

Security Council Elections 2020



The delegation of Estonia celebrates their country's election to the Security Council, 7 June 2019. Kersti Kaljulaid, President of Estonia, stands with arms raised. To her right is Urmas Reinsalu, Minister for Foreign Affairs. (UN Photo/Loey Felipe)

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Introduction: The 2020 Elections

On 17 June, the 74th session of the UN General Assembly is scheduled to hold elections for the Security Council, in a manner resulting from the global COVID-19 pandemic which compelled the closure of the UN headquarters in mid-March. According to the General Assembly decision adopted on 29 May, member states would cast ballots during designated time slots at the General Assembly Hall due to limitations on large gatherings at the UN due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Casting of ballots will be covered live on the UN webcast and the President of General Assembly will oversee the process on site. The

same method would be used for additional rounds of balloting, if required.

The five seats available for election in 2020 according to the regular distribution among regions will be as follows:

- one seat for the African Group (currently held by South Africa);
- one seat for the Asia-Pacific Group (currently held by Indonesia);
- one seat for the Latin American and Caribbean Group (GRULAC, currently held by the Dominican Republic); and
- two seats for the Western European and Others

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Group (WEOG, currently held by Belgium and Germany).

The Eastern European Group is not contesting any seat this year as its seat, held by Estonia through 2021, comes up for election

every other year. The five new members elected this year will take up their seats on 1 January 2021 and will serve until 31 December 2022.

The 2020 Candidates

Seven member states—Canada, Djibouti, India, Ireland, Kenya, Mexico and Norway—are currently running for the five available seats. Djibouti and Kenya are contesting the single African Group seat. Canada, Ireland and Norway are contesting the two WEOG seats. The other two candidates, India and Mexico, will run unopposed. All seven candidates have served on the Council previously:

- India has served seven times (1950-1951, 1967-1968, 1972-1973, 1977-1978, 1984-1985, 1991-1992 and 2011-2012);
- Canada has served six times (1948-1949, 1958-1959, 1967-1968, 1977-1978, 1989-1990 and 1999-2000);
- Mexico has served four times (1946, 1980-1981, 2002-2003 and 2009-2010);
- Norway has served four times (1949-1950, 1963-1964, 1979-1980 and 2001-2002);
- Ireland has served three times (1962, 1981-1982 and 2001-2002);
- Kenya has served twice (1973-1974 and 1997-1998); and
- Djibouti has served once (1993-1994).

The table below shows the number of seats available per region in the 2020 election, the declared candidates, and their prior terms on the Council.

India, with seven previous terms, and Canada, with six previous terms, have the most prior Council experience, followed by Mexico and Norway, each having served four terms. Ireland, Kenya and Djibouti have served three terms, two terms and one term, respectively.

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 have in the past generally been 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, Djibouti and Kenya (both from the East Africa sub-region) are contesting the single African seat currently held by South Africa.

The process of selection and endorsement of candidatures for the African Group takes place within the AU structures. Given that the Group could not agree on a single candidate in 2019, the AU Executive Council

REGION	SEATS AVAILABLE IN 2020	MEMBER STATES RUNNING AND PREVIOUS TERMS ON THE COUNCIL
Africa	1	Djibouti (1993-1994) Kenya (1973-1974 and 1997-1998)
Asia-Pacific	1	India (1950-1951, 1967-1968, 1972-1973, 1977-1978, 1984-1985, 1991-1992 and 2011-2012)
Latin America and Caribbean	1	Mexico (1946, 1980-1981, 2002-2003 and 2009-2010)
Western Europe and Others	2	Canada (1948-1949, 1958-1959, 1967-1968, 1977-1978, 1989-1990 and 1999-2000) Ireland (1962, 1981-1982 and 2001-2002) Norway (1949-1950, 1963-1964, 1979-1980 and 2001-2002)

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delegated to the Permanent Representatives Council (PRC) the authority to consider the candidatures of both countries and subsequently endorse a single candidate. On 21 August 2019, the PRC endorsed the candidature of Kenya for the African Group. In October 2019, the AU's Office of the Legal Counsel provided a legal opinion on the decision of the PRC and concluded that the candidature of Kenya as endorsed by the PRC is the final decision of the AU.

Djibouti, however, has disputed the validity of the PRC's endorsement of Kenya. Djibouti has argued that authority to make the final decision on the endorsement of candidates rests solely with the Executive Council and the AU Heads of State Assembly and that the decision of the PRC is neither final nor binding. Djibouti has also maintained that its candidacy should be given priority over Kenya's in line with AU principles of frequency and rotation when considering candidatures for the UN Security Council. Djibouti has been elected to the Council once and Kenya two times; Djibouti last served in 1993-4 and Kenya in 1997-8.

Djibouti

Djibouti became a UN member state in 1977 after gaining its independence that year and has served on the Security Council once (1993-1994). Djibouti announced its candidacy in March 2016 and officially launched its campaign in December 2019.

Djibouti underscores the importance of achieving peace, stability, and development in Africa, considering that African issues occupy a significant portion of the Council's agenda. Djibouti would seek to promote dialogue, multilateral diplomacy, and advance principles set forth in the UN Charter. During its campaign, Djibouti has emphasised its contribution to security in its region, especially in stabilising Somalia, and it has noted the importance of its strategic position on the Red Sea. Djibouti has indicated its support for the UN in its efforts to strengthen peacekeeping operations and also highlighted its role as an active troop contributor country. It has further emphasised the importance of expanding cooperation between the Council and regional and sub-regional organisations.

Djibouti has highlighted the importance of recognising the impact of climate change on peace and security. It has an interest in supporting a number of thematic issues on the Council's agenda: international law in the

context of international peace and security; conflict prevention and resolution; protection of civilians in armed conflict; counter-terrorism; and maritime piracy. It underscores the connection between sustainable development and lasting peace and security.

As of 30 April, Djibouti contributes 166 personnel to four UN peace operations, predominantly to the UN/AU Hybrid Mission in Darfur (UNAMID). Djibouti also contributes an additional 2,000 troops to the AU Mission to Somalia (AMISOM), which operates with the UN Security Council's authorisation.

Kenya

Kenya became a UN member state in 1963 after gaining its independence that year. It has served on the Security Council twice (1973-1974 and 1997-1998). Kenya announced its candidacy in November 2017 and was endorsed by the AU in August 2019.

During its campaign, Kenya has maintained that it would seek to promote multilateral diplomacy, a rules-based international system, and to support coordination efforts between permanent and non-permanent members of the Council and continue building bridges between the Security Council, the UN Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) and other UN organs and bodies. Kenya also hopes to promote inclusive and triangular coordination among the Security Council, UN Secretariat and troop-contributing countries.

Kenya has underscored the importance of advancing regional peace and security issues, especially the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) priorities including the "Silencing the Guns" initiative. In this regard, it will strive to strengthen the relationship between the Security Council and AU PSC, as well as between the Security Council and other regional security organisations. It has highlighted its role in conflict prevention and resolution, as well as its contributions to peacekeeping efforts, in Africa. Furthermore, Kenya has indicated that it would advocate and explore viable options for regular, predictable and sustainable funding to support the critical work of AU peace operations and supplement funding from the AU and its member states.

Kenya has highlighted its interest in the following thematic issues: counter-terrorism; women, peace and security; youth, peace and security; global environmental agenda including climate change; regional integration;

protection of civilians; promotion of humanitarian efforts and human rights; and implications of the nexus between peace and security and sustainable development.

As of 30 April, Kenya contributes 165 personnel to eight UN peace operations, predominantly UNAMID. Kenya also contributes an additional 3,697 troops to AU peace operations, mostly AMISOM which operates with the UN Security Council's authorisation.

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, India is running unopposed for the seat currently held by Indonesia.

India

India joined the UN in 1945. A founding member of the world body, it has served on the Security Council seven times (1950-1951, 1967-1968, 1972-1973, 1977-1978, 1984-1985, 1991-1992 and 2011-2012). It announced its candidacy for the 2021-2022 term in November 2013 and was endorsed by the Asia-Pacific Group in June 2019.

India has emphasised its unique position as a democratic country with a population of over one billion. India has been a long-standing proponent of Security Council reform, including the expansion of its membership (both permanent and non-permanent) to better reflect contemporary geopolitical realities. As one of the largest troop and police contributors, India has emphasised its durable commitment to UN peacekeeping. In this context, it has highlighted the importance of better coordination and cooperation among troop- and police-contributing countries, the Security Council and the UN Secretariat. It has also advocated for greater involvement of women in UN peacekeeping. India has stressed conflict prevention and peacebuilding as critical to efforts to achieve lasting peace and security. India would seek to advance discussions on counter-terrorism related issues, emphasising the need for better regional and international cooperation to combat terrorism. It has underscored the need for greater engagement, in general, between the UN and other regional and sub-regional organisations to promote international peace and security.

As of 30 April, India contributes 5,434 personnel to nine UN peace operations, predominantly the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), followed by the UN Organization

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Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO).

GRULAC Seat

Two non-permanent seats are allocated to Latin America and the Caribbean, with one coming up for election every year. Since 2007 candidates for the GRULAC seat have generally run unopposed (with the exception of El Salvador's submitting its candidacy just days before the 2019 election on 7 June and receiving six votes, with 185 going to the GRULAC's endorsed candidate, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines). In 2006, elections for the GRULAC seat on the Security Council for the 2007-2008 term 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. As noted previously, the exception was 2019 when El Salvador decided to run against a GRULAC-endorsed candidate, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, which won the seat. This year, Mexico is running unopposed for the seat currently held by the Dominican Republic.

Mexico

Mexico was a founding member of the UN in 1945. It has served on the Security Council four times (1946, 1980-1981, 2002-2003 and 2009-2010). Mexico was a part of the first group of six elected members of the Security Council in 1946 and was one of the three candidates elected to serve a one year term. This was done to ensure that half of the non-permanent members would change each year. It announced its candidacy for the 2021-2022 term in January 2011 and was endorsed by GRULAC in June 2019.

In its campaign, Mexico has said that it would bring its diplomatic tradition, cultural values, and commitment to multilateralism to the Council. Mexico has committed to

working constructively with other members to promote respect for international law. A priority would be to put the dignity of people and respect of their rights above all other considerations. Mexico has campaigned on the premise that its tenure on the Council would be guided by its core foreign policy principles, which include self-determination, non-intervention, peaceful resolution of disputes, legal equality of states, international cooperation for development, and the protection of human rights. Mexico has stressed the importance of pursuing lasting peace to achieve truly sustainable development. Mexico has also emphasised that it will build on its pacifist tradition, prioritising dialogue and conciliation in responding to conflicts. It would work towards improving the working methods of the Council. Other issues that Mexico would pursue include women, peace and security; climate change and security; and non-proliferation.

As of 30 April, Mexico contributes 13 personnel to four UN peace operations.

WEOG Seats

Two non-permanent seats are allocated to WEOG, and both come up for election every even calendar year. This year, Canada, Ireland and Norway are contesting the two available seats, currently held by Belgium and Germany.

Canada

Canada was a founding member state of the UN in 1945. It has served on the Security Council six times (1948-1949, 1958-1959, 1967-1968, 1977-1978, 1989-1990 and 1999-2000). It announced its candidacy for the current election in 2016.

Canada has structured its campaign around five main priorities—sustaining peace, addressing climate change, promoting economic security, advancing gender equality, and strengthening multilateralism—that it hopes to promote within the Council and various other multilateral fora in collaboration with the wider UN membership. It has underscored the need for the Council to strengthen its focus on conflict prevention and peacebuilding and has called for enhanced cooperation with regional organisations to improve the effectiveness of peacekeeping. Canada has highlighted its long-standing involvement and leadership roles in the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations and Peacebuilding Commission. It is among the top ten

contributors to both the UN peacekeeping and regular assessed budgets. Canada has also stressed the need for the Council to consider linkages between sustainable development and peace and security; in this regard, Canada has worked through multilateral institutions to promote sustainable economic growth, and it would strive as a Council member to address economic inequality and instability, which it views as key drivers of conflict. Canada has placed a special emphasis on addressing gender issues and has committed to working towards enhancing women's participation in peacekeeping, mediation and conflict prevention efforts. It has stressed that climate change represents a fundamental threat to international peace and security that should be a part of the Council's regular agenda. Canada would seek to improve the working methods of the Council.

As of 30 April, Canada contributes 35 personnel to five UN peace operations.

Ireland

Ireland became a UN member state in 1955 and has served on the Security Council three times (1962, 1981-1982 and 2001-2002), with the first time being a split term shared with Liberia (1961). It announced its candidacy for the 2021-2022 term in 2005.

During its campaign, Ireland has emphasised its strong commitment to the rule of law, multilateralism, and the international rules-based system. Ireland's campaign has been based around themes of empathy, partnership and independence. It would seek to draw from its own experiences and lessons learned in peacemaking to help the Council manage conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts. Ireland has stressed the need for a more integrated approach towards post-conflict reconciliation that would involve peacebuilding, development, human rights, and good governance. It has advocated for greater involvement of women and girls in peacebuilding processes and for their greater protection in armed conflict. It has highlighted peacekeeping as a priority, emphasising its continuous participation in peacekeeping operations since 1958. Ireland has committed to maintaining an independent voice and listening to all sides while building collective solutions to today's challenges. As a member of the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency Group (ACT), Ireland would seek greater transparency and accountability for the Council. (ACT is an initiative launched

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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 term, Ireland would also prioritise disarmament and non-proliferation issues.

As of 30 April, Ireland contributes 474 personnel to seven UN peace operations, predominantly the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL).

Norway

Norway was one of the founding member states of the UN in 1945. It has served on the Security Council four times (1949-1950, 1963-1964, 1979-1980 and 2001-2002). It announced its candidacy for the 2021-2022 term in 2007.

During its campaign, Norway has highlighted its long-standing commitment to the rules-based multilateral order and its independent voice. It has said that it would seek lasting solutions to armed conflict and bring its extensive experience in conflict resolution and peacebuilding to the Security Council. Norway has also highlighted its track record of promoting the women, peace and security agenda—including the participation of women in peace processes—and its support for international law. Norway has placed particular emphasis on the importance of underscoring the linkages between security and sustainable development, including by supporting the Council's engagement on climate change. It has emphasised that it has

consistently been one of the top contributors to the UN development system and a major donor of humanitarian and development assistance to those affected by conflicts and disasters. Norway has indicated that it would seek to promote issues related to the protection of civilians in armed conflict and support humanitarian principles on the Council. It would advocate for greater transparency and accountability in the work of the Council and promote enhanced engagement with civil society and other stakeholders. Norway is also part of the ACT group (see above for more on the ACT).

As of 30 April, Norway contributes 65 personnel to three UN peace operations and observer missions.

Council Dynamics in 2021

Geopolitical tensions and divisions among Council members, notably among the permanent members (P5), seem likely to persist following the departure of five non-permanent members at the end of 2020 and the arrival of five newly elected members in January.

Increasingly strained relations among the P5 have affected Council dynamics and were made very apparent during the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in the inability of the Council to react promptly to this global health crisis. For the last several years, Russia and the US have been on opposing sides in conflicts in the Middle East and Europe. China, which has become increasingly assertive globally and in the Council, has often sided with Russia. At the same time, the US has retreated from active engagement in multilateral institutions and increasingly pursues its foreign policy interests unilaterally. France, the UK and the US (P3), which were a united block for over a decade, have in some cases been divided on issues such as the Sahel; Iran; women, peace and security; and climate change and security.

Difficult and protracted negotiations have continued to be a regular feature, with push-back on language previously agreed in past resolutions. This difficult dynamic among Council members is apparent in the 2019 statistics. The number of formal Council decisions was at its lowest since 1991 and finding consensus on the most contentious issues was challenging. In 2019, the Council adopted 67 decisions (resolutions and presidential

statements). Presidential statements—which are adopted by consensus without a vote—fell particularly drastically, from 21 in 2018 to 15 last year. The low number of decisions may be attributed to greater difficulty in reaching consensus, and to some members' choosing not to aim for an outcome, particularly in connection with a presidency's signature event.

The difficulty in reaching agreement on several issues has led regional sub-groups within the Council to demonstrate their solidarity on divisive issues. In 2019, the recently departed, present and future EU members of the Council presented seven joint statements and appeared together at press stakeouts. Also in 2019, the African members (A3) made joint statements, including when the Council failed to support the AU's call for a transition to civilian rule in Sudan.

The elected members (E10) have continued to meet regularly among themselves as well as with the Secretary-General. They have joined forces to advance the Council's working methods, making their first public statement as a group in a Council meeting during the working methods open debate in June 2019 (and delivering another joint statement in an open video teleconference on working methods in May). The E10 also made a joint media statement in November 2019 on Israeli settlement activity but have found it more difficult to rally around Syrian humanitarian issues than they have in the past. As well, in late 2018, the E10 and the incoming

five elected members jointly signed a letter to the president of the Security Council seeking changes to Council working methods.

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has emerged as one of the issues that could potentially have wide-ranging consequences for international peace and security and affect various situations on the Council's agenda. The pandemic has had a direct impact on the Council's working methods: the highly contagious nature of the new coronavirus has prompted so-called social distancing, or the need to maintain a safe distance between individuals, leading to the suspension of in-person Council meetings. The pandemic has further exposed divisions among permanent members on issues ranging from working methods to an appropriate substantive response. In the coming months, the Council will have to contend with the implications of the pandemic for UN peacekeeping and its humanitarian impact in countries on the Council's agenda. 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, indicate some general patterns that might emerge.

Both Djibouti and Kenya have placed a special emphasis on regional peace and security, and each, if elected, is likely to take a keen interest in the Council's consideration of the situation in Somalia. In addition to sharing a border with Somalia, both countries

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contribute a significant number of peacekeepers to AMISOM, which is authorised by the Security Council. A related issue in which Djibouti and Kenya have expressed interest is the fight against terrorism and violent extremism in the Horn of Africa and beyond. As a frequent target of the Somali-based terrorist group Al-Shabaab, Kenya has had a long-standing interest in counter-terrorism in the region. In its campaign, Djibouti has emphasised its role in counter-piracy efforts as well as in the global fight against terrorism.

Among the current candidates, Djibouti, India, Ireland, and Kenya are significant troop contributors to peace operations and are expected to play a role in advancing the Council's discussions on this topic. India has historically been among the largest troop contributors to UN peacekeeping operations. Canada is one of the top ten contributors to the UN peacekeeping budget, and it has had consistent interest in this issue. In the context of peacekeeping, Kenya has emphasised the need for more predictable funding to support the work of AU peace operations. These candidates are likely to be interested in ongoing discussions about the role of the Council in designing and overseeing the mandates of peacekeeping operations and efforts to improve their effectiveness and efficiency.

Post-conflict peacebuilding is an area of interest to a number of the candidates, and it appears that it will remain a key focus of the Council's work in the coming years. This is especially likely given the recent transition to a political mission in Haiti and transitions to a post-peacekeeping environment that are underway in Darfur and possibly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

Most candidates have committed to promoting greater transparency and inclusiveness in the Council's work. This has been a prominent theme in candidates' agendas during recent election cycles and an issue on which elected members traditionally play the leading role. Some member states have raised concerns regarding the lack of transparency in the context of the Council's adjusted working methods in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

While there have been positive developments regarding the working methods of the Council in the past several years, 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.

Despite resistance by some members, the Council has become progressively readier to acknowledge the relationship between climate change and threats to security and stability in several situations on its agenda. During their campaigns, most of this year's candidates have emphasised the importance of addressing climate change as a security risk. Canada, Kenya, Mexico, and Norway have all placed climate change high on their list of priorities. 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. Russia, China and the US have expressed concern about the Council's engagement on this issue. However, other Council members, including permanent members France and the UK, strongly support a role for the Council on climate and security matters. Under the presidency of the Dominican Republic in January 2019, 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. More recently, this issue was discussed in an Arria-formula meeting in April.

Over the past several years, a growing number of the Council's elected members have emphasised the interlinkages between development and international peace and security. This trend is likely to continue in 2021, given that several candidates have similarly placed special emphasis on this issue. 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.

The five Council members departing at the end of 2020 serve as chairs of four sanctions committees and two other subsidiary bodies. While it is unclear which subsidiary bodies newly elected members will chair, it is probable that the trends that have developed in recent years at the subsidiary level will continue, subject to evolving working methods during COVID-19 pandemic. These have included increased transparency in the work of the sanctions committees through public briefings by the chairs, enhanced engagement with regional actors, and several field visits.

There may continue to be a push for the chairs of sanctions committees, who are invariably elected members, to have the opportunity to hold the pen on the corresponding country issues. Permanent members hold the pen on most country cases, including those in which there are sanctions committees chaired by an elected member. The one current exception is Libya, for which the UK shares the pen with Germany, the chair of the Libya sanctions committee. In a letter to the president of the Security Council on 13 November 2018, referred to above, the permanent representatives of 15 elected and incoming Council members—Belgium, Bolivia, Côte d'Ivoire, the Dominican Republic, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Germany, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, the Netherlands, Peru, Poland, South Africa 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 the 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, two members (the Central African Republic and Venezuela) are not permitted to vote in the General Assembly because of their arrears.

If no candidate obtains the required number of votes in the first round of a contested election, 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 that 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 1961-1962 term, split between Liberia and Ireland. Extended voting has still occurred despite the Council's enlargement although since 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 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 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 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
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, initially on a temporary basis, and permanently in 2004. This enables it to put forward candidates for election by the General Assembly to various UN bodies.

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

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the list goes to the AU Ministerial Committee. The AU Executive Council 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 principles:

- 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, disrupting the 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. At the time of writing, this seems to be the case with the competing candidacies of Djibouti and Kenya. 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

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 26 percent of the group’s members are Pacific island countries.

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.

The absence of a formal rotation system has meant that countries frequently compete 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 from the region 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 the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (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 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, 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, the 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

Regional Groups and Established Practices

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, a process that lasted 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 a 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), and the Dominican Republic (2018) have all been unopposed candidates for Council seats. In 2019, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines held off a late challenge from El Salvador. One GRULAC seat is up for election each year. Brazil has served the highest number of terms among GRULAC members and with a total of 20 years on the Council, comes in second after Japan in the length of Council service.

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 either the Asian or African group 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 pattern of regularly contested candidatures that is likely to remain highly competitive 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 the 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), 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 contested the second seat. After five inconclusive rounds of balloting, they were deadlocked at 95 votes each, well short of the 128 votes needed to win. 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 said in a letter to the president of the General Assembly (A/70/964) that, in view of the inconclusive results, Italy and the Netherlands had agreed to split the 2017–2018 term 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. In a stand-alone vote on 30 June 2016, 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 a non-permanent member during the 2016–2017 term, Egypt, outlined their concerns about the arrangement between Italy and the Netherlands in letters to the president of the General Assembly (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 because of disagreements

The 2017-2018 Split Term

regarding regional rotation and associated Cold War politics and to accommodate the aspirations of newly independent countries. Two candidates would occasionally agree to split a 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 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 sub-regional group, it will often first inform members of that group of its intention to run and seek support. The endorsement of the sub-regional 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 support 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 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 have 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. On the day of the elections, permanent representatives were customarily offered gifts by most candidates, even those headed for an unopposed election. On 8 September 2017, however, the General Assembly adopted resolution 71/323 on the revitalisation of the work of the General

Campaigning for the Council

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 that 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 will often eventually 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/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/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/73/PV.89](#) (7 June 2019) was the record of the 2019 election 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/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 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/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 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.

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.)

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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

Annex 1: Rules and Process for Election to the Council: Relevant Charter Provisions and Rules of Procedure

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 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 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](#).

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
2009 UNGA64 20th 15-10-09	1 ROUND 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 28th 12-10-10	3 ROUNDS Round 1: 191 votes, 5 abstentions Round 2: 191 votes, restricted Round 3: 184 votes, 2 abstentions, restricted	India 187, Colombia 186, South Africa 182, Germany 128, Portugal 122, Canada 114, Pakistan 1, Swaziland 1 Portugal 113, Canada 78 Portugal 150, Canada 32
2011 UNGA66 37th 21-10-2011 38th 21-10-11 39th 24-10-11 40th 24-10-11	17 ROUNDS Round 1: 193 votes, 2 abstentions Round 2: 193 votes, 2 abstentions, restricted Round 3: 193 votes, 1 abstention, restricted Round 4: 192 votes, 1 abstention, restricted Round 5: 193 votes, 1 abstention, unrestricted Round 6: 193 votes, 1 abstention, unrestricted Round 7: 193 votes, 1 abstention, unrestricted Round 8: 191 votes, 1 abstention, restricted Round 9: 191 votes, 1 abstention, restricted Round 10: 193 votes, restricted Round 11: 193 votes, 1 abstention, unrestricted Round 12: 193 votes, 1 abstention, unrestricted Round 13: 192 votes, 1 abstention, unrestricted Round 14: 192 votes, 1 abstention, restricted Round 15: 193 votes, restricted	Guatemala 191, Morocco 151, Pakistan 129, Togo 119, Mauritania 98, Azerbaijan 74, Slovenia 67, Kyrgyzstan 55, Hungary 52, Fiji 1 Togo 119, Slovenia 97, Azerbaijan 90, Mauritania 72 Togo 131, Slovenia 99, Azerbaijan 93, Mauritania 61 Slovenia 98, Azerbaijan 93 Azerbaijan 98, Slovenia 93, Hungary 1 Azerbaijan 96, Slovenia 95, Estonia 1 Azerbaijan 100, Slovenia 91, Estonia 1 Azerbaijan 110, Slovenia 80 Azerbaijan 113, Slovenia 77 Azerbaijan 110, Slovenia 83 Azerbaijan 110, Slovenia 82 Azerbaijan 111, Slovenia 81 Azerbaijan 111, Slovenia 80 Azerbaijan 110, Slovenia 81 Azerbaijan 117, Slovenia 76

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

	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
	Round 5: 190 votes, 2 abstentions, unrestricted	Netherlands 95, Italy 95
108th 30-06-16	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
2019 UNGA73	2 ROUNDS	
89th 07-06-2019	Round 1: 193 votes, 4 abstentions	Viet Nam 192; Niger 191; Tunisia 191; Estonia 111; Romania 78; Saint Vincent and the Grenadines 185; El Salvador 6; Georgia 1; Latvia 1
	Round 2: 193 votes, 2 abstentions, restricted	Estonia 132; Romania 58

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