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Recommendation to elect the first woman to the post of United Nations Secretary-General

*Motion adopted by the IPU Standing Committee on United Nations Affairs
(Geneva, 21 October 2025)*

Since the inception of the United Nations in 1945, nine men have successively been elected or re-elected as its Secretary-General. This gender imbalance is principally attributed to the male-dominated international and cultural orders in which the United Nations has operated.

Much has changed around the world during the 80 years that the United Nations has been in existence, including a growing consensus around gender equality and women's right to hold leadership positions nationally and internationally. The principle of gender equality has been entrenched in numerous international agreements, and both the United Nations and the IPU have made it a key driver of their work on development, human rights and democracy.

Last year, in the landmark **Pact for the Future** (September 2024), the Member States of the United Nations decided to:

“Stress the need for the selection and appointment process of the Secretary-General to be guided by the principles of merit, transparency and inclusiveness and with due regard to gender balance and regional rotation and take into account during the next and in subsequent selection and appointment processes the regrettable fact that there has never been a woman Secretary-General, and we encourage Member States to consider nominating women as candidates.”

The latest resolution on *Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly* (September 2025), which makes the election process of the UN Secretary-General more open and transparent than ever before, reiterates the sentiment of “regret” that is in the Pact for the Future, but avoids making a direct appeal for a woman to be elected in 2026.

In adopting this motion, the IPU Standing Committee on United Nations Affairs affirms that, in the context of the current process for selecting the next United Nations Secretary-General in 2026, the historic moment has come to elect a woman as United Nations Secretary-General — both as a matter of principle and as a demonstration of the United Nations’ commitment to ensure equality for all.

We recognize the many accomplished women leaders who have held, or continue to hold, leadership roles worldwide, including in the Latin American and Caribbean region, which is considered next in the geographical rotation for the position of United Nations Secretary-General. Noting further that candidates for the position need to be officially sponsored by their respective governments, the Committee calls upon IPU Member Parliaments, particularly members of the Group of Latin America and the Caribbean, to:

1. Hold briefings in their respective foreign affairs committees to take stock of the modalities for electing the UN Secretary-General and of the timing whereby the selection and appointment process will unfold during 2026; and
2. Engage with their government leadership to initiate a search for women candidates as soon as possible with a view to ensuring a large pool of highly-qualified women candidates for election by the Security Council.

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