

13 October 2016

## **71<sup>st</sup> session of the General Assembly**

### **Remarks by H.E. Peter Thomson, Appointment of the Secretary-General of the United Nations**

Mr. Secretary-General,  
Mr. Secretary-General-Designate,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today is indeed a momentous one.

Since 1946, the General Assembly has taken action on the appointment of a new Secretary-General only 8 times.

It is inherently a decision of deep consequence, as the entire membership agrees to the appointment of an individual to lead the United Nations.

The process that has been undertaken to arrive at today's decision has been an historic one. It was shaped from the outset through committed engagement by the General Assembly.

For the first time in the history of the United Nations, the selection and appointment process for the Secretary-General has been guided by principles of transparency and inclusivity.

The process began with the first-ever joint call from the Presidents of the General Assembly and the Security Council formally soliciting candidates for the job.

And from the outset, it acknowledged the importance of geographic and gender balance, and explicitly invited the candidacies of women.

It was a process that specifically sought out candidates who embody a firm commitment to the purposes and principles of the Charter; who exemplify the highest standards of efficiency, competence, and integrity; and who have proven leadership and managerial abilities, extensive experience in international relations, and strong diplomatic, communication and multilingual skills.

And throughout it all, the process emphasized the need to secure the best possible candidate for the role.

Thirteen candidates of the highest standard were presented for consideration, seven of them being women.

From the moment of the presentation of their nominations, their candidatures were subject to full public view – from the joint circulation of letters, the establishment of a dedicated website, and the presentation of each candidate’s vision for the organization.

All candidates were given the opportunity – and indeed, all participated – in informal dialogues with the UN membership – a process deeply enriched by the engagement of civil society, and the wider global public.

Throughout the process, a number of key messages began to resonate from Member States:

- the desire to continue to see an independent and courageous Secretary-General who will make full use of the powers provided for in the UN Charter;
- a person who is committed to ensuring that the UN both embraces and exemplifies gender equality at all levels;
- a person with the deftness and skills to innovate and adapt the organization’s structures, capacities, culture, and capabilities, to respond to today’s major challenges; and
- acknowledgement of the importance of geographic and gender balance in senior posts.

I congratulate Mr. Guterres on emerging as the best candidate from such an historically rigorous and comprehensive process.

Mr. Guterres embodies the highest standards of competence, integrity and leadership needed for the position. And he brings within him vast experience from his time as the Prime Minister of Portugal, and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

His dedication to the high ideals and common values of the United Nations is beyond doubt.

I am confident that Mr. Guterres will serve the global community with dedication, as a moral authority, and be the voice of our collective conscience and humanity, throughout his term.

I assure Mr. Guterres of my full support throughout the 71st Session of the General Assembly and will do everything within my power to facilitate a smooth transition process.

I am pleased to say that he has accepted my invitation to meet with the General Assembly on 19 October, in order to begin a dialogue on critical, priority and emerging issues for the organization.

Once again, congratulations Mr. Guterres.