

Security Council Elections 2019



View of Retno Lestari Priansari Marsudi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, expressing gratitude as Indonesia is elected to the Security Council. On her right side is Ambassador Dian Triansyah Djani (Indonesia) 8 June 2018 (UN Photo/Manuel Elias)

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Introduction: The 2019 Elections

On 7 June, the 73rd session of the UN General Assembly is scheduled to hold elections for the Security Council. The five seats available for election in 2019 according to the regular distribution among regions will be as follows:

- two seats for the African Group (currently held by Côte d'Ivoire and Equatorial Guinea);
- one seat for the Asia-Pacific Group (currently held by Kuwait);
- one seat for the Latin American and Caribbean

Group (GRULAC, currently held by Peru); and

- one seat for the Eastern European Group (currently held by Poland).

The Western European and Others Group (WEOG) is not contesting any seats this year as its two seats, held by Belgium and Germany through 2020, come up for election every other year. The five new members elected this year will take up their seats on 1 January 2020 and will serve until 31 December 2021.

- 1 Introduction: The 2019 Elections
- 2 The 2019 Candidates
- 4 Likely Council Dynamics in 2020
- 6 The Process of Election
- 7 Regional Groups and Established Practices
- 9 The 2017-2018 Split Term
- 10 Becoming a Candidate
- 10 Campaigning for the Council
- 11 UN Documents on Security Council Elections
- 11 Useful Additional Resources
- 12 Annex 1: Rules and Process for Election to the Council: Relevant Charter Provisions and Rules of Procedure
- 13 Annex 2: Historical Background
- 13 Annex 3: Results of Recent Elections for Non-Permanent Members of the Council

The 2019 Candidates

Six member states—Estonia, Niger, Romania, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Tunisia and Viet Nam—are currently running for the five available seats. Estonia and Romania are contesting the single Eastern European Group seat, while the other four candidates will run unopposed. Four of the six candidates have served on the Council previously: Niger has served once, forty years ago (1980-1981); Romania has served four times, starting with one year as a result of the split term

in 1962 and 1963 between Romania and the Philippines (1962, 1976-1977, 1990-1991 and 2004-2005); Tunisia has served three times (1959-1960, 1980-1981 and 2000-2001); and Viet Nam has served once (2008-2009). Estonia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines have never served on the Council.

The table below shows the number of seats available per region in the 2019 election, the declared candidates, and their prior terms on the Council.

REGION	SEATS AVAILABLE IN 2019	MEMBER STATES RUNNING AND PREVIOUS TERMS ON THE COUNCIL
Africa	2	Niger (1980-1981) and Tunisia (1959-1960, 1980-1981, 2000-2001)
Asia-Pacific	1	Viet Nam (2008-2009)
Latin America and Caribbean	1	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (never served)
Eastern Europe	1	Estonia (never served) and Romania (1962, 1976-1977, 1990-1991, 2004-2005)

Romania, with four previous terms, and Tunisia, with three previous terms, have the most prior Council experience, followed by Niger and Viet Nam, each having served one term. Estonia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines are among the 65 UN member states—34 percent of the total membership—that have never served on the Council.

African Seats

Three non-permanent seats are allocated to Africa. One seat comes up for election during every even calendar year, and two seats are contested during odd years. Although there have been exceptions, elections for seats allocated to Africa tend to be 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 year, Niger is running unopposed for the West Africa seat currently held by Côte d'Ivoire. The fact that Niger, a Francophone country, will succeed another Francophone country, Côte d'Ivoire, departs from a general pattern of this seat alternating between Anglophone and Francophone countries in the past.

Tunisia is running unopposed for the North Africa seat, which will rotate with

the Central Africa seat currently held by Equatorial Guinea. Tunisia will also fill the Arab swing seat, which alternates every odd calendar year between the Asia-Pacific Group and the African Group and is being vacated by Kuwait on 31 December 2019. (The Arab swing seat is described in greater detail below.)

Niger

Niger became a UN member in 1960 after gaining its independence from France that year and has served on the Security Council once (1980-1981). Its candidacy for the 2020-2021 seat was endorsed by the AU following the organisation's 32nd Ordinary Session in January/February after Ghana, which has served on the Security Council three times (most recently in 2006-2007), withdrew as a potential candidate. Niger circulated a note verbale presenting its candidature to the permanent missions and observer missions of the UN on 7 May.

As at 31 March, Niger contributes 941 personnel to four UN peace operations, predominantly to the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA).

The 2019 Candidates

Tunisia

Tunisia became a UN member in 1956 after gaining its independence from France that year, and has served on the Security Council three times, at roughly 20-year intervals (1959-1960, 1980-1981 and 2000-2001). Its candidacy for the 2020-2021 seat was endorsed by the AU at the organisation's 31st Ordinary Session in June/July 2018 and, prior to that, by the Arab Group.

During its campaign, Tunisia has emphasised that peace, security, development and human rights are interrelated. It aims to use its term on the Security Council to prioritise conflict prevention, including through promoting sustainable peace and strengthening ties between the UN and regional bodies, particularly the AU and League of Arab States; the peaceful and negotiated settlement of disputes, particularly in conflicts in Africa and the Middle East, notably the Palestine issue; promoting the role of women and youth; and the fight against terrorism. It also seeks to focus on UN peacekeeping operations through promoting greater effectiveness, clear and realistic mandates, and resource mobilisation. Additionally, Tunisia has highlighted the need to foster collective and consensual responses to climate change and cyber-threats. Tunisia was the first African country to preside over the General Assembly (during its 16th session in 1961/1962) and was president of the Economic and Social Council in 1971 and 2006. It is currently a member of the Human Rights Council for the term 2017-2019.

Tunisia has contributed to 22 peacekeeping operations since 1960. As at 31 March, it contributes 239 personnel across six UN peace operations, predominantly MINUSMA.

GRULAC Seat

Two non-permanent seats are allocated to Latin America and the Caribbean, with one coming up for election every year. Since 2008, candidates for the GRULAC seat have run unopposed. In 2006, elections for the GRULAC seat on the Security Council were inconclusive after 47 rounds of voting over several weeks. With the General Assembly unable to decide between Guatemala and Venezuela, Panama agreed to stand and was elected on the 48th round as the compromise candidate (the process lasted from 16

October until 7 November). As a result of this experience, an informal understanding developed among GRULAC members to avoid contested elections, starting with the 2007 elections for the 2008-2009 term. Since then, Mexico (2008), Brazil (2009), Colombia (2010), Guatemala (2011), Argentina (2012), Chile (2013), Venezuela (2014), Uruguay (2015), Bolivia (2016), Peru (2017) and the Dominican Republic (2018) have all been sole candidates for the GRULAC seat on the Security Council. This year, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is running unopposed for the seat currently held by Peru.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines became a UN member in 1980 after gaining its independence from the UK in 1979, and has never served on the Security Council. It submitted its candidacy for the 2020-2021 term in 2010 and was endorsed by GRULAC in November 2018 and, prior to that, by the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). If elected, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines will be the first CARICOM member to serve on the Security Council since Jamaica's 2000-2001 term.

In its campaign, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has emphasised the importance of advancing security-related issues around climate change, sustainable development, disarmament, and human rights. It has also expressed interest in promoting the role of women and youth in conflict prevention and resolution. It has emphasised its commitment to multilateralism and strengthening the rule of law as well as the principles of non-intervention and non-interference. As a member of CARICOM, it signed on in February as a part of the "Montevideo Mechanism", which seeks to resolve the situation in Venezuela through dialogue. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines recently chaired the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly and is currently president of the Economic and Social Council.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is not currently a troop- or police-contributing country.

Eastern European Seat

One non-permanent seat on the Council is allocated to Eastern Europe. This seat comes up for election every odd calendar year. In 2019, Estonia and Romania are contesting the single seat currently held by Poland.

Estonia

Estonia became a UN member in 1991 following its regaining of independence from the Soviet Union and has never served on the Security Council. It submitted its candidacy for the 2020-2021 term in 2005 and launched its official campaign in July 2017.

In its campaign, Estonia identified cybersecurity as high on its list of priorities, including in the context of threats of cyber-attacks. Climate change and climate security has also been highlighted as an area of particular priority. Its campaign has highlighted the country's commitment to sharing its experience and best practices in finding digital solutions. It has also highlighted conflict prevention as a priority: in this context, Estonia would aim to focus more attention and resources on conflict prevention and increased Security Council efforts dedicated to this end, including working with member states, the UN system, and regional organisations towards facilitating peaceful solutions. Another area of priority that Estonia would seek to work towards is greater accountability, coherence, and transparency of the Security Council's activities through increased inclusiveness and targeted action. Estonia belongs to the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency Group (ACT), an initiative launched in 2013 by a group of member states focusing on the Security Council's working methods, particularly those that enhance non-members' interaction with the Council. During its campaign, Estonia has referred to the key role it played, along with Costa Rica, on behalf of ACT during the selection and appointment process for the ninth Secretary-General in 2016. Estonia also emphasised that as a small country it intends to bring a small state perspective, and – if elected – to act as an advocate for the common interests of small states.

As at 31 March, Estonia contributes seven personnel to three UN peace operations.

Romania

Romania became a UN member in 1955 and has served on the Security Council four times (1962, 1976-1977, 1990-1991 and 2004-2005), with the first time being one year as a result of the split term in 1962 and 1963 between Romania and the Philippines. It submitted its candidacy for the 2020-2021 term in 2006 and launched its official campaign in June 2017.

The 2019 Candidates

In its campaign, Romania has emphasised several priority areas, including improving the Security Council's working methods, transparency and efficiency; promoting conflict prevention through early-warning and preventive-action mechanisms; making UN peacekeeping more effective through clear and effective mandates and adequate resource allocation; and enhancing cooperation between the UN and regional and sub-regional organisations. It has also expressed interest in promoting protection of women and children in armed conflict and the linkages between climate change and peacebuilding and sustaining peace. Additionally, Romania has highlighted the need to promote innovative solutions to new and emerging threats to international peace and security, including asymmetric threats and cyber-threats. Romania has recently chaired several UN bodies, including the Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency of Military Expenditures (2015-2016); the Intergovernmental Process for Security Council Reform (2017-2018); the Peacebuilding Commission (2018, vice-chair in 2019); the Group of Francophone Ambassadors to the UN (2018 and 2019); and the First Committee of the General Assembly (2018-2019).

Romania's campaign emphasised its overall contributions of personnel to UN peace operations, namely around 12,500 troops to 25 UN peacekeeping missions over 28 years. As at 31 March, it contributes 54 personnel to eight UN peace operations. Romania has announced its intention to deploy four military utility helicopters (together with 120 troops) to MINUSMA in 2019.

Asia-Pacific Seat

Two non-permanent seats are allocated to the Asia-Pacific Group, with one coming up for election every year (similar to the GRULAC seat). This year, Viet Nam is running unopposed for the seat currently held by Kuwait.

Viet Nam

Viet Nam became a UN member in 1977 and has served on the Security Council once (2008-2009). It submitted its candidacy for the 2020-2021 term in 2009 and was endorsed by the Asia-Pacific Group in May 2018.

During its campaign, Viet Nam has stressed that it is a strong proponent of multilateralism, both globally and regionally, to promote sustainable development, address climate change, build inclusive societies, and protect and promote human rights. It identified

several priority areas, including conflict prevention, preventive diplomacy, and strengthened implementation of Chapter VI of the UN Charter relating to the peaceful settlement of disputes. It also identified improving the working methods of the Security Council; enhancing engagement with regional arrangements, including the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), of which it is a member and which it will chair in 2020; protection of civilians and critical civilian infrastructure in armed conflict; and peacekeeping. Additionally, Viet Nam has highlighted its interest in thematic issues, such as women, peace and security and children and armed conflict. Addressing the aftermath of armed conflicts, including threats to civilian populations posed by landmines and explosive remnants of war, is also identified as a priority, and continues to be a problem in Viet Nam.

Viet Nam was recently a member of the Human Rights Council (2014-2016) and the Economic and Social Council (2016-2018).

As at 31 March, it contributes 73 personnel to two UN peace operations, predominantly to the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS).

Likely Council Dynamics in 2020

The current fractured state of Council relations, particularly among the permanent members, seems likely to persist following the departure of the five current non-permanent members and the arrival of five newly-elected members. Throughout 2018, this was reflected in the difficulty of obtaining consensus on Council resolutions. This is not entirely new: the number of vetoed and non-consensus resolutions has been rising for eight years. In 2018, three resolutions were vetoed while four tabled drafts failed because of insufficient votes. There were also four procedural votes in 2018, a number not seen since the early 1990s. The recent recourse to these votes, on issues including adding a new agenda item, whether a Council meeting can take place as proposed, or the identity of a briefer is an indicator of changed dynamics, and may also reflect greater assertiveness among elected members. In

2019, by press time, there has been one procedural vote on a new agenda item; Russian and Chinese vetoes of a draft resolution on Venezuela; and adoption of three non-consensual resolutions: on South Sudan (Russia abstaining); Haiti (Dominican Republic and Russia abstaining); and sexual violence in conflict (China and Russia abstaining).

In the face of acute divisions among the permanent members, the ten elected members (E10) have emerged more strongly as an active group despite their political differences, enhancing their contribution to the substantive work of the Council. The elected members can be expected to continue to play a significant role. Recent examples have included pushing the Council to address humanitarian issues in Syria and Yemen as well as advancing thematic issues, including children and armed conflict; conflict prevention; climate

change; hunger and conflict; peace operations; peacebuilding; and women, peace and security. On many of these issues, elected members have worked together to negotiate successful outcomes and integrate themes into country-specific situations. Although it is difficult to assess how the Council's dynamics might evolve next year, the priorities raised in the campaigns by the candidates, as well as their long-standing interests, provide an indication of some general patterns that might emerge.

During its campaign, Estonia placed cyber-security high on its list of priorities, including in the context of responding to threats of cyber-attacks and developing international norms and standards to deal with this issue. Tunisia and Romania also highlighted cyber-security in their campaigns. To date, there has been limited engagement by the Council on this issue. However, Spain and

Likely Council Dynamics in 2020

Senegal (elected members in 2016) organised an Arria-formula meeting on cyber-security and international peace and security on 28 November that year. Estonia is the only candidate that is a member of ACT; if elected it will be the only Security Council member in that category, as ACT member Peru leaves the Council at the end of this year. In this regard, Estonia would seek to further advance the goals of ACT, including around working methods of the Council and enhancing non-members' interaction with the Council. The goals of ACT are likely to resonate with other Council members that, while not part of the group, are committed to enhancing the accountability, effectiveness and legitimacy of the Council.

A key issue facing Niger is the deteriorating security situation in West Africa and the Sahel. This includes rising concerns over developments in Burkina Faso, which could have broader spill-over effects on West Africa, and the situation in the Lake Chad Basin. Niger faces a "triple threat" as a result of the conflict in Mali to its east, the war in Libya to its north, and the presence of Boko Haram in the south-east, so it can be expected to take a particular interest in these issues on the Council's agenda. As part of the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G5 Sahel), established in 2017 to combat terrorist and criminal groups in the Sahel, Niger is likely to be especially interested in the Council's engagement on this, and also in MINUSMA, to which Niger is a significant troop-contributor. (The Security Council visited Niger in March 2017 as part of its visiting mission to the Lake Chad Basin and Burkina Faso and Mali, focused on the efforts of the G5 Sahel and on the situation in Burkina Faso in March 2019.)

During its Security Council campaign, Romania has placed peacebuilding high on its list of priorities. Romania chaired the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) in 2018 and has served as vice-chair in 2019. If elected, Romania can be expected to foster cooperation between the Security Council and the PBC. During its most recent term on the Security Council from 2004 to 2005, Romania was particularly engaged around preventive diplomacy and post-conflict reconstruction as well as cooperation between the UN and regional organisations, with the first resolution on the latter adopted during Romania's presidency of the Security Council on 17 October 2005

(S/RES/1631). If elected, Romania is expected again to focus on these issues.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines campaigned on emphasising the need to address the effects of climate change and the linkages between climate and security. Estonia similarly identified this issue as high up on its list of priorities. Romania, Tunisia and Viet Nam also highlighted the need to address the issue during their campaigns. Because of its geographical location and vulnerability to the effects of climate change, Niger may also join in efforts to promote action on this matter. The question of whether the Council is an appropriate body to discuss climate change has been raised ever since 17 April 2007 when the Council held its first open debate to discuss possible implications of climate change for international peace and security. While not expressing the same level of criticism about Council involvement as Russia, China and the US have both shown some ambivalence. However, other Council members, including permanent members France and the UK, strongly support Council engagement on the issue. Most recently, on 25 January, under the presidency of the Dominican Republic, the Security Council held an open debate focused on addressing the impact of climate-related disasters on international peace and security. Over 70 Council and other member states participated.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is likely to take a keen interest in the situation in Haiti, given its geographical proximity, as is the case with current Council member the Dominican Republic. With the potential transition to a Special Political Mission following the final renewal of the UN Mission for Justice Support in Haiti until 15 October, by resolution 2466 adopted on 12 April, it is likely that Saint Vincent and the Grenadines will seek to influence this process so as to secure stability. Given its involvement in regional dialogue efforts in Venezuela, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines may also want to be active in the Council's engagement on the issue.

Tunisia can be expected to emphasise African issues, which make up the bulk of the Council's agenda. Given that it contributes most of its UN troops to MINUSMA, Tunisia is likely to take particular interest in this file along with Niger. Representing the candidature for the Arab Swing Seat, Tunisia is also expected to be involved in Middle East issues, in particular Israel/Palestine. Similarly,

to Romania and Viet Nam, Tunisia has indicated that one of its priorities is the strengthening of ties with regional bodies, notably the AU and League of Arab States.

Viet Nam, during its previous term on the Security Council from 2008 to 2009, was particularly engaged around issues relating to post-conflict reconstruction, terrorism, sanctions, peacekeeping and improving the transparency of the work of the Council. During its presidency of the Council, resolution 1889 was adopted on 5 October 2009, focusing on responding to the needs of women and girls in post-conflict situations. Viet Nam is likely to seek to further its contribution to these issues on the Council. It is also likely to take a particular interest in the situation in South Sudan, given that it contributes most of its UN troops to UNMISS. As a member of ASEAN, and the chair of the organisation in 2020, Viet Nam is likely to advocate for stronger engagement with regional arrangements and to be actively engaged on the Council's consideration of the situation in Myanmar, along with current Council member Indonesia, which is also a member of ASEAN.

The role of the Council in designing and overseeing the mandates of peacekeeping operations may have particular resonance for several candidates who contribute personnel to UN peace missions. They can be expected to build upon ongoing efforts by the Council and the Secretariat to improve mandating, including through strategic assessments of peacekeeping operations, in order to increase their effectiveness and efficiency. As troop- and police-contributing countries, Estonia, Niger, Romania, Tunisia and Viet Nam are all likely to be interested, if elected, in fine-tuning the Council's approach to mandating and encouraging constructive engagement with other troop- and police-contributors in this regard. The campaigns of Romania and Tunisia, in particular, highlighted the priority they would give to mandating.

The conflict prevention and sustaining peace agenda is a common priority among this year's candidates, which is also in line with the Secretary-General's emphasis on these issues. Several candidates, including Estonia, Romania, Tunisia and Viet Nam, could be expected to further advance this work if elected to the Council. Over the past several years, there has been noticeable interest in strengthening the PBC, triggered in part by the 2015 review

Likely Council Dynamics in 2019

of the UN peacebuilding architecture (the PBC, Peacebuilding Support Office and the Peacebuilding Fund). Subsequently, both the General Assembly and the Security Council adopted comprehensive resolutions on peacebuilding. These also established the notion of “sustaining peace” and the understanding of peacebuilding as a set of activities to be undertaken to prevent conflict as well as during peacemaking and peacekeeping.

Over the past several years, more of the Council’s elected members have emphasised the interlinkages between development and international peace and security. This trend is likely to continue next year since several candidates have stressed the importance of this issue and have supported the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The tendency of elected members to widen the scope of the Council’s work on conflict prevention has led to some difficult dynamics among its members. The P3 have been receptive to Council discussions of links between specific aspects of development and peace and security. However, China and Russia have been more cautious in this regard and have advocated keeping the Council’s agenda more narrowly focused on issues that primarily involve situations of armed conflict.

There appears to be a strong desire among most candidates to enhance the transparency and inclusiveness of the Council’s work. This has been a prominent trend in

candidates’ agendas during recent election cycles. Although there have been some positive developments in respect of the Council’s working methods, most elected members have continued to draw attention to aspects of the Council’s work that need further improvement. These include inadequate time to negotiate Council outcomes and the limited interactivity of Council meetings.

The five departing Council members serve as the chairs of eight sanctions committees and six other subsidiary bodies. Recent years have seen a trend towards increased transparency in the work of the sanctions committees, including public briefings by the chairs, engagement with regional actors, and several field visits. This will be the fourth time that the Council elections are held more than six months prior to the start of the new term, in line with General Assembly resolution A/RES/68/307, making it possible to select the new chairs considerably earlier than was the case until 2016. After the 2016 elections, Council members agreed on a note by the president (S/2016/619) concerning transitional arrangements for newly elected members in which, among other matters, they indicated the desirability of appointing the chairs of subsidiary bodies by 1 October. In 2016, agreement on the distribution of chairmanships was reached on 31 October, though this was still significantly earlier than in previous years. In 2017, the Council incorporated

the provisions of its 2016 note on transitional arrangements into a comprehensive document on working methods, note by the president S/2017/507. Later that year, the Council agreed on the selection of chairs by the end of the first week of October, while most recently, the president of the Security Council issued a note on 2 January on the chairs and vice-chairs of subsidiary bodies for the period ending on 31 December 2019 (S/2019/2).

In a letter to the president of the Security Council on 13 November 2018, the permanent representatives of 15 countries, both elected and incoming Council members—Belgium, Bolivia, Côte d’Ivoire, Dominican Republic, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Germany, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, the Netherlands, Peru, Poland, South African and Sweden—stressed their conviction that a more equal distribution of work among all members, including through co-penholderships, would improve the overall effectiveness of the Council (S/2018/1024). The letter also highlighted the connection between the penholdership and the chairing of sanctions committees, saying the Council ought to “make better use of the expertise that the Chairs of sanctions committees develop on the situations discussed in their respective committees and should consider promoting their role as penholders and the automaticity of their role as co-penholders on the related dossiers”.

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 candidate country must always obtain the votes of two-thirds of the member states present and 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. Under Article 19 of the UN Charter, a member state can be excluded from voting as a result of arrears in payment of financial contributions. At press time, Libya was the only member not permitted to vote in the General Assembly because of its arrears.

In a contested election, if no candidate

obtains the required number of votes in the first round, voting in the next round is restricted to the candidates that received the most votes. In this restricted ballot, the number of countries included is limited to twice the number of vacant seats; for example, if one seat is available, only two countries can contest this round—the two who received the most votes. 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 then garnered the required number of votes, unrestricted voting is reopened for up to three rounds. This pattern of restricted and unrestricted voting continues until a candidate is successful in securing the required two-thirds majority.

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.

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 1962-1963 term, split between Romania and the Philippines, in that order. Extended voting has still occurred despite

The Process of Election

the Council's enlargement, although after 1966 such situations have, with one exception, been resolved by the withdrawal of one of the contenders or the election of a compromise

candidate. The sole exception to this practice since 1966 was the 2016 agreement between Italy and the Netherlands to split the 2017-2018 term. A summary of the recent voting

in the 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 elections 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 candidates for election to the African and Asia-Pacific seats operate 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 geographic distribution, stipulate how it should be achieved, or suggest the composition of appropriate geographical groups. However, the principle of equitable geographic distribution gave rise to the establishment of 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
GRULAC	33 members
WEOG	28 members

The US is not a member of any group but attends meetings of WEOG as an observer and is considered a member of this group for electoral purposes. In May 2000 Israel became a WEOG member, on a temporary basis (subject to renewal), in WEOG's headquarters in the US, thereby enabling it to put forward candidates for election to various UN General Assembly bodies. In 2004 Israel obtained a permanent renewal to its membership.

African Group

Most of the groups have internal selection processes based on informal understandings. The African Group is the exception, as it has adopted the rules of procedure of the AU's Ministerial Committee on Candidatures within the International System for the selection of 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 in 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 group submits the candidates to the Committee on Candidatures of the African Group in New York, which transmits the information to the AU Ministerial Committee on Candidatures. This committee follows its written rules of procedure in selecting candidates. The African Group and the AU are made up of the same members. (For over three decades the sole exception was Morocco, which had been a founding member of the Organisation of African Unity [OAU], the AU's precursor,

but which withdrew from membership in the OAU in 1984 after the organisation admitted the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic. In January 2017, Morocco joined the AU.) Subregional organisations may add their endorsement before the list goes to the AU Ministerial Committee. The AU Executive Committee makes the final decision during an AU summit meeting. Despite the written rules of procedure for candidate selection, some countries have in the past submitted their candidature directly to the AU Ministerial Committee on Candidatures, bypassing the process in New York.

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

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

This system has meant that the African seats are rarely contested, but there have been exceptions. The election in 2011 was unusual in that three candidates (Mauritania, Morocco and Togo) ran for two seats. This happened because Mauritania decided to contest the Northern Africa/Arab swing seat with Morocco rather than wait its turn in the rotational cycle. Morocco prevailed, as did Togo, which won the seat allocated by the African Group to the Western Africa subregion. When Sudan was the endorsed candidate in 2000, Mauritius decided to contest the seat and won election to the Council.

The picture can also become complicated when countries that can claim to straddle more than one geographic region have at times chosen to shift from one subgroup to another. Challengers can also emerge within the same subregional grouping, upsetting the

Regional Groups and Established Practices

rotation. Candidate countries can often be persuaded to drop out to avoid a competitive election. However, there have been times when rival candidacies have emerged and continued all the way through to the election. In addition, within a subgroup some countries may choose to run more often, while others choose to run infrequently or not at all.

A factor that seems to be coming into play is the growing desire by some member states in the region to be elected more often than strict adherence to the rotation system would allow. Nigeria was elected for the 2014–2015 term after having been a Council member in 2010–2011. South Africa was on the Council in 2007–2008, again in 2011–2012, and is currently on the Council for the term 2019–2020. Although some have argued against the “miniaturisation” of the Council by including too many small states, smaller countries have maintained that they too contribute to international peace and security and should have the opportunity to serve on the Council.

Asia-Pacific Group

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.

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.

Since 1958, Japan has also been a regular presence on the Council. When it completed its last term at the end of 2017, Japan had accumulated 22 years on the Council, the most of any non-permanent member. Since 1966, it has never been off the Council for more than six consecutive years. With a total of 20 years on the Council, Brazil comes in second.

The absence of a formal rotation system has meant that there is frequent competition for the Asia-Pacific seat regardless of whether a candidate declares itself far in advance or not. While larger member states have tended

to declare their candidacy closer to the election year, smaller candidate countries have tended to announce their decision to run many years ahead of time. The only subgroup within the Asia-Pacific Group that endorses its candidates is ASEAN, made up of Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam.

The Arab Swing Seat

There is an established practice that spans the Asia-Pacific and African Groups. As discussed in Annex 2 below, 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, that one seat would be reserved 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 occupied 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, four—Albania, Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia—are candidates for EU membership, and Bosnia and Herzegovina is considered a “potential candidate”. 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. It also became a hotly contested seat among new

member states that did not have a clear regional grouping. (For example, in 1955, when there was no Asian seat, the Philippines competed with members of the Eastern European Group for a seat. When the 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 took in the Caribbean states, several of which were members of the British Commonwealth, and became the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States (GRULAC). It currently has 33 members.

Like most of the other groups, GRULAC has no formal rules regarding rotation. For much of the last 60 years, non-Caribbean countries have tended to dominate regional representation. Historically, the group was often able to reach consensus on “clean slates”. However, the group has also produced two of the most protracted and bitterly contested voting sessions in UN history. The 1979 contest between Colombia and Cuba went to 154 rounds before Mexico was elected as a compromise candidate in the 155th round, in a process lasting from 26 October 1979 until 7 January 1980. In 2006, elections for the GRULAC seat on the Security Council were inconclusive after 47 rounds of voting over several weeks beginning on 16 October. With the General Assembly unable to decide between Guatemala and Venezuela, Panama agreed to stand and was elected in the 48th round on 7 November, as the compromise candidate.

As a result of this experience, an informal understanding developed among GRULAC members to avoid contested elections, starting with the 2007 elections for the 2008–2009 term. Since then, Mexico (2008), Brazil (2009), Colombia (2010), Guatemala (2011), Argentina (2012), Chile (2013), Venezuela (2014), Uruguay (2015), Bolivia (2016), Peru (2017), the Dominican Republic (2018) and now Saint Vincent and the Grenadines have all been unopposed candidates for Council seats. One GRULAC seat is up for election each year.

Regional Groups and Established Practices

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 levels of economic development and political values. The “others” subgroup is made up of three members of what was previously called the British Commonwealth Group. The British Commonwealth Group grew rapidly in the late 1950s as states in Africa and Asia became independent. Most of these newly independent states joined the Asian and African Groups or GRULAC. Australia, Canada and

New Zealand became the “others” in WEOG. Israel is the other non-European state that participates in WEOG. With France and the UK as members and the US attending meetings as an observer, WEOG includes three of the five permanent members of the Council. The Holy See is also an observer in WEOG.

WEOG practices what might be called an open-market approach to elections, which produces a regular pattern of contested candidatures that is likely to remain highly competitive in the coming years.

There are several subgroups within WEOG: the Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden), CANZ (Canada, Australia and New Zealand), and

the Benelux (Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg). There are informal understandings within the Nordic countries and CANZ subgroups that have encouraged members to support each other’s campaigns.

In its first term on the Council (1951-1952), Turkey served as the Middle Eastern Council member. It occupied the Eastern European seat twice (1954-1955 and 1961) and has since run for the WEOG seat. Turkey participates fully in both the WEOG and Asian Group, but for electoral purposes is considered a member of WEOG only.

The 2017-2018 Split Term

In the 2016 elections, three candidates—Italy, the Netherlands and Sweden—ran for the two available WEOG seats. During the first round of voting, on 28 June, Sweden received more than the necessary two-thirds majority of votes to be elected (134). Thus, Italy and the Netherlands were contesting the fifth seat but after five inconclusive rounds of balloting, with the fifth round deadlocked at 95 votes each (with 128 votes or two-thirds majority needed), following this the two countries then announced they had agreed to split the two-year term, whereupon the meeting was suspended. On 29 June 2016, the Chair of WEOG sent a letter (A/70/964) informing the president of the General Assembly that Italy and the Netherlands had agreed to split the 2017-2018 term in view of the inconclusive results for the remaining non-permanent seat. The letter indicated that the Netherlands had withdrawn its candidacy in favour of Italy, which was consequently endorsed by WEOG as the group’s only candidate. On 30 June 2016, in a stand-alone vote, Italy was elected to the seat. According to the agreement, the Netherlands ran as the sole and endorsed WEOG candidate in a by-election held on 2 June 2017, the same day as the regular elections for non-permanent members of

the Council for the 2018-2019 term, and Italy relinquished its seat on 31 December 2017.

Russia and Egypt, a non-permanent member during the 2016-2017 term, wrote to the president of the General Assembly outlining their concerns over the arrangement between Italy and the Netherlands (A/70/971 and A/70/974). Both said that they viewed the agreement to split the term as an exceptional case that should not set a precedent. They argued that a practice of split terms would have a negative impact on the functionality and efficiency of the Security Council in its responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. Russia noted that the last time a decision had been taken on splitting a term had been more than 50 years earlier, following which the Council’s workload had greatly increased, and said it was “gravely disappointed by the inability of the Western European and other States to designate a candidate by consensus, which has led to the current stalemate”.

Article 23(2) of the UN Charter states that the non-permanent members of the Security Council shall be elected for a term of two years. Split terms started to appear in the late 1950s due to disagreements regarding regional rotation and associated Cold War

politics, as well as to accommodate the aspirations of newly independent countries. Two candidates would occasionally agree to split the term following multiple rounds of inconclusive voting. The member that was elected first would relinquish its term after one year on the Council, thus enabling the holding of a by-election to fill the vacant seat. By-elections are in line with Rule 140 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly, which states: “Should a member cease to belong to a Council before its term of office expires, a by-election shall be held separately at the next session of the General Assembly to elect a member for the unexpired term”.

The practice of splitting terms ended in the mid-1960s when the non-permanent membership of the Council was enlarged from six to ten members and regional representation was introduced. (For further background, see “Security Council Elections: Italy and the Netherlands Agree to a Split Term”, What’s in Blue, 29 June 2016: <http://www.whatsinblue.org/2016/06/security-council-elections-italy-and-the-netherlands-agree-to-a-split-term.php>.)

Becoming a Candidate

Most candidate countries follow a fairly standard path in announcing and pursuing their bids for the Council with the exception of candidates from the African Group, which has a more complex process, as described earlier. If the country is a member of a subregional group, it will often first inform members of that group of its intention to run and seek support. The endorsement of the subregional group then becomes an important factor in the next step.

A candidate country formalises its

intention to seek a Council seat by notifying the rotating monthly chair of its respective regional group in New York. This is done in writing, specifying the two-year term the country seeks. The chair then incorporates that information into the UN candidacy chart of the regional group, which 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 a number of factors, including the wealth of the candidate and whether the candidacy is contested. (Candidates predictably tend to spend less in unopposed 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. Or, if there is a change in government, the new government may not consider itself bound by the pledges of a previous administration. Given the secrecy of the ballot, there are incentives to pledge to all candidates in a competitive election. Knowing that commitments are not always secure, some candidate countries repeatedly cultivate those countries that have already promised to vote for them, seeking reassurances 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, the foreign minister and permanent representative to the UN 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 particular regions where they lack strong diplomatic representation.

To secure voting commitments from member states, candidate countries may volunteer, or be asked for, inducements. For example, a candidate may offer development assistance to a member state in seeking its vote, or it may promise that while on the Council it will bring attention to or avoid an issue of concern to that member state. Arranging trips to the candidate's capital or holding workshops on (uncontroversial) issues of interest in attractive locations has been used by several candidates in recent years to raise the profile of their campaign and attract permanent representatives, who will cast the actual vote, to these events. So-called "swag bags" filled with items imprinted with the logo of the candidate that are handed out within UN circles are intended to increase the outreach of the campaign. Customarily, on the day of the elections, permanent representatives were offered gifts by most candidates, even those

headed for an unopposed election. However, on 8 September 2017, 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 20 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 having 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 that they do so for the duration of the electoral process, regardless of the number of rounds. However, in protracted elections that come down to two candidates vying for a single seat, member states will often eventually shift their vote if it appears that their candidate of choice is losing ground and appears unlikely to prevail.

UN DOCUMENTS ON SECURITY COUNCIL ELECTIONS

Security Council Documents

[S/2017/507](#) (30 August 2017) was the updated compendium of Security Council working methods.

[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/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/72/PV.93](#) (8 June 2018) was the record of the 2018 election of five non-permanent members.

[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/71/PV.86](#) (2 June 2017) was the record of the 2017 election of five non-permanent members.

[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 the 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 the letter from Russia expressing the position that the exceptional case of the agreement between Italy and the Netherlands to split the 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 the letter from the chair of WEOG stating 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/70/PV.106](#) (28 June 2016) was the record of the 2016 elections of four non-permanent members.

[A/70/PV.33](#) (15 October 2015) was the record of the 2015 elections of non-permanent members.

[A/69/PV.25](#) (16 October 2014) was the record of the

2014 elections of non-permanent members.

[A/RES/68/307](#) (18 September 2014) decided that elections of the non-permanent members of the Security Council would take place about six months before the elected members assume 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.

Other

Charter of the United Nations, <http://www.un.org/en/charter-united-nations/>

A/520/Rev.15 and amendments 1 and 2 are the Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly, including amendments and additions.

Repertory of Practice of the United Nations Organs, Supplement no. 6, Volume III on Article 23 (1979-1984).

See <http://www.un.org/en/sc/repertoire/> for the online version of the Repertoire of the Practice of the Security Council. (The Repertory and the Repertoire are different resources.)

Useful Additional Resources

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.

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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 update website www.sprocedure.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 2017-2018, New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, (2017).

Annex 1: 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 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 remaining candidates should not be more than twice the number of places available.

Annex 2: 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 was 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 out-voted by non-permanent members, although only on procedural questions, which are not subject to vetoes by permanent members.

Annex 3: 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. A table with the complete results can be found here: <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/Elections-Table.pdf>.

2007 UNGA62

26th 16-10-07

3 ROUNDS

Round 1: 190 votes, 4 abstentions

Round 2: 190 votes, 3 abstentions, restricted

Round 3: 189 votes, 9 abstentions, restricted

Burkina Faso 185, **Viet Nam** 183, **Libyan Arab Jamahiriya** 178, Costa Rica 116, Croatia 95, Czech Republic 91, Dominican Republic 72, Mauritania 2, Senegal 1

Costa Rica 119, Croatia 106, Czech Republic 81, Dominican Republic 70

Croatia 184, **Costa Rica** 179, Czech Republic 1, Dominican Republic 1

2008 UNGA63

28th 17-10-08

1 ROUND

Round 1: 192 votes, 6 abstentions

Mexico 185, **Uganda** 181, **Japan** 158, **Turkey** 151, **Austria** 133, Iceland 87, Iran (Islamic Republic of) 32, Madagascar 2, Australia 1, Brazil 1

Annex 3: Results of Recent Elections for Non-Permanent Members of the Security Council

2009 UNGA64	1 ROUND	
20th 15-10-09	Round 1: 190 votes, 7 abstentions	Nigeria 186, Gabon 184, Bosnia and Herzegovina 183, Brazil 182, Lebanon 180, Iran (Islamic Republic of) 1, Liberia 1, Sierra Leone 1, Togo 1, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) 1
2010 UNGA65	3 ROUNDS	
28th 12-10-10	Round 1: 191 votes, 5 abstentions	India 187, Colombia 186, South Africa 182, Germany 128, Portugal 122, Canada 114, Pakistan 1, Swaziland 1
	Round 2: 191 votes, restricted	Portugal 113, Canada 78
	Round 3: 184 votes, 2 abstentions, restricted	Portugal 150, Canada 32
2011 UNGA66	17 ROUNDS	
37th 21-10-2011	Round 1: 193 votes, 2 abstentions	Guatemala 191, Morocco 151, Pakistan 129, Togo 119, Mauritania 98, Azerbaijan 74, Slovenia 67, Kyrgyzstan 55, Hungary 52, Fiji 1
	Round 2: 193 votes, 2 abstentions, restricted	Togo 119, Slovenia 97, Azerbaijan 90, Mauritania 72
	Round 3: 193 votes, 1 abstention, restricted	Togo 131, Slovenia 99, Azerbaijan 93, Mauritania 61
38th 21-10-11	Round 4: 192 votes, 1 abstention, restricted	Slovenia 98, Azerbaijan 93
	Round 5: 193 votes, 1 abstention, unrestricted	Azerbaijan 98, Slovenia 93, Hungary 1
	Round 6: 193 votes, 1 abstention, unrestricted	Azerbaijan 96, Slovenia 95, Estonia 1
	Round 7: 193 votes, 1 abstention, unrestricted	Azerbaijan 100, Slovenia 91, Estonia 1
	Round 8: 191 votes, 1 abstention, restricted	Azerbaijan 110, Slovenia 80
	Round 9: 191 votes, 1 abstention, restricted	Azerbaijan 113, Slovenia 77
39th 24-10-11	Round 10: 193 votes, restricted	Azerbaijan 110, Slovenia 83
40th 24-10-11	Round 11: 193 votes, 1 abstention, unrestricted	Azerbaijan 110, Slovenia 82
	Round 12: 193 votes, 1 abstention, unrestricted	Azerbaijan 111, Slovenia 81
	Round 13: 192 votes, 1 abstention, unrestricted	Azerbaijan 111, Slovenia 80
	Round 14: 192 votes, 1 abstention, restricted	Azerbaijan 110, Slovenia 81
	Round 15: 193 votes, restricted	Azerbaijan 117, Slovenia 76
	Round 16: 193 votes, restricted	Azerbaijan 116, Slovenia 77
	Round 17: 193 votes, 24 abstentions, unrestricted	Azerbaijan 155, Slovenia 13, Hungary 1
2012 UNGA67	2 ROUNDS	
27th 18-10-2012	Round 1: 193 votes, 8 abstentions	Argentina 182, Rwanda 148, Australia 140, Luxembourg 128, Republic of Korea 116, Finland 108, Cambodia 62, Bhutan 20, United Republic of Tanzania 3, Barbados 1, Cuba 1, Democratic Republic of the Congo 1
	Round 2: 192 votes, restricted	Republic of Korea 149, Luxembourg 131, Finland 62, Cambodia 43
2013 UNGA68	1 ROUND AND A SPECIAL ELECTION	
34th 17-10-2013	Round 1: 191 votes, 5 abstentions	Lithuania 187, Chile 186, Nigeria 186, Chad 184, Saudi Arabia 176 (declined), Senegal 2, The Gambia 2, Lebanon 1, Croatia 1
61st 6-12-2013	Round 1: 185 votes, 4 abstentions	Jordan 178, Saudi Arabia 1
2014 UNGA69	3 ROUNDS	
25th 16-10-2014	Round 1: 193 votes, 10 abstentions	Angola 190, Malaysia 187, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela 181, New Zealand 145, Spain 131, Turkey 109, Democratic Republic of the Congo 1, Brazil 1
	Round 2: 193 votes, restricted	Spain 120, Turkey 73

	Round 3: 192 votes, 1 abstention, restricted	Spain 132, Turkey 60
2015 UNGA69	1 ROUND	
33rd 15-10-2015	Round 1: 192 votes, 14 abstentions	Senegal 187, Uruguay 185, Japan 184, Egypt 179, Ukraine 177
2016 UNGA70	6 ROUNDS	
106th 28-06-2016	Round 1: 191 votes, 8 abstentions	Ethiopia 185, Bolivia 183, Sweden 134, Netherlands 125, Kazakhstan 113, Italy 113, Thailand 77, Colombia 1, Cuba 1, Belgium 1
	Round 2: 193 votes, 2 abstentions, restricted	Kazakhstan 178, Netherlands 99, Italy 92, Thailand 55
107th 28-06-16	Round 3: 190 votes, 3 abstentions, restricted	Netherlands 96, Italy 94
	Round 4: 191 votes, 2 abstentions, restricted	Netherlands 96, Italy 95
108th 30-06-16	Round 5: 190 votes, 2 abstentions, unrestricted	Netherlands 95, Italy 95
	Round 6: 184 votes, 6 abstentions, unrestricted	Italy 179, Netherlands 4, San Marino 1
2017 UNGA71	1 ROUND	
86th 02-06-2017	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
2018 UNGA72	1 ROUND	
93rd 08-06-2018	Round 1: 190 votes, 8 abstentions	Dominican Republic 184, Germany 184, South Africa 183, Belgium 181, Indonesia 144, Maldives 46

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