and 2011–2012).

Portugal has framed its campaign around three interlinked priorities—prevention, partnership, and protection—aimed at strengthening an effective, inclusive, and responsive Security Council. It positions itself as a consensus-builder, committed to dialogue, equality of states, and trust-based diplomacy.

During its campaign, Portugal has emphasised a comprehensive approach to global challenges that integrates the UN's peace and security, development, and human rights pillars. If elected, it intends to prioritise mediation and preventive diplomacy, and to promote the implementation of the New Agenda for Peace. It considers addressing structural drivers of instability, such as climate change and rising sea levels, poverty, and social exclusion, as crucial for consolidating peace and preventing conflict resurgence. It has also indicated that it would support the women, peace and security; youth, peace and security; children and armed conflict; and climate, peace and security agendas.

Portugal has underscored the need for a more open and interconnected Council, advocating for stronger linkages with the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council, the PBC, and regional organisations. As a member of the ACT Group, Portugal advocates for improved transparency and representation in the Council, including by expanding its membership, holding more open meetings and increasing scrutiny of veto use.

Portugal has highlighted the primacy of the UN Charter and international law for global peace and security. If elected, it would support peacekeeping revitalisation to meet evolving threats. Portugal also seeks to address emerging challenges and risks within the technology-security nexus, including maritime and cyber security. Another of Portugal's priorities is disarmament, non-proliferation, and counterterrorism.

As at 31 March, Portugal had contributed 167 military and police personnel deployed in MINUSCA (160), UNMISS (4) and UNVMC (3).²

Asia-Pacific Seat

Two non-permanent seats are allocated to the Asia-Pacific Group, with one coming up every election year (similar to the GRULAC seat). This year, Kyrgyzstan and Philippines are running for one available seat currently held by Pakistan. The last time the Asia-Pacific Group had contested elections was in 2018 when Indonesia and Maldives ran for one available seat which Indonesia won. Since SCR published its first elections report in 2006, six out of twenty elections for the Asia-Pacific Group have been contested.

Kyrgyzstan's candidature is backed by Central Asian countries, which seek to strengthen the region's voice in global security. The Philippines' candidature has been endorsed by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyzstan became a member of the UN in 1992, one year after its independence in 1991. It has never served on the Security Council. It would be the second Central Asian country to do so, after Kazakhstan in 2018–2019.

Kyrgyzstan has campaigned under the slogan of “Building a Safer and More Prosperous World through Cooperation, Trust and Multilateralism”. It describes itself as a bridge-builder, promoting dialogue, preventive diplomacy and mediation to address world conflicts and reduce geopolitical divisions.

Building on its own experience in resolving border disputes through diplomacy, Kyrgyzstan has emphasised the importance of

¹ All references to military and police personnel are drawn from: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/troop-and-police-contributors>.

² As at 31 March 2026, Portugal also deployed 41 military personnel in MINUSCA's Quick Reaction Force, operating a National Support Element alongside these troops.

The 2026 Candidates

prevention. It has also expressed support for strengthening the effectiveness of UN peace operations. If elected, it has indicated that its work in the Council would be guided by international law, the UN Charter and the principles of multilateralism.

Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are key priorities for Kyrgyzstan, which seeks to share its experience as a party to the Central Asian Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone. During its campaign, it has highlighted its role in proclaiming the International Day for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Awareness.

Kyrgyzstan has emphasised the importance of stability in Central Asia, particularly in relation to Afghanistan. It has advocated for inclusive approaches to achieving sustainable peace, considering the concerns of developing countries, landlocked states and vulnerable regions such as those that are mountainous and SIDS affected by climate change.

Kyrgyzstan's other priorities for its Council term would include enhancing the effectiveness, transparency and representativeness of the Council while supporting broader UN reforms to ensure greater participation of the Global South. It has also emphasised the interlinkages between peace, development and humanitarian action, including climate-related security risks and sustainable mountain development.

As at 31 March, Kyrgyzstan had contributed 11 military and police personnel deployed in UNMISS (8), UNISFA (2), and MINURSO (1).

The Philippines

The Philippines is a founding member of the UN and has so far served four times in the Security Council (1957, 1963, 1980–1981 and 2004–2005).³

The Philippines has campaigned under the slogan “Partner, Pathfinder, Peacemaker” and positioned itself as a bridge-builder

committed to strengthening peace through dialogue, the primacy of the rule of law and the rules-based international order, democratic values, and constructive engagement with all member states.

During its campaign, the Philippines has highlighted its long-standing commitment to multilateralism and the peaceful settlement of disputes in accordance with international law, including international humanitarian law. It has underscored the importance of inclusive peace processes, drawing on its domestic experience, particularly in the Bangsamoro region, and committed to promoting preventive diplomacy, mediation, and the women, peace and security agenda.

The Philippines has emphasised its contributions to peacekeeping and peacebuilding and its interest in enhancing the effectiveness, safety, and adaptability of UN peace operations. If elected, it seeks to advance the protection of civilians affected by armed conflict and to help address terrorism and violent extremism.

Its thematic priorities include the intersection of climate security, humanitarian action, and maritime cooperation, reflecting its identity as an archipelagic state and its concerns about the security impacts of climate change and rising sea levels.

It has also underscored the importance of arms control and nuclear non-proliferation, and the need for practical and forward-looking approaches to emerging technologies such as cybersecurity and autonomous weapons.

The Philippines' other priorities include strengthening partnerships between the UN and regional organisations, including ASEAN, and enhancing the transparency and effectiveness of the Council, including through fundamental reforms.

As at 31 March, the Philippines had contributed 29 military and police personnel deployed in UNMISS (20), UNMOGIP (5), MINUSCA (3), and MINURSO (1).

Potential Council Dynamics in 2027

Shifting global power dynamics and continued geopolitical uncertainty are expected to continue to shape the multilateral landscape and Security Council dynamics in 2027. The priorities advanced by candidates during their campaigns, together with their long-standing interests, offer valuable insight into how they may approach some of the key issues that may dominate the Council's agenda in the next year.

Entrenched divisions among permanent members are likely to continue affecting the Council's ability to respond effectively to several protracted conflicts in 2027. A clear manifestation of these divisions is the increasing use of the veto in recent years, as analysed in a 2026 SCR research report on the topic.⁴

These tensions are likely to persist in 2027, making it difficult for the Council to adopt meaningful outcomes on highly politicised crises. At the same time, the number of previously unscheduled Council meetings, which accounted for approximately 27 percent of the Council's meetings in 2025, is also expected to remain high in 2027, reflecting the increasingly reactive and unpredictable nature of the

Council's work amid a growing number of emerging and unforeseen conflicts. A significant proportion of these meetings in 2025 and during the first five months of 2026 focused on Ukraine; “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question (MEPQ)”; Sudan; the DRC; and Iran-related issues.

Although it is unclear what course the war in Ukraine will take in the future, the situation is likely to continue to occupy a significant portion of the Council's agenda in 2027. Among the WEOG candidates, there is sustained interest in the situation in Ukraine. Together with Latvia, which will remain on the Council in 2027, the European members are likely to stay closely engaged on the file.

The positions of the 2027 candidates on Ukraine are likely to reflect differing regional and political perspectives. With the exception of Kyrgyzstan and Zimbabwe, which abstained from the vote on the 24 February 2025 General Assembly resolution titled “Advancing a Comprehensive, Just and Lasting Peace in Ukraine”, all other candidate countries voted in favour. Kyrgyzstan

³ The Philippines served single-year UN Security Council terms in 1957 and 1963 due to temporary “split-term” compromises designed to break deadlocked General Assembly elections with rival member states.

⁴ Security Council Report. Living with the Veto, Research Report no.1. (23 March 2026), <<https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/research-reports/living-with-the-veto.php>>.

Potential Council Dynamics in 2027

and Zimbabwe's abstentions reflect a growing reluctance among some Global South countries to take sides, which continued in 2026 and is likely to persist in 2027.

At the same time, the WEOG candidate countries have expanded their military preparedness, in line with a broader European trend since the beginning of the war in Ukraine and the growing uncertainty surrounding the long-term US security commitment to Europe under the Trump administration. Divisions between members prioritising deterrence and military preparedness and those advocating de-escalation and negotiated solutions are therefore likely to persist in 2027.

The situation in the Middle East is likely to continue to feature prominently in the Council's work in 2027. The repeatedly violated ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, instability along the Israel-Lebanon border, and the wider regional escalation triggered by the joint US-Israeli strikes on Iran on 28 February 2026 and Iran's subsequent retaliation across the region risk extending well into 2027, exacerbating an already dire humanitarian situation in Gaza and other conflict-affected areas and a strained economic outlook across parts of the region.

In addition, tensions within the transatlantic alliance are likely to complicate coordination among the WEOG members on the Middle East in 2027, requiring them to strike a delicate balance between supporting collective security measures and avoiding deeper military entanglement in the region.

The Council's work on African files is likely to remain heavily focused on mandate renewals, sanctions regimes, and civilian protection concerns, particularly in relation to the DRC, Central African Republic, Libya, South Sudan, and Sudan. Insurgencies in the Sahel region may also be an important focus in the coming year.

The new group of African members (A3) would consist of the DRC, Liberia, and Zimbabwe. The fact that two of its members—the DRC and Zimbabwe—belong to the Southern African Development Community (SADC) could strengthen coordination on peace and security issues affecting the Great Lakes region and Southern Africa. More broadly, the A3 in 2027 is expected to continue to align closely with AU positions and to emphasise African ownership, sovereignty, and support for AU-led responses to conflict situations in Africa. Zimbabwe is likely to reinforce these positions, while favouring cautious approaches to sanctions and other externally driven pressure initiatives, reflecting its longstanding emphasis on dialogue, noninterference, and negotiated solutions.

It remains unclear if Trinidad and Tobago will join the African members of the Council as part of the "A3 Plus" grouping, similar to the role played by Saint Vincent and the Grenadines during its 2020-2021 Council term and by Guyana during its 2024-2025 tenure. Having an additional member from another region has benefited both the "A3" and the "plus" members in recent years and has come to symbolise the strengthening of Africa-Caribbean coordination at the UN. This growing cooperation was reinforced by a memorandum of understanding signed between the AU and CARICOM in 2024 to enhance collaboration between the two organisations and their peoples.

The outcome of the election for the Asia-Pacific seat may likewise influence the regional perspectives represented on the Council. A Kyrgyzstan victory would return a Central Asian voice to the Council for the first time since Kazakhstan's 2017-2018 term. This could bring additional attention to developments in Afghanistan and their implications for regional stability. The election of the Philippines, on

the other hand, would restore ASEAN representation to the Council, absent since Viet Nam's 2020-2021 term, and could elevate attention to Southeast Asian perspectives on issues such as Myanmar, maritime security, and regional cooperation.

In 2027, elected members (including all the candidate countries) are likely to continue emphasising compliance with international humanitarian law, humanitarian access, accountability, and civilian protection across both thematic and country-specific files. However, translating these commitments into concrete Council action may remain difficult because of divisions among major powers, differing interpretations of sovereignty and humanitarian obligations, and broader disagreements over accountability and enforcement mechanisms.

Several candidates have indicated peace operations as a priority, with some emphasising the need to reform peace operations in order to make them more effective, adaptable, and fit for purpose in responding to evolving global challenges. In 2025, a "peacekeeping trio" comprising Denmark, Pakistan, and the Republic of Korea (ROK) encouraged Council activity in support of peacekeeping. Following ROK's departure from the Council, Denmark and Pakistan continued to promote peacekeeping as a key priority in 2026 as a "peacekeeping duo". With both due to leave the Council at the end of the year, it remains to be seen which elected members, if any, will assume a leading role on peacekeeping-related issues in 2027.

Council discussions on peace operations are likely to unfold against the backdrop of continuing peacekeeping liquidity challenges, driven by persistent delays in the payment of assessed contributions. The resulting gap between approved budgets and available cash is expected to continue constraining peacekeeping operations in 2027 and may necessitate further expenditure reductions. Recommendations emerging from the ongoing review of peace operations by the UN Secretariat may also inform Council deliberations in 2027 on mandate renewals and the future of peacekeeping.

Additionally, all candidates have expressed interest in supporting UN peacebuilding efforts, with Austria also emphasising the links between peacebuilding and counter-terrorism efforts. Germany, which was the Chair of the PBC in 2025, as well as other candidates who champion peacebuilding, are likely to advocate for stronger integration of peacebuilding considerations across the Council's work and closer engagement with the PBC. Such efforts, however, may face resistance amid growing scepticism among permanent members towards thematic and prevention-oriented agendas.

Most candidate countries have expressed an interest in advancing Women, Peace and Security (WPS) issues. Several may sign on to the Shared Commitments on the WPS Initiative, which started in late 2021. Council member signatories in 2026 are Colombia, Denmark, France, Greece, Latvia, Liberia, Panama, and the UK. Three of these—Denmark, Greece, and Panama—will leave the Council at the end of the year. Permanent members France and the UK, the penholder on WPS, can be expected to remain proponents of the agenda. However, divisions on WPS issues are likely to deepen, fuelled by growing US scepticism towards some aspects of the agenda alongside longstanding reservations expressed by Russia and China. At the March 2026 session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), the agreed conclusions were adopted through a vote rather than by consensus for the first time in the Commission's history, following US efforts to alter and narrow the scope of gender-related language. Against this backdrop, Council dynamics

Potential Council Dynamics in 2027

on WPS in 2027 are likely to remain difficult, particularly regarding WPS outcomes and gender-related language.

Several candidate countries have identified AI and other emerging technologies as important priorities, highlighting the need to better understand and address the implications of these technologies for international peace and security. As these technologies increasingly intersect with many of the crises already on the Council's agenda, 2027 may see growing efforts by the elected members of the Council to examine the security implications of AI and other emerging technologies for terrorism, disinformation, maritime security threats, autonomous weapons systems, and nuclear and non-proliferation risks, among other issues.

Trinidad and Tobago has indicated that it plans to place a particular focus on peace and security challenges facing SIDS. The last open debate specifically focused on SIDS was held in 2015 under New Zealand's presidency of the Council. The fourth international conference on SIDS, held in 2024 in Antigua and Barbuda, highlighted interconnected challenges facing SIDS countries and territories, such as transnational crime and trafficking, climate change, economic vulnerability, food and energy insecurity, and uneven development. In 2027, Trinidad and Tobago may seek to draw the Council's attention to the security implications of some of these challenges.

One member of the ACT Group—Denmark—will leave the Security Council at the end of 2026. Among the current candidates, Austria and Portugal are members of the group. The ACT member(s) are likely to seek improvements in Security Council working methods, including proposals advocated by the ACT Group. Among the candidate countries, only Kyrgyzstan and Zimbabwe have not signed the ACT Group's Code of Conduct regarding Security Council action against genocide, crimes against humanity, or war crimes, which calls on all Council members to not vote against any credible draft resolution intended to prevent or halt mass atrocities. Among the permanent members of the Council, only France and the UK have signed the Code of Conduct.

In 2027, elected members may continue to seek active roles in the Council as penholders or co-penholders, the informal designation of those that take the lead in drafting outcomes and convening meetings or negotiations on particular agenda items, a responsibility most often assumed by one of the P3 (France, the UK, and the US). In recent years, a growing number of elected members have served

as penholders and co-penholders on various files. Among the elected members in 2026, Bahrain has taken on the role of penholder for regional resolutions in close coordination with other member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)—Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE)—as well as Jordan. Denmark is the penholder on Syria humanitarian affairs and shares the pen with Liberia on UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS). Greece is the co-pen with France on the EU naval force in the Mediterranean (Operation EUNAVFOR MED IRI-NI) and shares the pen with the US on the Red Sea. Panama shares the pen with the US on Haiti. Given the gradual expansion of penholding responsibilities among elected members over the last decade, 2027 may see continued efforts to broaden the role of E10 co-pens in shaping Council outcomes, including through more shared or regionally focused penholdership arrangements.

At the time of writing, Council members have yet to reach agreement on selecting the chairs of the subsidiary bodies for 2026. If similar delays persist in 2027, they could further complicate Council dynamics. Subsidiary bodies include sanctions committees and working groups, and the respective chairs are responsible for several important aspects of the work of these bodies, including chairing meetings, briefing the Council on the work of the relevant subsidiary body, and managing subsidiary body casework, such as listing and delisting requests. If there are no chairs during the first months of 2027, the Council would continue to rely on caretaker arrangements, putting additional pressure on Council presidencies and potentially affecting the comprehensiveness and thoroughness of subsidiary body work.

In 2027, the Security Council will also begin working with a new Secretary-General amid heightened geopolitical tensions, financial constraints, and growing scepticism towards the current global governance structure. The relationship between the Council and the incoming Secretary-General is likely to be an important factor shaping UN peace and security efforts. All the current candidates for the Secretary-General position have emphasised the importance of diplomacy and the UN's peace and security functions, including conflict prevention, mediation, peacemaking, and peacebuilding, although the degree of emphasis has varied. A new Secretary-General who seeks to strengthen the UN's role in these areas could create opportunities for meaningful cooperation with the Council.

The Process of Election

Elections to the Council, as with other principal organs of the UN, require formal balloting even if candidates have been endorsed by their regional group and are running unopposed. A Council candidate country needs to obtain the votes of two-thirds of the member states voting at the General Assembly session. This means that at least 129 votes are required to win a seat if all 193 UN member states vote. Member states that abstain are considered not voting, and blank ballots are not counted. Votes are secret. Under Article 19 of the UN Charter, a member state can be excluded from voting if the amount owed in arrears equals or exceeds the contributions due for the two preceding years. At press time, Afghanistan

and Venezuela are not permitted to vote in the General Assembly because of their arrears.

Member states vote for five candidates representing the various regional groups in each round of voting. In theory, it is possible that a country running unopposed might not garner the required number of votes of those present in the General Assembly in the first round of voting. Such a country may then be challenged in subsequent rounds by hitherto undeclared candidates and could ultimately fail to obtain a seat. However, this has never happened.

In a contested election, if no candidate obtains sufficient votes to be elected in the first round, voting in the next round would

The Process of Election

be restricted. In this restricted ballot, the number of candidates is limited to twice the number of seats available, and the candidates are those that received the highest number of votes in the first round. For example, if one seat is available, only two countries can contest this round—the two that received the most votes in the first round. Any votes for other candidates during this restricted voting round are considered void. This restricted voting process can continue for up to three rounds of voting.

If no candidate has garnered the required number of votes, unrestricted voting is opened up for up to three rounds. At this point, new candidates can come into the process and those excluded after the first restricted ballot can reenter. This pattern of restricted and unrestricted voting continues until a candidate is

successful in securing the required two-thirds majority.

Historically, there have been several instances in which extended rounds of voting were required to fill a contested seat. This was more common before the Council's enlargement from 11 to 15 members in 1966, when it led to several agreements to split terms, such as the 1961-1962 term, split between Liberia and Ireland. Since 1966, such situations have been resolved by the withdrawal of one of the contenders or the election of a compromise candidate, with the sole exception being the 2016 agreement between Italy and the Netherlands to split the 2017-2018 term.⁵ A summary of the recent voting in General Assembly elections for non-permanent seats on the Security Council is contained in Annex 3 of this report.

Regional Groups and Established Practices

For purposes of election to the Security Council, the regional groups have been governed by a formula set out in General Assembly resolution 1991 A (XVIII), which was adopted in 1963 and took effect in 1966. The main feature of the resolution was to amend the UN Charter to increase the number of Council members from 11 to 15. Under this resolution, the seats previously assigned to the African and Asia-Pacific states were combined. In reality, however, the determination of candidates for election to the African and Asia Pacific seats operates separately, and this report reflects that customary practice.

Article 23 of the Charter, which establishes the number of Council members, also specifies the criteria that the members of the General Assembly are to apply when considering which countries should

be elected to serve on the Council. It provides that due regard shall be “specially paid, in the first instance, to the contribution of Members of the United Nations to the maintenance of international peace and security and to the other purposes of the Organization, and also to equitable geographical distribution”.

The Charter does not define equitable geographical distribution, stipulate how it should be achieved, or suggest the composition of appropriate geographical groups. However, the principle of equitable geographical distribution gave rise to the establishment of regional electoral groups as a vehicle for achieving that goal. The regional groups, as they now operate, are as follows:

African Group	54 members
Asia-Pacific Group	54 members
Eastern European Group	23 members
Latin America and Caribbean (GRULAC)	33 members
Western European and Others Group (WEOG)	28 members

African Group

Most of the groups have internal selection processes based on informal understandings. The African Group's process is more formal: it has adopted the rules of procedure of the AU's Ministerial Committee on Candidatures within the International System to endorse candidates to occupy the three African seats on the Council. Subregional groups within the African Group tend to follow a rotation system, though there have been some departures from this scheme. Theoretically, under this system, every country in Africa should eventually get a turn as a candidate for a Council seat.

The process of selecting a candidate within the African Group usually follows a defined path in accordance with the AU rules of procedure cited above. First, the subregional groups select the potential candidate countries and forward their names to the African Group for endorsement. The African Group submits all candidate

countries' names to the Committee on Candidatures of the African Group in New York: at this stage, subregional organisations may add their endorsement before the list goes to the AU Ministerial Committee on Candidatures. This committee follows its written rules of procedure in selecting candidates.

Today, every member of the African Group is a member of the AU. The AU Executive Council makes the final decision on which members to endorse during an AU summit meeting. Notwithstanding the written rules of procedure for candidate selection, some countries have submitted their candidature directly to the AU Ministerial Committee on Candidatures, bypassing the process in New York.

The African rotation generally follows a cycle based on the following principles:

- Northern Africa and Central Africa rotate running for one seat every odd calendar year;

⁵ For further background, see Security Council Report, “Security Council Elections: Italy and the Netherlands Agree to a Split Term” (What's in Blue, 29 June 2016), <<https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/whatsinblue/2016/06/security-council-elections-italy-and-the-netherlands-agree-to-a-split-term.php>>.

Regional Groups and Established Practices

- Western Africa runs for one seat every odd calendar year; and
- Eastern Africa and Southern Africa rotate running for one seat every even calendar year.

Broad adherence to this system has meant that African candidates generally run on “blank slates”, or uncontested. This is not always the case, however. When Sudan was the endorsed candidate for the 2000 election, Mauritius contested the seat and won election to the Council. In 2011, Mauritania contested Morocco’s candidature for the Northern Africa/Arab swing seat but lost. In 2020, Djibouti contested the seat allocated to the East Africa region but lost to Kenya, which was the endorsed candidate. In 2021, the DRC entered the race very late but withdrew in favour of Gabon, which was the AU endorsed candidate.

In addition to rival candidates emerging within a given subregional grouping, there have been times in the past when countries that can claim to straddle more than one geographic region have shifted from one subgroup to another.

A factor that seems to be coming into play is the growing desire by some member states in the region to be elected more regularly than the—admittedly informal—rotation system would allow. Nigeria was elected for the 2014–2015 term two years after its Council membership of 2010–2011. South Africa was on the Council in 2007–2008, in 2011–2012, and again in 2019–2020. By declaring their candidacies ahead of their “turn”, these countries need to either persuade other candidates to withdraw or face a contested election.

Asia-Pacific Group

In 2011, the Asian Group officially changed its name to the Group of Asia and the Pacific Small Island Developing States, also known as the Asia-Pacific Group. The name change reflects the fact that more than a quarter of the group’s members are island countries in the Pacific.

The Asia-Pacific Group has no formally established practices of rotation to fill the two seats, one of which becomes available every year. While it has the same number of countries as the African Group, the Asia-Pacific Group’s wide geographic span—from the Middle East to Polynesia—has led to much looser regional coordination.

Japan has served for 24 years, the longest of any of the Asia-Pacific members. Until the mid-1990s, there was a fairly consistent South Asian presence on the Council, with Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and Pakistan rotating seats. In practice, South Asian countries rarely run against each other. One exception occurred in 1975 when India and Pakistan contested the same seat, and eight rounds of voting were needed before Pakistan prevailed. By the time Pakistan completes its 2025–2026 term, it will have served a total of 16 years on the Council. India, which has also served 16 years, has begun to come on more regularly, serving in 2011–2012, 2021–2022 and will again for a seat in 2028–2029. A number of ASEAN members have served several terms: Indonesia has served eight years, Malaysia seven years, and the Philippines six years.

In the absence of a formal rotation system, larger member states have tended to declare their candidacy closer to the election year, while smaller candidate countries from the region have often announced their decision to run many years ahead of time. The only subregional group within the Asia-Pacific Group that endorses its candidates is the ASEAN, comprised of Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Viet Nam.

The Arab Swing Seat

There is an established practice that spans the Asia-Pacific and African Groups. As discussed in greater detail in Annex 2, General Assembly resolution 1991 A (XVIII) provided five seats for “Asia and Africa”, and, in practice, the seats have been divided into three seats for Africa and two for Asia. In 1967, after Jordan ended its two-year term in what had been the Middle East seat, there was a year with no Arab state on the Council, which coincided with the Six-Day War. It appears that at some point, there was an informal agreement, although there are no known records, to reserve one seat for an Arab state and that Asia and Africa would take turns every two years to provide a suitable candidate. As a result, this seat is often called the “Arab swing seat”. An Arab country has always held a seat on the Council since 1968.

Eastern European Group

The Eastern European Group is the smallest regional group, consisting of 23 member states, with an election for one seat every odd calendar year. This is also the group that has expanded the most in recent decades, with 15 new members added since 1991 because of the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the splitting of both Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. Today, 11 of its countries are EU members, and eight—Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, the Republic of North Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia, and Ukraine—are formal candidates for EU membership. An Eastern European seat was included in the permanent members’ “gentlemen’s agreement” in 1946 (see Annex 2), but soon thereafter, the meaning of that agreement was contested, with the Soviet Union and the West vying for 20 years to place their preferred candidates in this seat. The seat also became hotly contested among new member states that lacked a clear regional grouping. (For example, in 1955, before there was an Asian seat, the Philippines competed for a seat with members of the Eastern European Group. When voting remained deadlocked between Yugoslavia and the Philippines after 36 rounds, the two countries agreed to accept a split term: Yugoslavia served on the Council in 1956 and the Philippines in 1957.)

Latin American and Caribbean Group

After the expansion of the Council and the reorganisation of the regional groups that occurred as a result of General Assembly resolution 1991 A (XVIII), the Latin American Group incorporated the Caribbean states, several of which were members of the British Commonwealth, and became GRULAC. It currently has 33 members.

Like most of the other groups, GRULAC has no formal rules regarding rotation. Historically, the group was often able to reach consensus on “clean slates”, although there have been notable exceptions. Two of the most protracted and bitterly contested elections were between GRULAC candidates. The 1979 election between Colombia and Cuba went to 155 rounds between 26 October 1979 and 7 January 1980 before Mexico was elected as a compromise candidate. In 2006, 47 rounds of voting were needed between 16 October and 7 November in the election between Guatemala and Venezuela before Panama was elected in the 48th round as a compromise candidate. Following the hotly contested 2006, election there has been an informal understanding among GRULAC members to avoid contested elections.

Regional Groups and Established Practices

While for much of the last 60 years, non-Caribbean countries have tended to dominate regional representation, there have been two Caribbean countries that were elected to this seat recently: Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (2020–2021) and Guyana (2024–2025). Brazil has served the highest number of terms among GRULAC members, with a total of 22 years on the Council by the end of its last term in 2022–2023.

Western European and Others Group

With 28 members, WEOG is the second smallest regional group, and two seats become available to it every even calendar year. Strictly speaking, it is not a geographical group, as it comprises Western Europe plus “others”, but its members share broadly similar political values and levels of economic development. The “others” subgroup is made up of Australia, Canada, and New Zealand, who were members of what was previously called the British Commonwealth Group. Israel is the other non-European state that participates in WEOG, while the Holy See is an observer. With the

US also attending meetings as an observer and France and the UK as members, WEOG includes three of the five permanent members of the Council.

WEOG practices what might be called an open-market approach to elections, which produces regularly contested candidatures, a pattern likely to continue in the coming years.

There are three subgroups within WEOG: the Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden), CANZ (Canada, Australia, and New Zealand), and Benelux (Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg). There are informal understandings within the Nordic and CANZ subgroups that have encouraged members to support each other’s campaigns.

In its first term on the Council (1951–1952), Türkiye served as the Middle Eastern Council member. After twice holding the Eastern European seat, in 1954–1955 and 1961, it ran for the WEOG seat in 2008 and 2014 elections. Türkiye participates fully in both the WEOG and Asian-Pacific Group but, for electoral purposes, is considered a member of WEOG.

Becoming a Candidate

The path most candidate countries follow in announcing and pursuing their bids for the Council usually begins by informing members of their regional (or subregional) group of the intention to run and seeking its support. The group’s endorsement becomes an important factor in the next step. (The more complex process within the African Group is described above.)

A candidate country then formalises its intention to seek a Council seat by notifying the rotating monthly chair of its regional group in New York. This is done in writing, specifying the two-year term the country seeks. The chair incorporates that information into the UN candidacy chart of the regional group in question; this chart is

maintained by each group and reviewed at monthly group meetings. Most candidate countries then prepare a circular note to all missions in New York informing them of the candidacy. Most also send a note to the Secretariat or the president of the General Assembly, or both, although this is not required by the General Assembly’s rules of procedure.

As the relevant election year approaches, the regional group may decide to give its endorsement, and, nearer to the election date, the chair of the regional group will inform the president of the General Assembly whether elections will be contested or not. This allows the Secretariat to prepare documentation for the election process.

Campaigning for the Council

Candidates seek voting pledges from member states, often years in advance of the election, and may continue to do so up until the vote. Campaigning for the Council can involve significant investments of time and financial resources, although funds brought to bear vary greatly depending on several factors, including the resources of the candidate and whether the candidacy is contested. (Candidates predictably tend to spend less in uncontested elections.)

Commitments are sought in writing, orally, or both. Votes are cast by secret ballot, making it impossible to determine whether member states have kept their promises. There are several reasons why pledges may be broken. A high-level official in the capital may pledge the country’s vote to a particular candidate but fail to convey the commitment to the permanent mission to the UN in New York, where the votes are cast. Pressure could be exerted or promises made for votes at a late stage in the campaign. Or, if there is a change in government, the new government may not consider itself bound by

the pledges of a previous administration. Knowing that commitments are not always secure, some candidate countries persistently cultivate countries that have already promised to vote for them, seeking reassurance that they have not changed their minds. Candidates often seek pledges from member states at many levels of government.

As candidate countries generally focus their campaigns on influencing the voting decisions of diplomats in member state capitals and at UN headquarters, their foreign minister and permanent representative to the UN in New York play significant roles in the campaign process. Additionally, particularly in contested elections, many candidates employ special envoys, usually former senior government officials or diplomats, who travel to capitals seeking voting pledges from high-level officials. Depending on their campaign strategies and resources, candidate countries may use multiple envoys, often focusing their efforts on regions where they lack strong diplomatic representation.

Campaigning for the Council

To secure voting commitments from member states, candidate countries may volunteer, or be asked for, inducements, such as development assistance or promises to promote—or avoid—particular issues while serving on the Council. Several candidate countries have arranged trips to their capital or held workshops on (uncontroversial) issues of interest in attractive locations to raise their campaign profile. “Swag bags” with items imprinted with the candidate’s logo may be distributed within UN circles to increase campaign visibility.

Until recently, permanent representatives were customarily offered gifts on election day by most candidates, even those running unopposed. On 8 September 2017, however, the General Assembly adopted resolution 71/323 on the revitalisation of the work of the General Assembly, which decided that “on the day of election...the campaign materials distributed in the General Assembly Hall...shall be limited to a single page of information regarding the candidates, with a view to preserving the decorum of the Assembly”. The following year, on 17 September 2018, resolution 72/313 welcomed the

“efficient implementation” of this provision and decided “to continue to consider, within the Ad Hoc Working Group [on the Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly], the potential concept and scope of guidelines on how to conduct the election campaigns by Member States, with a view to improving the standards of transparency and equity”.

As contested elections may continue for several rounds, candidates try to ensure that member states that voted for them in the first round continue to do so while also attempting to secure support from uncommitted members. Some member states have said when they commit their vote to a candidate, they do so for the duration of the electoral process, regardless of the number of rounds. In protracted elections that come down to two candidates vying for a single seat, however, member states may shift their vote if it appears that their candidate of choice is losing ground and seems unlikely to prevail.

UN Documents on Security Council Elections

SECURITY COUNCIL DOCUMENTS

[S/2024/507](#) (13 December 2024) was the updated compendium of Security Council working methods.

[S/2018/1024](#) (13 November 2018) was a letter to the President of the Security Council from the elected ten and incoming five members advocating a more equal distribution of work among all members.

[S/2016/619](#) (15 July 2016) was a note by the Council president concerning transitional arrangements for newly elected Council members, which among other matters, called on Council members to agree provisionally on the appointment of chairs of subsidiary bodies by 1 October.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY DOCUMENTS

[A/79/PV.73](#) (3 June 2025) was the meeting record of the 2025 elections of the five non-permanent members.

[A/78/PV.86](#) (6 June 2024) was the meeting record of the 2024 elections of five non-permanent members.

[A/RES/72/313](#) (17 September 2018) was on the revitalisation of the work of the General Assembly and welcomed the “efficient implementation” of this provision and decided “to continue to consider, within the Ad Hoc Working Group [on the Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly], the potential concept and scope of guidelines on how to conduct the election campaigns by Member States, with a view to improving the standards of transparency and equity”.

[A/RES/71/323](#) (8 September 2017) was on the revitalisation of the work of the General Assembly and decided that “on the day of election...the campaign materials distributed in the General Assembly Hall...shall be limited to a single page of information regarding the candidates, with a view to preserving the decorum of the Assembly”.

[A/70/PV.108](#) (30 June 2016) was the record of the 2016 elections for the remaining non-permanent member from WEOG.

[A/70/974](#) (30 June 2016) was a letter from Egypt expressing its understanding that the agreement between Italy and the Netherlands to split the 2017-2018 term would not lay the ground for future practice and would have no legal or procedural implications on future elections to the Security Council.

[A/70/971](#) (30 June 2016) was a letter from Russia expressing the position that the exceptional case of the agreement between Italy and the Netherlands to split the 2017-2018 term would not set a precedent, arguing that this practice would have a negative impact on the Security Council's efficiency.

[A/70/964](#) (29 June 2016) was a letter from the chair of WEOG saying that Italy and the Netherlands had agreed to split the term, with Italy serving in 2017 and the Netherlands in 2018, requiring a by-election for the remainder of the term.

[A/70/PV.107](#) (28 June 2016) was the record of the 2016 elections of the non-permanent members for the remaining candidates from WEOG, when Italy and the Netherlands announced that they would split the term.

[A/RES/68/307](#) (10 September 2014) decided that elections of the non-permanent members of the Security Council would take place about six months before the elected members assumed their responsibilities.

[A/59/881](#) (20 July 2005) was a note verbale from Costa Rica containing information on elections from 1946 to 2004.

[A/RES 1991 A \(XVIII\)](#) (17 December 1963) was the resolution adopting amendments to the Charter on the composition of the Council and establishing the allocation of seats to various regions. GAOR 1st Session, Part I, 14th Plenary Session and Part II (12 January 1946) was the first election of non-permanent members.

Useful Additional Sources

- David L. Bosco, *Five to Rule Them All: The UN Security Council and the Making of the Modern World*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).
- Andrew Boyd, *Fifteen Men on a Powder Keg: A History of the UN Security Council*, (New York: Stein and Day, 1971).
- Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and Alastair Smith, "The Pernicious Consequences of UN Security Council Membership", *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 54, no. 5 (2010), 667-686.
- Terrence L. Chapman and Dan Reiter, "The United Nations Security Council and the Rally 'Round the Flag Effect", *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 48, no. 6 (2004), 886-909.
- Axel Dreher et al., *The Determinants of Election to the United Nations Security Council*, CESifo Working Paper Series, no. 3902 (2012).
- Jared Genser and Bruno Stagno Ugarte, eds., *The United Nations Security Council in the Age of Human Rights*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).
- Edward C. Luck, *Reforming the United Nations: Lessons from a History in Progress*, *International Relations Studies and the United Nations Occasional Papers*, no.1 (2003).
- David M. Malone, "Eyes on the Prize: The Quest for Nonpermanent Seats on the UN Security Council", *Global Governance*, vol. 6, no. 1 (2000), 3-23.
- Norman J. Padelford, "Politics and Change in the Security Council", *International Organization*, vol. 14, no.3 (1960), 381-401.
- Ruth B. Russell, *A History of the United Nations Charter: The Role of the United Nations, 1940-1945*, (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institute, 1958).
- Bruce Russett, ed., *The Once and Future Security Council*, (New York: St Martin's Press, 1997).
- Loraine Sievers and Sam Daws, *The Procedure of the UN Security Council*, Fourth Edition, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014) and its ongoing updated website www.scprocedure.org.
- Bruno Simma et al., eds., *The Charter of the United Nations, A Commentary*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).
- Ramesh Thakur, ed., *What is Equitable Geographic Representation in the Twenty-first Century?*, International Peace Academy, the United Nations University Seminar Report, 26 March 1999.
- Thomas G. Weiss and Sam Daws, eds., *The Oxford Handbook on the United Nations*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).
- Taking Stock, Moving Forward: Report to the Foreign Ministry of Finland on the 2012 Elections to the United Nations Security Council*, International Peace Institute, April 2013.
- Rules of Procedure of the AU Ministerial Committee on Candidatures within the International System*, Doc.EX.CL/213 (VIII), African Union, (2006).
- United Nations Handbook 2023-2024*, New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, (2023).

Annex I: Rules and Process for Election to the Council: Relevant Charter Provisions and Rules of Procedure

Charter Provisions on Election to the Council

The UN Charter, in Article 23, specifies the number of non-permanent members to be elected, as amended in 1963:

The General Assembly shall elect ten other Members of the United Nations to be non-permanent members of the Security Council...

Article 23(2) also stipulates the length of their term:

The non-permanent members...shall be elected for a term of two years.

The practical impact of rotation occurring every two years is mitigated by staggering the cycle, so that the General Assembly elects five members each year for the stipulated two-year period. This was determined by Rule 142 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly.

Despite the specification of a two-year term, there have been exceptions when members have served shorter terms. There have been one-year terms, either to establish the required rotational cycle or to break electoral deadlocks.

Article 23(2) also contains a provision that ensures that no member can become a de facto permanent member by being re-elected to serve continuously in the Council:

A retiring member shall not be eligible for immediate re-election.

This is further reinforced by Rule 144 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly, which also says that a retiring member of the Council is not eligible for immediate re-election. In addition to the provisions cited above, the Charter specifies the criteria that the members of the General Assembly shall apply when considering which countries should be elected to serve on the Council. It provides in Article 23 that due regard shall be:

...specially paid, in the first instance to the contribution of Members of the United Nations to the maintenance of international peace

and security and to the other purposes of the Organization, and also to equitable geographical distribution.

"Contribution to the maintenance of international peace and security" is often interpreted in this context as the personnel or financial contributions for peacekeeping operations and peace processes. "Contribution to the other purposes of the Organization", by contrast, is a very wide term. In recent years, most discussions regarding Article 23 at the General Assembly have focused on the criteria of equitable geographical distribution, with issues related to the candidates' contribution to international peace and security being left aside.

A key procedural provision of the Charter that is relevant to Security Council elections is Article 18(2). This requires a two-thirds majority vote in the General Assembly on important questions. Under that article, election to the Council is defined as an important question.

In addition, Article 18(3) defines the required majority by reference to members present and voting. This refers to members casting an affirmative or negative vote. Members who abstain from voting are considered not voting.

Relevant Rules of Procedure

Voting, especially during elections to the Security Council, can sometimes produce tense and dramatic situations on the floor of the General Assembly. In such circumstances, understanding the relevant rules of procedure can become very important.

Rule 88 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly indicates that once the president of the General Assembly announces the commencement of voting, the process can only be interrupted on a

Annex I: Rules and Process for Election to the Council

point of order regarding the conduct of the vote. Furthermore, explanations of vote are not permitted when votes are cast by secret ballot.

Elections are governed by Rules 92, 93, and 94 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly.

Under Rule 92, elections to the Council are held by secret ballot. Nominations are not required. Countries simply declare their intention to run, sometimes many years ahead, either by circular note to all members of the UN or to the chair of their regional grouping, or both.

Rule 93 sets out the procedure that applies when there is only one vacancy to be filled and no candidate obtains the required two-thirds majority in the first ballot. It provides that:

...a second ballot shall be taken, which shall be restricted to the two candidates obtaining the largest number of votes...if a two-thirds majority is required, the balloting shall be continued until one candidate secures two-thirds of the votes cast...

What this first part of Rule 93 means is that if there are more than two candidates and there is no clear winner on the first ballot, the lower-polling candidates drop out, and the contest then continues to a second ballot between the top two candidates. The effect of Rule 93 is that voting simply continues until one candidate prevails, either by securing the required majority or because the other withdraws.

If neither candidate receives the required majority on the second and third ballots, Rule 93 says that after the third inconclusive ballot, votes may be cast for “an eligible ... Member”. This allows new candidates to come into the process, and the fourth ballot is therefore technically referred to as an unrestricted ballot. (It also allows any candidate excluded after the first restricted ballot to come back again.)

If a result is not achieved after three of these unrestricted ballots, Rule 93 requires that the pool again be reduced to the top two. This cycle then repeats until a result is achieved. The emergence of new candidates during the unrestricted stage is rare but not unprecedented. If a trend is starting to emerge in one direction after a succession of inconclusive ballots, it is not unusual for the candidate with fewer votes to withdraw.

Rule 94 is similar to Rule 93 but is applied when there are two or more seats to be filled.

When two or more elective places are to be filled at one time under the same conditions, those candidates obtaining in the first ballot the majority required shall be elected.

Rule 94 also specifies that if additional rounds of voting are required, the pool is reduced by a formula that says that the remaining candidates should not be more than twice the number of places available.

Annex II: Historical Background

When the UN was established in 1945, the Charter provided for 11 members of the Security Council: five permanent members and six elected members.

Article 23(2) included a provision that in the first election of Council members, three members would be chosen for a period of one year so that in the future, three new members could be elected annually. This was decided by drawing lots for the one- and two-year terms.

In the first election, on 12 January 1946, the following countries were elected: Australia, Brazil, Egypt, Mexico, the Netherlands, and Poland. The pattern of geographical distribution was: two seats for Latin America, one for the Middle East, one for Eastern Europe, one for Western Europe, and one for the British Commonwealth.

The interpretation of what equitable geographic distribution should mean in terms of seats was based on an informal agreement among the permanent members, sometimes known as the London Agreement. From the start there was a lack of agreement about what had been agreed to. The US saw the 1946 formula as applying only to the first election, but the Soviet Union maintained that there had been a gentlemen’s agreement of a more general nature for the future meaning of geographic distribution.

The Charter clearly specifies a two-year term for elected members of the Council, but in addition to the 1946–1947 period, split terms started to occur in the late 1950s until the Council was enlarged in 1966. This was driven in part by fallout from the disagreement over regional rotation and associated Cold War politics. But the aspirations of newly independent countries were also an important factor. The first example of this was seen in 1955 when the Philippines and Poland contested a seat. After four inconclusive ballots, Poland withdrew, and Yugoslavia declared its candidacy. However, the stalemate

continued, and after two months and more than 30 rounds of voting, it was informally agreed that the Philippines would withdraw and that Yugoslavia would resign after one year, at which point the Philippines would run as the only candidate for that seat. Over the next few years, this became a common occurrence.

By the early 1960s, there was a growing acceptance that the original composition of the Council had become inequitable and unbalanced. Between 1945 and 1965, UN membership rose from 51 to 117 member states, with the proportion of Asian, African, and Caribbean states increasing from 25 percent to about 50 percent. On 17 December 1963, the General Assembly adopted resolution 1991 A (XVIII), which contained amendments to the Charter to address the issue by increasing the number of elected members to ten. The resolution also dealt with the issue of geographic distribution, which was resolved as follows:

- five elected members from the African and Asian states (this was subsequently subdivided in practice into two seats for the Asian Group and three seats for the African Group);
- one from the Eastern European states;
- two from the Latin American states (this included the Caribbean); and
- two from the Western European and other states (this included Australia, Canada, and New Zealand).

At the same time, Article 27 was altered so that resolutions of the Council required the vote of nine members instead of seven. This also meant that for the first time, the permanent members could be outvoted by non-permanent members, although only on procedural questions, which are not subject to vetoes by permanent members, and when the permanent members choose not to cast a veto.

Annex III: Results of Recent Elections for Non-Permanent Members of the Security Council

The left-hand column lists the year and the UN General Assembly Session in which the voting was held, as well as the number of the plenary meetings (the ordinal numbers) and the date of meetings. The middle column reflects the highest number of votes and

abstentions in a given round of elections. (The number of votes cast to fill the different seats in a given round is not always the same.) Candidate countries that won the election are in bold.

2025 UNGA 79 73rd 03-06-2025	ROUND 1 187 votes, 10 abstentions	Bahrain 186, Colombia 180, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) 183, Latvia 178, Liberia 181
2024 UNGA 78 86th 06-06-2024	1 ROUND Round 1: 188 votes, 6 abstention	Pakistan 182, Somalia 179, Panama 183, Denmark 184, Greece 182
2023 UNGA 77 75th 06-06-2023	1 ROUND Round 1: 192 votes, 1 abstention	Sierra Leone 188, Algeria 184, Republic of Korea 180, Slovenia 153, Belarus 38, Guyana 191
2022 UNGA 76 79th 09-06-2022	1 ROUND Round 1: 192 votes, 2 abstentions	Mozambique 192, Ecuador 190, Switzerland 187, Malta 185, Japan 184, Mongolia 3
2021 UNGA 75 78th 11-06-2021	1 ROUND Round 1: 190 votes, 14 abstentions	Ghana 185, Gabon 183, Brazil 181, United Arab Emirates 179, Albania 175, Democratic Republic of the Congo 3, Islamic Republic of Iran 1, Peru 1
2020 UNGA 74 17-06 2020* 18-06-2020*	2 ROUNDS Round 1: 192 votes, 0 abstentions Round 2: 191 votes, 0 abstentions	Djibouti 78, India 184, Ireland 128, Kenya 113, Mexico 187, Norway 130 Kenya 129, Djibouti 62
2019 UNGA73 89th 07-06-2019	2 ROUNDS Round 1: 193 votes, 4 abstentions Round 2: 193 votes, 2 abstentions, restricted	Viet Nam 192, Niger 191, Tunisia 191, Estonia 111, Romania 78, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines 185, El Salvador 6, Georgia 1, Latvia 1 Estonia 132, Romania 58
2018 UNGA72 93rd 08-06-2018	1 ROUND Round 1: 190 votes, 8 abstentions	Dominican Republic 184, Germany 184, South Africa 183, Belgium 181, Indonesia 144, Maldives 46
2017 UNGA71 86th 02-06-2017	1 ROUND Round 1: 192 votes, 5 abstentions	Poland 190, Côte d'Ivoire 189, Kuwait 188, Peru 186, Equatorial Guinea 185, Netherlands 184, Argentina 1, Guinea 1, Morocco 1
2016 UNGA70 106th 28-06-2016 107th 28-06-16 108th 30-06-16	6 ROUNDS Round 1: 191 votes, 8 abstentions Round 2: 193 votes, 2 abstentions, restricted Round 3: 190 votes, 3 abstentions, restricted Round 4: 191 votes, 2 abstentions, restricted Round 5: 190 votes, 2 abstentions, unrestricted Round 6: 184 votes, 6 abstentions, unrestricted	Ethiopia 185, Bolivia 183, Sweden 134, Netherlands 125, Kazakhstan 113, Italy 113, Thailand 77, Colombia 1, Cuba 1, Belgium 1 Kazakhstan 178, Netherlands 99, Italy 92, Thailand 55 Netherlands 96, Italy 94 Netherlands 96, Italy 95 Netherlands 95, Italy 95 Italy 179, Netherlands 4, San Marino 1
2015 UNGA69 33rd 15-10-2015	1 ROUND Round 1: 192 votes, 14 abstentions	Senegal 187, Uruguay 185, Japan 184, Egypt 179, Ukraine 177

Security Council Report Staff

Shamala Kandiah Thompson
Executive Director

Katerina Limenopoulou (Lead author)
Chief Operating Officer

Paul Romita
Managing Editor

Alina Entelis
Deputy Managing Editor

Dawit Yirga Woldegerima
Deputy Managing Editor

Vladimir Sesar
Development and Outreach Manager

Audrey Waysse
Operations Manager

Sara Bertotti
Senior Policy Analyst

Erik Ramberg
Senior Policy Analyst

Andrew Azzopardi
Policy Analyst

Gaurav Redhal
Policy Analyst

Rodrigo Saad
Policy Analyst

Ashley Onwuzuruike
Research Intern

Security Council Report is a non-profit organisation supported by the Governments of Australia, Austria, Bahrain, Carnegie Foundation, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Germany, Ireland, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Kuwait, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Open Society Foundations, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Spain, Switzerland, Türkiye, United Arab Emirates, and Individual Contributions.

Design Point Five, NY

Security Council Report
125 Park Avenue
New York NY 10017

Telephone +1 212 759 9429

Web securitycouncilreport.org