

TRANSCRIPT
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Why I Should Run the U.N.; Climate of Distrust

By ASHRAF GHANI

The United Nations selects its next secretary general this fall through a series of straw polls. The third of these -- the most decisive to date -- will be held today. In the vote, the 15 members of the Security Council "encourage," "discourage" or venture "no opinion" on each of the candidates. To win, a candidate must have at least nine encouraging votes and no discouragement from any of the five permanent members of the Security Council. The winner is then presented to the General Assembly for ratification.

The Op-Ed page asked all seven candidates to respond to two questions. First, we asked them to discuss an avoidable mistake the United Nations had made within the last five years. Second, we asked them what major reform they would undertake as secretary general. Five candidates gave us their answers.

IN his March report on reform, Secretary General Kofi Annan said that the United Nations "lacks the capacity, controls, flexibility, robustness and indeed transparency to handle multibillion-dollar global operations." Describing the organizational culture as "damaged," he acknowledges that a recent audit points "to both mismanagement and possible fraud" in peacekeeping operations. He concludes that reform efforts have addressed the "symptoms and not the causes of our underlying weaknesses."

These internal problems have undermined the moral authority and effectiveness of the United Nations, which ought to be the trusted global forum for reaching consensus and taking action on vital challenges. This loss is most directly felt in the poorest countries of the world. Yet distrust among member nations has slowed the momentum of reform.

The United Nations should foster global stability by investing in effective states and legitimate institutions. But doing so requires us to renew an organization designed for a different era. Through consultation with member states, I will seek an agreement on the key tasks that the United Nations must perform. I will lead a process of reform that will allow the United Nations to set the gold standard for transparency and accountability, and which will inspire talented women and men from around the world to work at the United Nations. Only by establishing trust in the organization can we make the United Nations the instrument of global choice for addressing the problems of our time.

ASHRAF GHANI, the chancellor of Kabul University and former finance minister of Afghanistan.