
18 January 2007

H.E. José Alberto Briz Gutiérrez
Chargé d'affaires a.i. of Guatemala
Chair of Latin American and Caribbean States
Permanent Mission of Guatemala to the United Nations
57 Park Avenue
New York, NY 10016

Dear Ambassador Briz Gutiérrez,

Latin American and Caribbean States will have the opportunity, according to current practices, to nominate a candidate to the position of President of the 63rd General Assembly. As a civil society organization committed to a stronger and more democratic United Nations, we are interested in the nomination of highly qualified candidates to the position of President of the General Assembly. We oppose the idea that the position is merely symbolic. The few instances of highly organized and effective Presidents of the GA demonstrate the impact that the office can have.

I write to encourage you, as Chair of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, to take what we believe could be two precedent-setting steps in your group's nomination process – to develop clear and appropriate criteria prior to the consideration of candidacies, and to establish a search committee. The candidate criteria should address the unique responsibilities of the position while also advancing the concerns of Latin American and Caribbean countries. Based on practices and recommendations of other international organizations, criteria could include:

- Availability to devote full-time attention for many months;
- Political independence;
- Multilateral leadership experience, including negotiation and consensus-building skills and the ability to deal with multiple powerful stakeholders; and
- A thorough understanding of the UN Charter.

The nomination process should focus on identifying the best-qualified candidates, avoiding any reciprocal agreements, as Member States consider candidacies.

In order to agree on criteria among your members, and to identify the best candidates who meet those criteria, we would like to suggest that you consider the establishment of an "elections committee," or, alternatively, a search committee.



Both the establishment of criteria and a thorough candidate search would have multiple benefits. It would ensure that individuals are nominated based on their relevant qualifications, experience, and ability to devote the necessary time to the position. The adoption of criteria would allow for small and middle-power countries in the region to make nominations on more even footing. It should also reduce the impact of pressures for reciprocal agreements.

Another benefit would arise when the criteria are announced publicly. Latin America and the Caribbean would set an example for transparency in high-level selection processes throughout the UN system and, by doing so, encourage more openness throughout such important decisions.

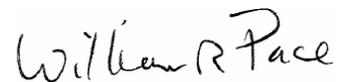
The process for developing criteria and identifying a number of qualified candidates from which to choose would accomplish two further things: first, it would give smaller states within your region an equitable chance to put forward qualified individuals for the position. Secondly, undertaking these processes now would form a foundation for future processes, making the Latin American and Caribbean community better equipped to undertake other high-level nominations.

In other words, despite the effort to be invested in an elections committee and/or search committee, the benefits of this investment would extend beyond just next year's selection for the President of the General Assembly.

A transparent and qualifications-based selection process in 2008 will result in better leadership and a more productive General Assembly, having positive effects for your country, others in the region, and the people represented by the UN membership at large. It will also send a strong signal to all those who depend on the United Nations for their livelihood, security, and human rights, that qualified, effective leaders are in office.

We would welcome the opportunity to provide you with any assistance in considering or implementing an improved nomination process for the President of the General Assembly.

Sincerely,



William R. Pace
Executive Director

CC: Permanent Representatives of Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela