

UN Security Council backs Antonio Guterres for second term

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As secretary-general, Guterres has backed climate action, COVID-19 vaccines for all and digital cooperation [File: Carlo Allegri/Reuters]

United Nations, June 9 (RHC)-- The United Nations Security Council has backed Secretary-General Antonio Guterres for a second term, recommending that the 193-member General Assembly appoint him for another five years from January 1, 2022.

Estonia's UN Ambassador Sven Jürgenson, council president for June, said the General Assembly was likely to meet to make the appointment on June 18th. "He has proven worthy of the post already with the

five years he has been in office,” Jürgenson said on Tuesday. “He has been an excellent secretary-general. He’s a bridge builder ... He’s able to speak to everybody, and I think this is something that is expected from the secretary-general.”

“I would be deeply humbled if the General Assembly were to entrust me with the responsibilities of a second mandate.” Guterres succeeded Ban Ki-moon in January 2017, after a hotly contested race in October 2016 that initially included 13 candidates – seven women and six men.

It was just weeks before US President Donald Trump took office. Much of Guterres’s first term was focused on placating Trump, who questioned the value of the UN and multilateralism.

The United States is the largest UN financial contributor, responsible for 22 percent of the regular budget and about a quarter of the peacekeeping budget. US President Joe Biden has already started restoring funding cuts made by Trump to some UN agencies and re-engaged with the world body.

A handful of people sought to challenge Guterres, but the 72-year-old former prime minister of Portugal was formally unopposed. A person would only be considered a candidate once nominated by a member state. Portugal put forward Guterres for a second term, but no one else had the backing of a member state.

Guterres held a lengthy open question and answer session with the UN diplomats in the General Assembly last month and then met Security Council members privately.

He was prime minister of Portugal from 1995 to 2002 and then head of the UN refugee agency from 2005 to 2015. As secretary-general, Guterres has backed climate action, COVID-19 vaccines for all and digital cooperation.

When he took the reins as the UN chief, the world body was struggling to end wars and deal with humanitarian crises in Syria and Yemen. Those conflicts are still unresolved, and Guterres is now also faced with emergencies in Myanmar and Ethiopia’s Tigray region.

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