

## Meet the Prospective Next UN Secretary-General

Joël Ruet (President of The Bridge Tank and Specialist of Emerging Economies CNRS, Iddri)

Global leaders are gathering in New York this week for the 70<sup>th</sup> regular session of the United Nations General Assembly, and the search for Ban Ki-moon's successor is intensifying.

A glaring omission from the pantheon of Secretaries General is that Eastern Europe remains the only region without representation. Support for change has strengthened as many Members, including those within the P5 itself, publically declare it is time the next Secretary General comes from Eastern Europe. Finding a candidate acceptable to the P5 members, including the United States and Russia will not be easy, but qualified and credible candidates are out there.

### Biography

► **Joël Ruet**, President of The Bridge Tank and Economist in the CNRS

Born in 1972, Joel Ruet is a Specialist of Emerging Economies; He was Alumni of Ecole des mines, Paris & London School of Economics. Joel Ruet has lived in Paris, Cairo, New Delhi, Bombay, London, Beijing and Dakar. For a decade he has advised Fortune 500 companies and Private equity Funds in energy & nuclear, automotive, agriculture and mining industries at CEO/CFO level on India, China, Africa.

He is joint-coordinator of the "Global Vision Program" for Electric Vehicles initiative between Fondation Renault & ParisTech "Grandes Ecoles". Joel Ruet served as expert for the 2012 revision of "Stratégie Nationale de Développement économique et Social", Senegal and in 2014 served as Special Adviser to the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Equipment, Govt of Senegal.

Joel Ruet is now the president of The Bridge Tank, a "link-and-think" tank dedicated to the growing role of emerging countries in global change.



A potential game changer is the UN General Assembly's adoption of a resolution on the transparency of the selection process of the Secretary General on September 11. The changes include listing basic candidate criteria, circulating candidate résumés, and conducting informal 'hearings'. Significantly, the resolution also invites Member States to present women candidates for the position and there is increasing international pressure for a woman to finally serve as Secretary General.

Candidates will be needed who have experience in shepherding complex multilateral relationships, can be a bridge builder between the United States, Russia, and China, and crucially have a vision for the UN during their tenure. Which names will be whispered in the halls of Turtle Bay? Who is staking their claim? And which candidates are best placed to succeed Ban Ki-moon and lead the United Nations?

Here is the list of confirmed or rumored candidates from Eastern Europe, in alphabetical order.

### Irina Bokova



*Symposium: The Secretary-General's Symposium on International Counter-Terrorism Conference*

Irina Bokova is currently serving her second term as UNESCO's Director General, and was previously the Bulgarian Foreign Minister and the Bulgarian Ambassador to France. Nominated by the former Bulgarian government of Prime Minister Plamen Oresharski in June 2014, Bokova was confirmed as Bulgaria's candidate in August 2015 by Prime Minister Boyko Borisov.

She is viewed by most as one of the front-runners to succeed Ban Ki-moon and one of the few candidates that 'ticks all the boxes' for the role. With international pressure building for

the world's first woman to lead the UN, Bokova is well placed with a combination of previous diplomatic experience as well as extensive UN knowledge. She has managed to reform UNESCO following sharp budget cuts. She has been very active at promoting girls' education, interfaith dialogue, fight against anti-Semitism, cultural cleansing and terror financing. Her consensual style of leadership and acute political sense resulted in her re-election for a second term as Director-General in 2013. Importantly, Bokova enjoys good relations with the United States, France, China, and Russia, as well as the G77.

However, despite having the official backing of her government, Bokova suffers from internal Bulgarian competition with current European Commissioner Kristalina Georgieva. Few view Georgieva as having the right profile for the position—she has no diplomatic or UN experience and will have difficulties securing the support of Paris (she does not speak French) or Moscow (EU sanctions against Russia)—but she appears to be very actively campaigning to get the nomination in Sofia.

### Vuk Jeremić



*New Year's Concert sponsored by the PGA office and Serbia*

Vuk Jeremić is currently President of the Center for International Relations and Sustainable Development, which he established in November 2013, and a member of the Leadership Council of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Solutions Network, formed by Ban Ki-moon in 2012. Jeremić is a former Foreign Minister of Serbia and UN General Assembly President and although not a current official candidate for the UNSG, he has been rumored to be interested in the position.

Jeremić was an energetic Foreign Minister, regularly travelling and putting Serbia's case to the world over notable issues such as Kosovo's independence. His education in Cambridge

and Harvard has since been followed by participation on the lecture circuit at major international universities around the world, and regularly penning pieces in international publications. Serbia's traditional strong ties to Russia provide Jeremić with a strong P5 ally.

The problematic issue of Eastern European politics is highlighted by Jeremić's positions regarding neighboring countries and his less than diplomatic solutions. During his term as Foreign Minister, Jeremić lobbied extensively against the recognition of Kosovo's independence, including taking a case to the International Court of Justice—although the ICJ ultimately found against Serbia in an Advisory Opinion. Even his previous UN experience, does not guarantee him stronger support as most neighboring Members refused to support his candidacy for President of the General Assembly, with many viewing Jeremić as aggressive, divisive, and with a world view based on a Serbian nationalist outlook.

## Miroslav Lajčák



*Miroslav Lajčák, Foreign Affairs Minister of Slovakia addresses summit on Sustainable Development*

Miroslav Lajčák is the current Foreign Minister of Slovakia, and has extensive diplomatic experience after previously serving within the European External Action Service and as the EU's Special Representative for Bosnia. Slovakia has no official nominee yet, but statements from Prime Minister Robert Fico clearly point towards current Foreign Minister Miroslav Lajčák as the government's preferred candidate 'should he make his ambitions clear'. Lajčák is widely rumored to be interested in the role.

Lajčák's diplomatic skills have earned him praise for his active participation in conflict resolution in Ukraine, and as an intermediary in several difficult Balkan disputes. He maintains a

positive reputation in Eastern Europe and his successes meant he was recently tapped for a role in the European Commission, potentially as the EU High Representative for Foreign Policy. Although eventually beaten by his Italian counterpart Federica Mogherini, Lajčák is viewed well in Brussels and may count on support from fellow EU members.

However, Lajčák suffers from stiff competition from experienced and respected former Foreign Minister Ján Kubiš for Slovakia's nomination and support. Moreover, Slovakia's foreign policy has been dominated in recent months by the growing humanitarian and Syrian refugee crisis. The government's response that they would only take in Christian refugees was met with widespread criticism. With UN agencies calling for an international solution to a potential catastrophe, such a divisive and insular position cannot help Lajčák's efforts at generating support. His closeness with Brussels and also the United States may make it difficult to gain support from Russia given the current climate.

## Vesna Pusić



*Vesna Pusic, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs for Croatia, addresses High-level meeting of the General Assembly on the Realization of the Millennium Development Goals and Other Internationally Agreed Development Goals for Persons with Disabilities – Round Table 2 "The post-2015 development agenda and inclusive development for persons with disabilities"*

Vesna Pusić has been Croatia's Foreign Minister since 2011, having previously been a three time Member of Parliament as well as a founding member and later Vice President of the liberal Croatian People's Party. She also ran as a Presidential candidate in 2009, coming 5th. Pusić announced her intention to run for the position in May 2015, and was

confirmed as the Croatian government's choice in September.

Pusić is an ardent supporter of EU integration, leading the National Committee for EU negotiations during Croatia's accession negotiations, and chaired the parliamentary committee for tracking the progress of Croatian accession negotiations with the EU. Pusić can count on strong support from fellow EU liberals in Brussels and internationally respected figures including the former Swedish Prime Minister Carl Bildt, and has been a strong advocate of gay rights and gender equality. Even within her mandate as Foreign Minister she places a strong emphasis on women's issues.

However, regional relations have deteriorated over border arbitration disputes and historical baggage of the conflicts of the 1990's will cause problems in gaining regional support. Pusić also suffers unpopularity at home with President Grabar-Kitarović and the Opposition refusing to fully endorse her as a candidate. Persistent rumors that Croatia's Ambassador to India Amir Muharemi is a preferred choice, poses a significant challenge to Pusić.

## Danilo Türk



*10th GA Plenary Meeting: Opening of the General Debate of the 66th General Assembly Session  
speaking: Slovenia*

Danilo Türk is the former President of Slovenia, and served between 1991 and 2000 as the first Slovene Ambassador to

the United Nations. He is currently a visiting Professor of International Law at Columbia University in New York. Türk was one of the earliest declared candidates seeking and receiving the endorsement of the government in early 2014.

As a longtime and widely respected international diplomat, twice serving as President of the UN Security Council, Türk carries with him a wealth of diplomatic experience and knowledge of regional security. He will no doubt benefit from having served as Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs under former Secretary General Kofi Annan. His combination of diplomatic and UN experience, as well as good relations with several P5 members strengthens his chances.

Türk faces several challenges, however. Although he has received the support and nomination of the government, this did not include gaining the support of the Opposition. U.S. Ambassador to Slovenia Joseph M. Morsomeli also noted that the inability of Türk to be a 'unifier' domestically showed he was not a 'good candidate' for the role of UNSG. He is also hampered by the convention that the UNSG role traditionally goes to former Foreign Ministers, or even internal UN candidates, and has never gone to a former Head of State or Head of Government.