

UN chief Antonio Guterres sworn in for second term

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As secretary-general, Guterres has championed climate action, COVID-19 vaccines for all and digital cooperation [File: Michael Sohn/Reuters]

United Nations, June 18 (RHC)-- United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has been unanimously re-elected for a second five-year term by the 193-member United Nations General Assembly.

The 72-year-old Portuguese, the only candidate for the world body's top post, said on Friday he was "humbled and energized" by the support, adding that the "driving theme" of his second term will be "prevention in all its aspects – from conflicts, climate change, pandemics to poverty and inequality."

"I will give it my all to ensure the blossoming of trust between and among nations large and small, to build bridges, and to engage relentlessly in confidence building," Guterres told the General Assembly after taking the oath of office.

Ambassadors in the assembly chamber burst into applause as Assembly President Volkan Bozkir announced Guterres' re-election by "acclamation" -- without a vote. The 15-member Security Council earlier this month recommended the General Assembly reappoint Guterres. His second term officially starts on January 1, 2022.

Guterres succeeded Ban Ki-moon in January 2017, just weeks before Donald Trump became president of the United States. Much of Guterres's first term was focused on placating Trump, who questioned the value of the UN and multilateralism.

Washington is the largest UN financial contributor, responsible for 22 percent of the regular budget and about a quarter of the peacekeeping budget. President Joe Biden, who took office in January, has started restoring fundings cut by his predecessor to UN agencies and re-engaged with the world body.

Among those to welcome Guterres's re-election were US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and German Chancellor Angela Merkel.

Blinken called Guterres a "results-oriented" and "capable leader in a demanding role." The U.S. "looks forward to continuing our strong and constructive relationship ... as we advance the urgent task of bringing about a more peaceful world and prosperous future," Blinken said. "The United Nations is an indispensable anchor of the multilateral system" where nations work together "to meet such unprecedented challenges as the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, human rights, development, migration, and humanitarian crises."

For her part, Angela Merkel praised Guterres's commitment to peaceful solutions to conflicts, climate protection and "innovative solutions to global problems" in his first term and thanked him for helping set up the COVAX facility to get COVID-19 vaccines to poorer countries.

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