



By: TA | AP Brief

No candidate for UN chief has the required support of all five key powers



The latest straw poll in the selection of the **next U.N. secretary-general** on Friday showed that none of the seven candidates has the support of all five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council, all of whom have veto power.

This leaves the door open for new candidates if none of the current candidates is able to win over the veto-wielding members — the United States, Russia, China, Britain and France — in the race to succeed António Guterres, who has led the United Nations for almost 10 years.

As in five previous straw polls, the 15 council members voted to “**encourage**” or “**discourage**” the seven candidates or express “no opinion,” but this secret poll was the first to use red ballots to distinguish votes from the five powers.

The three **leading candidates** — U.N. trade chief Rebeca Grynspan of Costa Rica, U.N. nuclear chief Rafael Grossi of Argentina, and Guyana’s U.N. ambassador, Carolyn Rodrigues Birkett — all received two red “discourage” votes, according to two diplomats who spoke on condition of anonymity because the poll was private.

Grynspan, a former Costa Rican vice president, remained at the top of the polling with nine “encourage” votes.

While it was not known how each council member voted, numerous U.S. officials have made clear for the past several weeks that none of the candidates is ideal from the perspective of the Trump administration.

It has focused on radical reform of the global body and the withdrawal, or planned withdrawal, of the United States from multiple U.N. agencies.

However, despite the administration’s differences with the U.N., its bureaucracy, and reservations about who the next secretary-general should be, the officials have not ruled out supporting one of the announced candidates.

‘Strong, energetic leadership’

The officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations, said the U.S. position was still being refined and would be made clear in the coming days.

U.S. Ambassador Mike Waltz told reporters as he left the closed council meeting that the U.N. needs “strong, energetic leadership” that is going to take the 193-member world body back to its original focus on peace and security.

“This institution, after 80 years, has tried to become everything to everyone,” Waltz said. “We put it on a diet so to speak — we’re all a little better off after being on a diet — and (need to) get it focused on peace and security.”

By tradition, the job of secretary-general rotates by region, and this is Latin America’s turn.

There also is pressure to pick a woman, who would become the first female leader of the U.N.

The next straw poll, with red ballots, will be held next week

“We understand there is a desire for regional rotation,” Waltz said. “Of course, if the best candidate is a woman, we would welcome that — but we really just need the best candidate.”

The two candidates at the bottom of Friday’s straw poll were women — Maria Fernanda Espinosa, a former General Assembly president and foreign minister of Ecuador, and Ivonne A-Baki, a former Ecuadorian ambassador. Two African contenders — former U.N. diplomat Olara Otunnu of Uganda and Senegal’s former president, Macky Sall — each received 10 “discourage” votes.

The next straw poll, with red ballots, will be held next week, the two diplomats said.

Waltz and Russia’s U.N. Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia both left open the possibility of new

candidates.

“We're going to get this done, I'm confident, before the end of the year,” Waltz said. “That is my wish, definitely,” Nebenzia said.