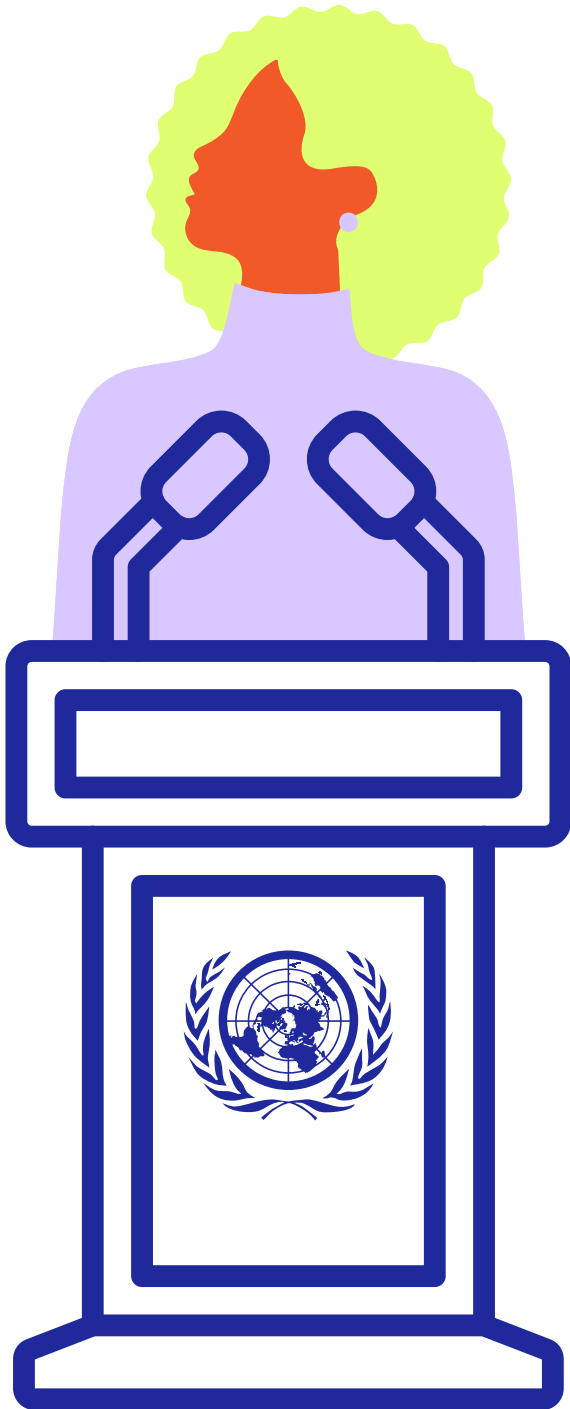


# Madam Secretary-General Campaign

## It's Time for a Different UN



## History

Since its founding in 1945, the United Nations has never had a woman **Secretary-General**. The first woman candidate was nominated only in 2006. **A decade later, seven women ran, including GWL Voices' three founders**—yet none were selected. In 2025, as the UN turns 80, the call to finally break this pattern grows louder. **A woman SG would not only make history—it would reflect the world we live in.**

## Process

Candidates for Secretary-General are nominated by Member States and formally appointed by the General Assembly, following a single recommendation from the Security Council. **In practice, the Council's five permanent members (P5) hold decisive power, as any one of them can veto a candidate.**

Reforms in 2016 introduced new elements of **transparency—such as public nomination letters, informal dialogues, and livestreamed debates among candidates**. However, there is no guarantee these improvements will be maintained in 2026, even though **they should be our starting point.**

**Member States must take the lead: by nominating qualified women**, voicing support for a woman SG, and demanding a transparent, inclusive process that reflects the values the UN stands for.

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### Current Status



Momentum is building. During UNGA79, eleven countries explicitly called for a woman Secretary-General. Soon after, Slovenia, Mexico, and Spain—joined by 78 other Member States—delivered a joint statement urging greater representation of women in UN leadership. In total, **81 countries have now endorsed the principle of electing a woman Secretary-General in 2026.** Ambassador Samuel Žbogar of Slovenia emphasized the need for Member States not just to support the idea, but to nominate and actively back qualified women.

Public interest is strong—but visibility alone is not enough. **GWL Voices and allies are working to convert this momentum into political will, engaging directly with UN missions and the media to ensure governments commit to change.** The campaign is not about any single woman. It is about ending 80 years of exclusion and advancing the UN's own equality agenda.

### Calls to Action

#### For Member States:



**Nominate** and champion qualified women. Join the growing number of countries supporting the principle of a woman SG.

#### For the UN System:



Align practices with principles. Model **transparency** and gender equality at every level.

#### For Civil Society & Media:



Keep the **spotlight** on the process. Ask governments where they stand. Elevate diverse voices.

#### For Everyone:



Stop asking: Why a MadamSG? Start asking: **Why not?**