TAKING STOCK, MOVING FORWARD

Report to the Foreign Ministry of Finland
on the 2012 Elections to the United Nations Security Council

April 2013

Contents

Acronyms 3
Executive Summary 4
Introduction 8
I. Analysis of the campaign 9
1. Campaign themes 9
2. Strategies 11
3. Resources 14
4. Tactics 16
5. Ideologies and Attitudes 19
6. Ethics 21
II. Lessons learned 23
1. For Finland 23
1.1 Stay engaged in the work of the UN 23
1.2 Sharpen its international profile and communicate more effectively 24
1.3 Diversify its bilateral partnerships 25
2. For the Nordic countries 26
3. For the EU 27
4. For the UN membership 28
Methodology 31

Acronyms

CARICOM	Caribbean Community
ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
EU	European Union
G77	Group of 77
GNI	Gross National Income
IPI	International Peace Institute
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OECD/DAC	OECD’s Development Assistance Committee
UN	United Nations
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
USD	United States Dollar
WEOG	Western European and Others Group

Executive Summary

The defeat of Finland at the 2012 elections to the UN Security Council came as a surprise to most delegates and observers. Finland, which was competing with Australia and Luxembourg, had long been considered a favorite.

This report—based on confidential interviews by the International Peace Institute (IPI)—is an attempt to analyze what differentiated the three candidates and to identify some lessons learned from their respective campaigns.

I. Analysis of the campaign

1. Campaign themes

All three candidates developed similar campaign themes that emphasized their respective contributions to the work of the United Nations. Finland was placed in an unusual configuration: it had to compete on the one hand with a country the size of a continent, and on the other with one of Europe's smallest states.

Sensitivities within the UN about the representation of European Union countries on the Security Council played in favor of Australia's candidacy, and unexpectedly led Finland and Luxembourg to compete with one another.

2. Strategies

Finland focused its strategy on UN issues. The cornerstone of Australia's strategy was to complement its discourse on UN policies with an emphasis on its *bilateral* and *regional* relationships with member states. It led an exceptionally active campaign both in New York and in capitals. Luxembourg prioritized cultivating ambassadors in New York while keeping close, constant contact at the ministerial level.

Luxembourg enlisted support from small states, from Francophone and Portuguese-speaking countries, and from EU members. Australia was endorsed by the Forum of the Pacific and by CARICOM, had access to the members of the Commonwealth, and received solid support in Asia and Africa, and also from some European countries.

Finland could not rely—as Australia and Luxembourg did—on cultural and historic ties to build its constituency. It was supported by the Nordics, the Baltic states, and CARICOM, but received insufficient support from the least developed countries, in particular in Africa, and did not receive full backing from EU members.

3. Resources

Australia mobilized important resources for its campaign with a budget of USD 25 million over 5 years, covering all its costs—including expenses for additional staff in

Canberra and New York, seminars, and travel costs of special envoys. Finland and Luxembourg spent much less, although available information relating to their campaign budgets (2 million Euros for Finland in 2010-2012 and 1 million Euros for Luxembourg in 2011-2012) does not include expenses for additional staff.

4. Tactics

Australia had announced its candidacy in 2008 and started its campaign almost immediately. It repeatedly checked pledges of support at all levels, and stepped up its efforts in the last two years of the campaign.

Luxembourg had declared its candidacy in 2001. It started its actual campaign in 2008 and progressively managed to establish strong credibility.

Finland had declared its candidacy in 2002 but its campaign only started in 2009. Once launched, the Finnish campaign was at first very effective. The question remains whether Finland competed less actively in the last phase of the campaign, at a moment when its competitors intensified their outreach.

Australia probably received between 150 and 160 pledges of support before the election. Luxembourg seems to have had slightly less than 160 pledges and Finland around 145.

5. Ideologies and Attitudes

Policies matter in UN electoral campaigns, but the competitive edge comes from bilateral relations or joint interests.

Australia was aware that its political proximity to the United States and its own positions on the Middle East could be considered as weaknesses and it worked to limit possible damage to its candidacy. Luxembourg is traditionally seen as favoring consensual views and did not have issues of concern.

Finland enjoyed a generally positive image as a Nordic country, but, too focused on UN issues, its campaign did not communicate enough about Finland’s own achievements and identity.

6. Ethics

All three candidates seem to have refrained from committing to defend specific positions at the Council that would not be consistent with their traditional policies.

Finland’s long track record as an important donor was an asset, but probably to a lesser degree than for its competitors. Almost half of Finland’s ODA is delivered through multilateral channels and, hence, less “visible” than that of Australia or Luxembourg.

II. Lessons learned

1. For Finland

Finland should remain engaged in the work of the United Nations and on the international scene. It should use the lessons learned from the campaign to build on its strengths and adapt, where needed, its diplomatic tools.

1.1. Stay engaged in the work of the UN

Last year's elections have not tarnished the good image of the country at the UN.

Finland should continue what it currently does, which includes its contributions to UN funds and programs (with some adaptation), but also its initiatives like its work on mediation and conflict prevention. It could do even more and should review ways to revive its participation in peace operations and to bring support to efforts to address crises, in particular in Africa.

1.2. Sharpen its international profile and communicate more effectively

Finland could seize the current opportunity to reflect on its international profile, on what makes this profile different or similar to the ones of its closest partners, and on ways to communicate more effectively about what it stands for and what it does.

Finland could consider a more selective funding strategy and concentrate its efforts on a smaller number of multilateral institutions working in areas which match its most important priorities. This would help build a more concrete narrative on Finland's development aid.

For the Foreign Ministry, a more effective communication strategy would also require a reflection on ways to better include communication techniques in the training and professional development of diplomats.

1.3. Diversify its bilateral partnerships

Finland's substantial diplomatic network is a strong asset. But the campaign has revealed a few blind spots—in particular in Francophone Africa—and a certain deficit of communication with Arab countries. Finland could explore how to fill in these gaps.

Finland's ODA is a major asset and could perhaps be more clearly connected to its foreign policy. Finland should continue to prioritize the most effective use of its resources from a development perspective. By redeploying only a margin of its ODA to bilateral cooperation, Finland could reach out to a wider range of countries than it currently does.

2. For the Nordic countries

Finland's defeat came at the same time as Sweden's failure to be elected to the UN Human Rights Council and four years after Iceland's unsuccessful bid for a Security Council seat. Although each election had its own logic, many in New York consider these recent failures as "a wake-up call for the Nordics."

Large segments of the UN membership acknowledge the particular profile of the Nordics as a "moral pillar" of the UN. But, for elections, they also tend to consider a Nordic candidate as one competitor among others, and very often not too different politically from the other Western candidates.

Nordic states could reflect together on how a renewed commitment to the work of the UN and a more effective communication strategy could help them remain true to their values and at the same time engage more effectively with the other countries.

3. For the EU

Competition between EU members for elections at the Security Council—or other major UN elections—plays against the interest of EU members themselves. It also shows a lack of unity and solidarity within the Union and belies the European aspiration to a common foreign policy.

A clear understanding among EU members that they need to work together to avoid electoral competition would strengthen the credibility of the EU foreign policy and would help enhance its contribution to the work of the UN.

4. For the UN membership

Countries tend to devote a larger amount of resources and mobilize at a higher political level to promote their candidacies at elections. Some delegates believe that such competition is inherently a healthy process. Others are more uncomfortable with big campaigns and all the effort which is put into them.

On a voluntary basis, candidates willing to promote transparency at elections could:

- Be transparent about their campaign budget, and
- Reaffirm the rules and principles of their development cooperation.

There is a need for a dialogue on the financing of development cooperation. Each set of donors seems to follow its own rules: South-South cooperation for the new donors, OECD-DAC for the traditional ones, with little overlap between the two. Member states could reflect on how to create some common ground between these different models.

Introduction

Elections to non-permanent seats at the United Nations Security Council took place on October 18, 2012. Australia, Finland, and Luxembourg were candidates for the two seats allocated to the Western European and Others Group[1] (WEOG).

Luxembourg had announced its candidacy to the Security Council in 2001, Finland in 2002, and Australia in 2008. Luxembourg had previously never served on the Security Council. Finland had served twice (1969-1970 and 1989-1990). Australia had previously served four times—the last one was in 1985-1986—and had been an unsuccessful candidate in 1996 when it lost to Portugal.[2]

On October 18, 2012, Australia was elected in the first ballot with 140 votes against 128 for Luxembourg and 108 for Finland. Luxembourg was then elected in the second ballot with 131 votes against 62 for Finland (the required majority being 129 votes).

The defeat of Finland came as a surprise to most delegates and observers. The three WEOG candidates had each led very active electoral campaigns, and—thanks to its longstanding involvement with the United Nations—Finland had been considered a favorite in the electoral race even though some doubts about its actual chance of succeeding had emerged in the very last weeks of the campaign.

In hindsight it is possible to identify elements that played in favor of Australia and Luxembourg and to explain the final outcome. But the way these elements were going to interact at the time of the vote was quite unpredictable during the campaign. The 193 member states of the United Nations vote in the elections to the UN Security Council. The ballot is secret, and it is difficult to guess how much the vote cast by each delegate reflects personal preferences or instructions sent by the capital. Last minute changes of heart do happen, and countries were indeed still trading votes in the hall of the General Assembly in the morning of the ballot.

This report—based on confidential interviews[3] by the International Peace Institute (IPI) in capitals and in New York with over fifty delegates, senior officials, and observers—is an attempt to analyze what differentiated the three candidates and to identify some lessons learned from their respective campaigns.

---

[1] The General Assembly also elected countries for the other seats allocated to the African, Asian, and Latin American and Caribbean groups. This report focuses on the campaign for the WEOG seats only.

[2] See Security Council Report, Special Research report on "Security Council Elections 2012", September 25, 2012, available at www.securitycouncilreport.org/special-research-report/security-council-elections-2012.php .

[3] See the section on methodology at the end of this report.

I. Analysis of the campaign

The analysis of the campaign for the 2012 elections to the Security Council can be structured around the following dimensions:

1. themes of the campaign,
2. strategies chosen by the candidates,
3. resources they mobilized for their campaigns,
4. tactics,
5. ideologies that shaped the context of the elections and the attitudes of the candidates, and
6. ethical dilemmas they faced.

1. Campaign themes

All three candidates developed similar campaign themes that emphasized their respective contributions to the work of the United Nations.

Finland underlined its participation in UN peace operations (over 50,000 Finnish peacekeepers have served since 1956), its contributions to UN funds and programs, and its generous international development policy. It also emphasized—perhaps more than the other two candidates—what it could bring to the Security Council because of its balanced approach toward international politics, its experience from two previous terms at the Council, and its record in support of mediation and peacemaking.

Luxembourg focused on its long-standing commitment to multilateral cooperation, which is illustrated by its active participation in numerous regional and international organizations, its high level of official development assistance (which reached 1.05 percent of its gross national income, GNI, in 2010), its support to peace operations led by the UN or by other organizations, and its involvement in all areas of the work of the UN including the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the Peacebuilding Commission. Luxembourg also stressed that, although it was a founding member of the United Nations, it had never served on the Security Council.

Australia emphasized its strong UN record marked by its contributions to the UN and UN-mandated peace operations (more than 65,000 Australian personnel have served since 1947), the expansion of its aid budget set to reach 9 billion Australian dollars[4] by 2016-2017, and its active involvement in multilateral cooperation ranging from support for peace processes in the Asia-Pacific region, to disarmament and non-proliferation, to international law and human rights issues. Australia, though, complemented its discourse on UN policies with an emphasis on its *bilateral* and *regional* relationships with member states. This was a cornerstone of its campaign strategy.

Beyond the similarities of these themes, the challenge was for each candidate to

[4] This amount was equivalent to USD 9.4 billion as of April 1, 2013.

express what made it more capable than the two others to take responsibility on the Security Council.

In this regard, Finland was placed in an unusual configuration: it had to compete on the one hand with a country the size of a continent, and on the other with one of Europe's smallest states. As one delegate interviewed for this survey summed it up: "It is hard to compete when you are in the middle. Whatever measure of achievement you choose, one of the two other candidates performs better than you do. For instance, Finland's ODA is larger than Luxembourg's, but Luxembourg gives a higher proportion of its national income. Finnish aid is higher than Australia's in proportion to its national income but much lower in actual amount."[5]

More importantly, another theme had a major impact on the campaign: the issue of the representation of **European Union** countries on the Security Council. Although this theme did not appear in the brochures circulated by the candidates, this issue had a significant influence on the outcome of the election.

In the last ten years, elections to the WEOG seats at the Security Council had all played in favor of candidates from the European Union. EU members had "clean slates" (i.e., only two candidates for two seats) in 2002, 2004, and 2006. Austria, the only EU candidate, was elected in 2008 together with Turkey in a bid against Iceland. In 2010, two EU members, Germany and Portugal, were elected over Canada.

These successes had generated a sense of frustration among the non-EU members of the WEOG. As one delegate put it, "After Iceland's and Canada's failures, there was some concern that—within the WEOG—the *others*, the non-EU, would never be elected again." They also raised questions about an "over-representation" of the EU at the Council, given that two of its permanent members, France and the United Kingdom, belong to the EU, and an EU member can also be elected for the Eastern European seat at the Council. Indeed, the "anti-EU rhetoric" had been one of the traits of the 2011 campaign for the Eastern European seat, which Azerbaijan won in opposition to EU-members Hungary and Slovenia.

Other elements also contributed to create a context that was less favorable to EU candidates. European Union countries had led two campaigns in 2010 and in 2011 to enhance the status of the EU in the General Assembly that resulted in the adoption of a resolution in May 2011.[6] But this had caused negative reactions from other countries, in particular from the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), which considered that the EU was asking for more than other regional organizations at a time when the contribution of EU members to the UN budget was declining and when the crisis of the Euro was affecting its image.

---

[5] According to the OECD/DAC, net official development assistance flows in 2011 were respectively USD 5 billion from Australia (0.34% of its GNI), USD 1.4 billion from Finland (0.53% of its GNI), and 0.4 billion from Luxembourg (0.97% of its GNI), available at www.oecd.org/dac/stats/statisticsonresourceflowstodevelopingcountries.htm .

[6] UN General Assembly Resolution (adopted May 3, 2011), UN Doc. A/RES/65/276.

This European Union context in the campaign for the 2012 elections set Australia apart from the two EU competitors. Most delegates with whom IPI met said that this background gave a real advantage to Australia against Finland and Luxembourg. The EU theme transformed the dynamic of the campaign. As one delegate put it, “Finland thought that it was going to be elected because of its UN record and that the race was between Australia and Luxembourg.” But in reality another race, between Luxembourg and Finland, was taking place.

One delegate commented: “Countries at the General Assembly are attached to a sense of balance. They did not want two EU countries to be elected in the same year. Finland had already been twice a member of the Council and Luxembourg had never been. Australia had lost a few years ago and countries wanted to give it a second chance.”

2. Strategies

Campaigning for the Security Council requires multifaceted strategies. The candidates need to approach officials of other countries both in their capitals and in New York. They have to identify the right level for their *démarches*. They need to strike the right balance between the presentation of their views on UN issues and more targeted messages on matters of bilateral interest.

All three candidates managed to combine these different elements in their electoral strategies, but with a different focus for each.

Finland’s strategy prioritized UN issues, in line with the main themes of its campaign. It emphasized what it could bring to the Security Council, an approach that is consistent with the UN Charter itself. Article 23.1 specifies that the General Assembly shall elect the non-permanent members of the UNSC with “due regard being specially paid, in the first instance to the contribution of members of the United Nations to the maintenance of international peace and security and to the other purposes of the Organization, and also to equitable geographical distribution.”

The choice had clearly been made that Finland’s campaign should be “substance-driven.” Finnish representatives emphasized their country’s commitment to the UN and its capacity to work in the Council in a reliable and predictable way. The messages were adapted as needed to the interlocutors, but it appears that they were generally related to the UN and Finland’s work in the organization. Specific themes also related to the UN were added to these messages as work developed at the UN. For instance, representatives highlighted the initiative sponsored by Finland and Turkey on mediation.

In addition to the many contacts developed by the Finnish permanent representative with his colleagues in New York, a special representative of the foreign minister was appointed, who did most of the bilateral visits to capitals.

In a similar way, **Australia** emphasized UN issues in its contacts in capitals and New

York. But the originality of its campaign was that it also made room for a substantial bilateral dialogue with each potential voter. Australian diplomats made special efforts to understand the needs and priorities of each country that they approached. They developed targeted messages for each voter, on a case-by-case basis, which explained, on a range of issues, what Australia was doing and why, detailing facts while at the same time avoiding generalities.

The result was that the Australian campaign succeeded in giving to each interlocutor a “convincing story,” based on experience and a long-track record of involvement with the UN and complemented by well-chosen talking points on bilateral issues.

Of the three candidates, Australia is probably the one that, thanks to the resources it mobilized for its campaign, developed the most active strategy toward the capitals and in New York. In capitals, Australian diplomats made sure to have access at very high levels. In New York, they cultivated the permanent representatives through an active engagement on substantial issues and an important program of invitations to Australia. The prime minister and foreign minister actively campaigned for their country’s candidacy. Australia deployed a number of special envoys in Africa and other places with good knowledge of these regions. In addition, it mobilized members of parliament who were sent to targeted capitals.

Australia had defined a comprehensive strategy of lessons learned by visiting a range of foreign ministries which had in the past won or lost seats at the Security Council. These lessons learned formed an important part of its campaign strategy. One of them was that the special envoys should be envoys of the prime minister, rather than of the minister of foreign affairs. This enabled the envoys to have access to head of states and of governments. The reason was that, for most countries, it is much more difficult for the representative in New York to ignore the voting instructions from its capital if these instructions emanate directly from the head of state or of government.

On its part, **Luxembourg** prioritized cultivating relationships with member-state representatives in New York. It also very actively campaigned at the ministerial level. Luxembourg’s foreign minister, who had the rare advantage of having been in office since 2004, tirelessly traveled to capitals and to meetings of international and regional organizations and kept in constant, personal contact with his peers.

New York, however, remained a key focus for Luxembourg. This was due to Luxembourg’s relatively smaller diplomatic network compared to its competitors. This also reflected a deliberate strategy to approach and remain in close and frequent contact with important voting blocs such as Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific, which could be more easily reached at UN headquarters than in capitals. Luxembourg also appointed a special envoy for each of these three regions.

Luxembourg’s permanent representative and mission to the UN played an essential role in the success of the campaign. The permanent representative was able to build on her achievements as president of ECOSOC in 2009 and chair of the Guinea configuration of

the Peacebuilding Commission in 2011, a post that gave Luxembourg good visibility vis-à-vis African delegates. In addition, Luxembourg's foreign minister made special efforts to visit New York frequently and to meet personally with permanent representatives there.

In a similar fashion as its two other competitors, Luxembourg developed arguments to explain its contributions to the UN and express its views on UN issues. But it was also able to relate to a very large and diverse group of countries that could one way or another identify with its candidacy as a country that had never served in the Security Council, as a small state, or as a multilingual and multicultural country. As one delegate commented, "Luxembourg looked very confident, focused on its small country profile, something many could identify with."

Indeed, the ability to access large networks of countries and to build a **constituency** is probably what differentiated the three candidates most.

Luxembourg was able to enlist support from small states[7], Francophone countries, and Portuguese-speaking countries—thanks to its important Portuguese community. The Grand Duchy mobilized a number of monarchies. It also appears that Luxembourg received stronger support among the members of the European Union than Finland.

Australia was endorsed by the countries of the Forum of the Pacific and by CARICOM in 2011 and 2012. It had access to the members of the Commonwealth (for whom it hosted a summit in Perth in October 2011). It enlisted solid support from countries in Asia and Africa, and also received support among European countries.

In contrast, as one interviewee put it, **Finland** "lacked a natural constituency beyond the Nordics—which endorsed its candidacy from the start—and the Baltic states." Thanks to the successful campaign of its special envoy based in the region, it received an endorsement from CARICOM in 2012. But, although a small state itself, Finland had to compete with Luxembourg to cultivate other small countries. Even though Finland had played an important role in promoting development cooperation with the least developed countries, it did not gain much support among this group, in particular in Africa.

Out of a sense of European solidarity, several EU countries pledged their support for both Luxembourg and Finland. However, it seems that Finland did not receive full EU backing. Several public commentators in Europe have pointed out Helsinki's positions in the crisis of the Euro as an explanation of the low support for Finland during the election. It is indeed possible that these positions cost Finland the votes of several Mediterranean members of the EU. But they do not seem to have influenced the voting behavior of the larger UN membership. On the other hand, the lack of European support for Finland may have weakened its candidacy and left many non-European countries wondering why it did not have full backing. As one delegate questioned, "Why did not

[7] Small states account for more than half of the UN with the Forum of Small States counting 105 countries as members.

the EU support both Luxembourg and Finland? Does the EU ever support one candidate? There was a perception that the EU did not support Finland."

It is also worth noting that, due in large part to historic and cultural ties, Luxembourg and Australia managed, better than Finland, to secure the sympathy of some permanent members of the Security Council.

Finland could not rely—as Australia and Luxembourg did—on similar ties to build its constituency. But, in hindsight, Finland's strategy also proved to be too narrowly focused on UN issues and lacked the bilateral campaign that Australia and Luxembourg successfully developed. It also seems that Finland was less active than its competitors in pursuing contacts at the political level in capitals. According to one delegate, "The Finnish campaign was too abstract and too focused on policy matters. It needed talking points on bilateral issues and a follow-up on the ground."

3. Resources

The resources mobilized by the candidates for their campaigns reflected the choices they had made to define their electoral strategies. Australia had a very substantial budget to support its efforts both in New York and in capitals. Finland and Luxembourg spent much less. However, Luxembourg concentrated the use of its smaller resources for a targeted impact, whereas Finland allocated its funding to a wider range of projects, with perhaps a more diffuse effect.

Australia allocated to its campaign 24 million Australian dollars[8] over five years.[9] This covered staff expenses for the campaign task force in Canberra, additional staff posted in New York for the campaign (including a senior diplomat), several regional envoys and their travel expenses, publication costs of brochures and various campaign materials, and costs related to a dynamic invitation program for New York delegates to visit Australia for consultations or participation in a seminar (invitations were sent to approximately 100 delegates).

Australian diplomats did not spare their efforts. They obviously felt under pressure to succeed in order to make up for their country's failed bid in 1996, and made sure that adequate resources matched their electoral strategy. Additional staff in Canberra and New York were a key asset to lead a well-coordinated campaign, identify the needs and expectations of potential voters, draft countless memos with the right mix of UN-related talking points and messages on bilateral issues, and ensure effective follow-up. In addition, members of parliament were actively mobilized and made campaign visits to numerous capitals. The impressive invitation program was equally successful. As one delegate noted, "Big machines win."

Luxembourg invested in its campaign a much more modest budget, probably in the

---

[8] This amount was equivalent to USD 25 million as of April 1, 2013.
[9] See Press Office of the Prime Minister of Australia, transcript of press conference on September 26, 2012, available at www.pm.gov.au/press-office/trancript-press-conference-26 .

order of 1 million Euros in 2011-2012. This budget covered the organization of three seminars in Luxembourg in 2012 (seventy delegations were invited), but did not include staffing expenses. As with the other two candidates, the campaign budget also did not include the foreign minister's travels, which are considered part of the normal activity of the minister.

Luxembourg only had a small dedicated campaign cell in the foreign ministry with one coordinator. No additional staff was sent to New York, but the mission staffing was progressively increased in 2012 so that the team expected to work on Security Council issues after the election would be close to capacity by October.

As noted earlier, much of the campaign work lay on the shoulders of the foreign minister and the permanent representative in New York and on their personal interactions with their peers. Three special envoys had also been designated for the Caribbean, Africa, and the Pacific.

Finland spent approximately 2 million Euros in 2010-2012 in its campaign. This budget did not include staff expenses, but covered funding provided to various UN trust funds for a range of projects and international conferences, the organization of two seminars in Finland in 2012, and administrative and travel expenses of the unit in charge of the campaign in Helsinki.

The campaign unit, which reported directly to the foreign minister, comprised the special representative of the foreign minister, a deputy, a counselor, a young diplomat, and an assistant. Finland did not send additional staff to New York—where the permanent representative led the campaign—except for a press adviser (hired locally in summer 2012) and two diplomats who were also appointed in summer 2012 in advance of the normal rotation process.

The special representative of the minister made most of the visits to capitals. Only one special envoy, based in the Caribbean, was appointed and successfully campaigned in the region. Finland could also count on its substantial diplomatic network to relay its positions, although it is not clear how embassies were effectively involved in the campaign.

The foreign minister kept up a busy schedule of weekly trips abroad and a number of visits to New York. Other political figures were enlisted to support the campaign, including the president of Parliament who visited Africa in 2011.

Overall, Finland's financial effort was greater than Luxembourg's but not to a point where it could have made a substantial difference between the two European candidates. Moreover, some of the funding allocated by Finland to UN trust funds did not seem to have much visibility. In terms of organization, Luxembourg was probably more active in maintaining contact at the ministerial level. Finland also seems to have hesitated to involve its best-known standard bearers, Presidents Ahtisaari and Halonen, who played a significant role, as did President Niinistö, in the last stages of the

campaign.

4. Tactics

Many delegates emphasized that the defeat of Finland had been a surprise for them. Finland was long considered a favorite. It is not clear when the trajectories of the candidates actually diverged. Indeed, as one interviewee commented, “One of the difficulties of the campaign is that you do not know how things are actually going, and if anything is going wrong.” Another delegate also exclaimed, “Some countries said to all three candidates that they were voting for them!” These uncertainties on voter intentions and on how campaigns are perceived make it more difficult for candidates to adapt their tactics.

Australia had announced its candidacy in 2008 (later than the other two candidates) and started its campaign almost immediately. At that stage, Finland and Luxembourg had already received pledges of support from several countries but they had not tied up all loose ends, and—according to interviews—Australia quickly managed to gather a “decent support base” for its candidacy.

Australia repeatedly checked pledges of support at all levels, following the so-called “Japanese model,”[10] to make sure there was no disconnect between the capitals and New York, and even continued to campaign after commitments were confirmed. Australia stepped up its efforts in the last two years of the campaign, with the strongest outreach phase in the last six months “to seal the deals.” In the end, Australia’s election in the first round seems to have been a surprise to the Australians themselves, who—before the vote—had carefully been asking for support for the second ballot.

Having declared its candidacy in 2001, **Luxembourg** quietly exchanged support with other delegations when opportunities arose and took steps to strengthen its UN profile and international networks. Luxembourg started its actual campaign in 2008 with more systematic exchanges of votes with European and other states.

According to delegates, compared to Australia—a regional power with global reach—and to Finland—a Nordic candidate with strong UN credentials—Luxembourg was generally considered as the least likely to succeed. To use the terminology of American politics and sports, Luxembourg was seen as the “underdog.” But it progressively managed to establish strong credibility and finally put pressure on its two other competitors in the last months of the campaign. Luxembourg—like Australia—intensified its efforts in the last six months before the elections. One delegate observed, “Luxembourg and Australia were very involved until the end, very present at all levels, very creative, very consistent, reminding others at all times of their candidacy but

[10] Japanese diplomats are said to use a score card with six columns that identify the pledges of each country as given by six officials (the head of state, the prime minister, the foreign minister, the permanent representative in New York, the ambassador in Tokyo, and the campaign coordinator). A pledge is registered only once all six officials confirm they will vote for Japan. If only one does not confirm, the Japanese go back to the beginning, and ask all six to confirm again.

without being too insistent."

Finland had declared its candidacy in 2002 and—like Luxembourg—exchanged support with other states when possible. However, its campaign only started in earnest in 2009, a few months after its two competitors. Having been endorsed by the Nordic states, Finland first waited until Iceland, which was the Nordic candidate for the 2008 elections to the Security Council, had completed its own campaign. It then waited until its full campaign team was in place in summer 2009.

In hindsight, it appears that the delay in launching a full-fledged campaign may have cost Finland a few votes. According to interviews, some of Finland's traditional partners were apparently unaware of its candidacy and had already pledged their support to Australia and Luxembourg before Finland approached them.

The general perception is that, once launched, the Finnish campaign was at first very effective. Finland's initiative with Turkey on the issue of mediation gave good visibility to its permanent representative to the UN, and so did his leading role in the preparation for the UN conference on the least developed countries in Istanbul in May 2011. The mission in New York organized successful events for representatives to the UN and creatively mobilized corporate sponsoring to make up for the relatively modest resources dedicated to outreach. The quality of the two retreats—one on mediation and the other one on peacekeeping—organized by Finland in 2012 was appreciated. Finland's special envoy in the Caribbean enlisted substantial support from CARICOM.

Several interviewees expressed their positive appreciation. One delegate noted, "The permanent representative of Finland did so many things. It is hard to know what more he could have done." Another delegate commented, "Luxembourg and Finland both did a great job at campaigning. They all had an invitation program, receptions, visits by the foreign minister; it was like 50-50, no mistake, an excellent job."

The question remains whether these achievements, and Finland's trust in its good UN record, led the Finns to compete less actively in the last phase of the campaign, at a moment when their competitors intensified their outreach.

Some believe that the Finnish campaign "peaked too soon." According to one delegate, "In 2010, the Finns were doing all the right things, like the initiative on mediation, but this came too early and the outcome was not as good." Several delegates suggested that Finland's focus on mediation and peacekeeping—two very broad themes—did not allow for a concentration of efforts on specific groups of countries.

Other interviewees consider that Finland "was not seen to be as proactive as the two other candidates to get votes." A delegate indicated to IPI that "the Finns were in the lead until the beginning of summer 2012, and then doubts emerged about the number of votes they were getting."

Finland did continue its efforts in the run-up to the election. Between the opening of the

session of the General Assembly—at the end of September—and the election in October, high-level Finnish personalities, including former Presidents Ahtisaari and Halonen, came to New York to meet with other member states. However, this effort at the end of the campaign, when voting instructions were being sent to the delegations, did not suffice to regain the ground that had probably been lost only a few weeks before.

It is difficult to guess how many commitments each candidate had gathered before the vote. Australia was elected with 140 votes in the first ballot, and one can assume that the total number of pledges that it had received was in the 150 – 160 range. According to interviews, Luxembourg seems to have had slightly less than 160 pledges the day before the vote, including around 110 written pledges. Also according to interviews, Finland seems to have had approximately 145 pledges before the election. The number of pledges one year before, in summer 2011, was approximately 100, and at one point, Finland may have had as many as 130 written commitments. However, at the time of the vote—given the number of pledges Luxembourg had reportedly received—the gap between the two European candidates was probably too wide for Finland to catch up.

The usual estimate to assess a state's chances at the UN is that candidates should discount 10 percent of the written commitments they receive and 20 percent of oral commitments.[11] Compared to this traditional formula, Finland suffered an unusual loss of votes which were pledged but did not materialize in the ballot. Numerous delegates emphasized the inherent uncertainties of assessing the values of commitments. As one interviewee noted: "One can never exclude disconnects between capitals and New York. Are all the permanent representatives informed of what is agreed in the capitals? Do they consider they are bound by a tie-up agreed several years ago by a government which is not in place anymore? In the end it's the ambassador who votes, in secret, and the relationships he or she has with the permanent representatives of the candidates will determine his or her vote."

It also appears that Finland did not have a "second ballot strategy" and it had not solicited support for the second round the way Australia and Luxembourg had. As one delegate indicated, "Commitments used to be for the whole election, it appears that now they are only for the first ballot."

Finland's campaign was clearly focused on the first ballot. There was a perception among Finnish officials and diplomats that campaigning for the second ballot could backfire and be interpreted as a sign of a lack of confidence. There was also the idea that asking for support for the second ballot was an implicit recognition that delegates could vote one way in the first round and the opposite way in the second round with no other reason than an electoral agreement.

Some interviewees consider that the lack of a second ballot strategy was a major cause of Finland's defeat. It is possible that some delegates perceived Finland's attitude as a

[11] See David M. Malone, "Eyes on the Prize: The Quest for Nonpermanent Seats on the UN Security Council" *Global Governance* 6, No. 1 (2000): 3-23.

sign of a lack of motivation to win votes. However, it is doubtful that it really mattered in the end. Luxembourg had already received 128 votes in the first round and needed only one more to win in the second. As one delegate put it, “Luxembourg was so close; the momentum in the room prevailed.”

5. Ideologies and Attitudes

What emerges from interviews conducted for this study is that policies matter in UN electoral campaigns, but the competitive edge comes from bilateral relations or joint interests.

Several delegates considered that the key to success depends on the ability of candidates to exchange support for elections to other UN bodies. “Exchange of votes is what matters most,” said one delegate. “This is a market place.” Others insisted on the way countries assess requests for support from candidates in the light of their own interests: “Instructions come from capitals and capitals take into account *realpolitik*. They look at the bilateral relations, the level of development aid, and consult with influential members at the UN.”

States determine their vote based on what best matches their direct interest. To use the formula coined by a former British ambassador in New York,[12] the United Nations serve as “a great clearing house of foreign policy,” and electoral campaigns are probably where this is most evident.

However, if policies may not be the best way to win support, they may in some cases contribute to the loss of votes. This is probably why all three candidates preferred to adopt a prudent profile on issues that they knew might be controversial. They carefully prioritized consensus-driving topics and generally avoided more difficult themes.

Australia was aware that its political proximity to the United States and its own positions on the Middle East could be considered as weaknesses by large segments of the UN membership. It had also drawn the lessons from its failure in 1996 and from Canada’s failure in 2010,[13] and it worked to limit possible damage to its candidacy. In their dialogue with countries of the Middle East, Australian diplomats apparently emphasized issues of agreement, while acknowledging differences. Several delegations also observed subtle evolutions in Australia’s voting pattern on the Palestinian issue at the General Assembly.

Luxembourg—which is traditionally seen as favoring consensual views—did not seem to have any particular issues that would raise concerns among voting countries.

[12] Sir David Hannay interviewed by the *New York Times*, December 16, 1996.

[13] To explain Australia’s failure in 1996 commentators usually point out the poor relationships of Australian permanent representative Richard Butler with his peers as well as several of Canberra’s foreign policy positions, including on climate change. For Canada’s failure in 2010, they usually mention Ottawa’s positions on the Middle East and on ODA issues.

Finland focused its messages on its UN record, its profile as a problem-solver, and—without shying away from its values—abstained from putting too much emphasis on some of its priorities that are more divisive at the UN, such as the rule of law or women's rights.

The question remains whether these issues and other positions traditionally promoted by the **Nordics** may have played against Finland.

Several delegates were skeptical about this possibility and indicated that, in their view, Nordic positions on human rights and other issues had played less of a role against Finland than the actual merits of its two competitors. Many delegates stressed that Australia, Finland, and Luxembourg were all seen as "Western" or "mainstream" candidates, and that "despite the fact that all three pretended to be *different* and except for their take on Middle East issues, there was no real difference in their policies."

Interviews also showed that the image of Nordic countries is generally positive at the UN. Several delegates observed, "The Nordics have an excellent image and are well respected. They are among the largest donors to the UN. These are countries which have no hidden agenda and want to help." Another delegate noted: "The Nordic card remains a good card at the UN, probably better than the EU card which is seen as a second tier of the most powerful states. But the Nordics need to do more bilaterally and they need to advertise it better. The Nordics used to be seen as countries of social democracy, closer to the developing world than the United States or the Soviet Union or other European countries. But the world has changed. Their image is not so strong anymore. Developing countries have their own models."

On the other hand, a number of delegates, in particular among the Group of 77 (G77) countries, also expressed frustration at attitudes that, they believed, are sometimes not respectful enough of cultural differences. This was particularly the case, according to some delegations, with issues related to women's rights or freedom of expression. As one delegate put it, the "Danish cartoons saga reflected badly on all the Nordic countries."

One delegate explained: "We have difficulties with the Nordic attitude on social and human rights issues. The Nordics impose their definitions, which sometimes are not acceptable to Islamic countries. Other EU members may think the same, but the Nordics are in the lead; they are more vocal. We want them to understand that there are different views, other cultures, and that the UN is not only Western. You cannot achieve your goal and make the others feel bad."

It is difficult to assess if these views had actual consequences in terms of votes. However, in discussing Finland's candidacy, several delegates did indicate during interviews their reservations on the profile of Nordic states at the UN and their preference for more "modest" candidates. One delegate noted: "Luxembourg was seen as the underdog, a modest country, not one that imposes its views among the Western countries. Being the small one among the West, Luxembourg was considered to be

more understanding of the G77."

On balance, the actual effect of policy issues and ideologies on the 2012 elections remains uncertain. But the way that Australia successfully managed to limit possible damage from its Middle East positions shows that judicious steps and a good communication strategy can help compartmentalize difficult issues.

In this regard, the Finnish campaign probably suffered from a communication deficit.

Australia and **Luxembourg** both succeeded in building a narrative that emphasized their bilateral relationships, joint interests, or a shared identity with each potential voter. As noted earlier, the campaign strategy chosen by these two candidates focused on such goals. But their everyday attitude also contributed to it. For instance, one delegate observed, "The permanent representative of Luxembourg was very approachable. She was present at all events, and always the first to agree to meet candidates from other countries for other posts."

Finland, on the other hand, had more difficulties in emphasizing its shared interests and bilateral relationships with voters. Although its image in New York was generally considered as good, its actual achievements and its own identity were less known to many delegations.

Finland's communication strategy, focused on UN issues, did not help to give others a better sense of the country. The campaign did not communicate enough on Finland's own achievements and identity. In a paradoxical way, Finland—which had always been a leader in women's rights and gender equality—had no woman playing a visible role in its campaign team.

Finland also did not manage to give an emotional dimension to its campaign, the way Luxembourg did in New York. According to delegates, Finland's communication seemed intermittent, based on specific events or initiatives, whereas its two competitors subtly but continuously reminded other delegations of their candidacies.

Finland's campaign was probably also handicapped by the fact that its foreign policy tools, and in particular its official development assistance (ODA), are largely focused toward multilateral institutions. Apart from the group of its ten or so cooperation partners, Finland was not in a position to show to potential voters the actual results of its contributions to international development. As one delegate put it, "It's not enough to have a good UN record, you need to better explain what you do."

6. Ethics

As is the case for all candidates running for elections, countries campaigning for a seat at the Security Council have to face, at one moment or another, difficult ethical dilemmas on how votes should or should not be won.

All three candidates seem to have cautiously refrained from committing to defend specific positions at the Council, especially on regional issues, that would not be consistent with their traditional policies. As one delegate indicated: "Authenticity and integrity matter. There is no point in hiding. You cannot take commitments you would not respect once you are elected at the Security Council. Candidates need to preserve their long-term credibility."

Beyond policy issues, the way candidates can use the tools of their foreign policy during the campaign, and in particular their official development assistance (ODA), is also often debated.

According to interviews, it appears that all candidates made sure to respect agreed guidelines on development policies during their campaign. They assumed that they could, when requested during the campaign, provide punctual assistance only if it was consistent with their existing policies. One delegate mentioned that a handful of countries offered electoral support in exchange for funding of dubious projects, but such offers were not accepted by the candidate who had been approached.

As one delegate noted, "the ODA status is a key element of the campaign and countries are aware of it." All candidates emphasized their development cooperation. Luxembourg's effort, with 1.05% of its gross national income devoted to ODA, was well perceived. Australia benefited from the increase in its ODA.

Finland's long track record as an important donor was also an asset, but probably to a lesser degree than for its competitors. Almost half of Finland's ODA is delivered through multilateral channels and, hence, less "visible," according to some, than that of Australia or Luxembourg.[14] It also seems that Finland's development cooperation tools and procedures were less geared to responding to punctual requests than the ones of its competitors.

***

In hindsight, Finland was at a disadvantage compared to its two competitors. It was caught "in the middle" and had difficulties to establish a profile consistent with its own identity. It did not have the reach and the resources of Australia as a regional power, and it could not play the "small-state" card, which was the mark of Luxembourg. The "anti-EU sentiment" forced a competition with Luxembourg that Finnish diplomats had probably not anticipated. Their strategy, focused on UN issues, did not appeal enough to other member states, which tend to put a premium on issues of bilateral interest. More importantly, Finland did not have the same natural constituency that Australia and Luxembourg could rely on, thanks to cultural, geographic, and historic ties.

Given its strong record and good image at the UN, Finland would probably have been

[14] According to OECD/DAC data, Finland allocated in 2011 40 % of its ODA in unearmarked contributions to multilateral institutions (compared with 32% for Luxembourg and 14% for Australia). www.oecd.org/dac/stats/statisticsonresourceflowstodevelopingcountries.htm

more at ease with a different set of competitors. But the specific configuration of the 2012 election and the way Australia and Luxembourg played their strengths narrowed its chances of success. There is no way to tell if a different campaign would have yielded a happier outcome for Finland. Some of the issues with which Finnish diplomats had to wrestle in the run-up to the election are of a structural nature. They probably could not have been overcome with a different campaign. These issues relate to the definition of the international profile of the country, the structure of its development cooperation policy, and the balance between its multilateral and bilateral diplomacies. The post-election phase offers an opportunity for Finland to take stock of these elements and move forward.

II. Lessons learned

The many interviews conducted for this survey offered opportunities to identify lessons learned from the 2012 campaign which can be of use for Finland but also for its close partners of the Nordic states and of the European Union, as well as for other UN members. Some of these lessons are directly related to elections. Others deal with larger issues and go beyond the electoral context at the UN.

1. For Finland

Finland should remain engaged in the work of the United Nations and on the international scene. In the wake of its defeat at the Security Council election, Finland might be tempted to reduce its involvement with the United Nations or with other countries. On the contrary, Finland should use the lessons learned from the campaign to build on its strengths and adapt, where needed, its diplomatic tools.

1.1. Stay engaged in the work of the UN

The reality which emerges from interviews with delegates in New York is that last year's elections have not tarnished the image of the country at the UN. Most delegates acknowledge Finland's good UN record and consider that electoral successes or failures come and go and are part of the life of the organization. They minimize the significance of the electoral vote: "What differentiated the candidates was unpredictable. It's a beauty contest. It's like the stock market. You win, you lose." Several delegates noted that the big winner of the 2012 election, Australia, had failed in its previous bid sixteen years ago.

As interviews showed, Finland has many assets and brings a contribution to the work of the UN which is widely respected.

Finland should certainly continue what it currently does. This includes its contributions to UN funds and programs (though, as indicated below, some adaptation could be considered), but also specific initiatives like its work on mediation and conflict prevention. It also includes its support to informal dialogue among member states at the

UN to facilitate discussions on policy issues and to help improve working methods of UN bodies. For instance, since 2003, Finland has hosted a retreat every fall for current and incoming members of the Security Council to share their experiences and reflect on the work of the Council. More than fifty states have participated in this retreat since its creation. Finland also started a similar annual retreat two years ago for the current and incoming presidents and vice-presidents of the General Assembly and its main committees. Continuing these initiatives would be a useful support to the work of the UN and a good investment for Finland.

Finland could do even more. Participation in peace operations has traditionally been a strong point in its UN record. However—due to budgetary and other constraints—its contributions to UN operations have significantly decreased in the past two decades. Its participation in EU- and NATO-led operations also decreased recently. Finland's overall contribution to international missions dropped from a high of about 2,000 in the 1990s to currently around 400 soldiers and 100 civilians.[15] Finland could reflect on ways to revive its participation in peace operations and bring concrete support to current efforts to address crises, in particular in Africa.

1.2. Sharpen its international profile and communicate more effectively

Finland's international profile reflects its values and priorities. Delegates with whom IPI met generally recognized these values—in particular human rights and gender equality, rule of law, sustainable development—and the role played by Finnish officials and personalities as problem solvers or mediators.

But interviewees sometimes seemed to wonder what differentiated Finland from its regional partners within the Western group, the EU, or among the Nordics. As noted earlier, most delegates thought that there was no significant difference in terms of policies between the three candidates. Some considered that Finland's values and roles could seem contradictory. One delegate observed that Finland was generally perceived as not having a "hidden agenda," but at the same time that its positions on social issues could give the impression that it was among those which tend to "impose their concepts and do not recognize cultural differences."

Right or wrong, perceptions matter, and views expressed by several delegates suggest that there may be a need for Finland to make sure that the gap does not widen between its objectives and the way some of its policies are perceived internationally.

Finland could seize the current opportunity to reflect on its international profile, on what makes this profile different or similar to the ones of its closest partners, and on ways to communicate more effectively about what it stands for and what it does.

One can look, for instance, at Finland's voluntary contributions to multilateral organizations. These contributions are an important dimension of the country's support

[15] See Finland's country profile in IPI's project "Providing for Peacekeeping," available at www.ipinst.org/peace-operations/providing-for-peacekeeping/programslist.html .

to the work of the UN and other institutions. But several interviewees noted that such contributions, spread across a wide range of programs and agencies, may not give a proper visibility to this important effort. Finland could consider a more selective funding strategy and concentrate its efforts on a smaller number of funds and agencies working in areas which match its most important priorities. This would help build a more concrete narrative on Finland's development aid.

For the Foreign Ministry, a more effective communication strategy would also require a reflection on ways to better include communication techniques in the training and professional development of diplomats. The 2012 election showed how Luxembourg—thanks to a well-thought-out communication strategy and to the skills of its campaign team—successfully managed to create with other countries a shared sense of mutual understanding that won widespread sympathy to its candidacy. More attention could be paid to communication skills and style in the multilateral context.

1.3. Diversify its bilateral partnerships

Finland's involvement in the work of multilateral organizations cannot be separated from its bilateral diplomacy. One of the main lessons learned from this survey of the 2012 election is that, to win international support, dynamic bilateral relationships remain what matters most.

Finland could review the tools at its disposal—its diplomatic network, its capacity to engage partners in joint initiatives, and its ODA—to better diversify its bilateral partnerships.

Finland's substantial diplomatic network is a strong asset. But the campaign has revealed a few blind spots—in particular in Francophone Africa—and a certain deficit of communication with Arab countries. Following up on previous efforts to adapt its representation abroad,[16] Finland could explore how to fill in these gaps. Cooperation with other Nordic or EU countries might be a way to identify cost-effective options.

Finland's ODA is a major asset and could perhaps be more clearly connected to its foreign policy. Development cooperation and Finland's diplomacy are already closely interdependent. As one interviewee noted, "Finland puts its money where its mouth is." But there may be a need to reflect on ways to better integrate Finland's development cooperation with its foreign policy and have it become part of its bilateral dialogue with a wider range of countries.

In a context of heavy budgetary and staffing constraints, the emphasis put on a limited number of cooperation partners and on multilateral channels to deliver ODA makes eminent sense. There is no question that Finland should continue to prioritize the most effective use of its resources from a development perspective. But by redeploying only a margin of its ODA to bilateral cooperation, Finland could reach out to a wider range of

[16] See Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland, Report on Finland's Representation Abroad, September 2009, available at http://formin.finland.fi/public/default.aspx?nodeid=44753&contentlan=2&culture=en-US.

countries than it currently does.

According to OECD/DAC data,[17] Finland currently allocates 40 % of its ODA in unearmarked contributions to multilateral institutions (compared with 35% for Sweden, 27% for Denmark, and 24% to Norway). If Finland were to align itself with its Nordic partners, and devote for instance only 35% of its ODA—like Sweden—to general support to multilateral organizations instead of 40%, it would free more than 75 million US dollars annually that it could allocate to bilateral cooperation. Going down to 27%—which would be comparable to what Denmark does—would free more than 180 million US dollars. Alternatively, given that Finland's ODA is expected to grow in the coming years,[18] it could choose to allocate its surpluses to bilateral development cooperation. This would not diminish Finland's standing with multilateral institutions and would create opportunities to engage a more diverse group of partners with whom it could conduct small-scale projects.

The recommendations proposed above should not be misinterpreted as an invitation to subordinate foreign policy priorities to the quest for optimal performance at UN elections. For a country like Finland, major election campaigns only take place once every fifteen to twenty years, and electoral strategies are probably not the best guide for defining policies. But the analysis of the recent electoral campaign helps to shed light on some gaps in Finland's diplomacy. These recommendations are meant to help Finland—or other countries with a similar profile—explore ways to better pursue its priorities, to build more diversified relationships, and to better connect with the rest of the UN membership.

2. For the Nordic countries

Finland's defeat came at the same time as Sweden's failure to be elected to the UN Human Rights Council and four years after Iceland's unsuccessful bid for a Security Council seat. Although each election had its own logic, many in New York consider these recent failures as "a wake-up call for the Nordics."

Still, some delegates warned against "jumping to conclusions too quickly." Interviews confirmed the generally "good image" of Nordic countries at the UN, even though some expressed more nuanced views.[19]

Several elements, however, are worth noting.

Given their long-time record of support to conflict prevention, mediation, and peace-making, their leading role in many UN and international debates and initiatives, and their

---

[17] ODA from DAC countries to multilateral organizations in 2011, available at www.oecd.org/dac/stats/statisticsonresourceflowstodevelopingcountries.htm .

[18] In the EU, Finland is committed to achieve by 2015 an ODA/GNI rate of 0.7% (from 0.53% in 2011). See Finland's Development Policy Programme, February 16, 2012, available at http://formin.finland.fi/public/default.aspx?contentid=251855&nodeid=15452&contentlan=2&culture=en-US .

[19] See section I-5 above.

generous contributions to the UN and to its peace operations, Nordic countries may have been tempted to see themselves as—according to one delegate—a “moral pillar” of the UN.

Large segments of the UN membership acknowledge this particular profile of the Nordics. But, as far as electoral campaigns are concerned, they also tend to consider a Nordic candidate as one competitor among others, and very often not too different politically from the other Western candidates.

Nordic states may need to better take into account these evolving views. They may also want to revisit their UN record. If Nordic funding to UN funds and programs remains higher than that of other donors, Nordic participation in UN peace operations has declined over the last two decades. Support for peace efforts has been less prominent. For a number of countries the Nordic "difference" has become less evident. Several delegates wondered about the "visibility" of Nordic aid. Some mentioned the more prominent profile assumed by new actors like Turkey, India, or—in the development field—China.

Nordic countries that are also members of the EU may also wish to revisit the way they reconcile these two identities. It appears that, during the campaign, Finland did not get full EU support. According to interviews, its European profile seemed less evident to some fellow EU members than that of Luxembourg. In a similar way, Ireland got strong European backing at the election to the Human Rights Council, but not Sweden.

There is a need for the Nordic states to address these perceptions. They could in particular reflect together on how a renewed commitment to the work of the UN and a more effective communication strategy could help them remain true to their values and at the same time engage more effectively with the other countries. Indeed, many of the Nordic countries’ numerous achievements can be an inspiration for others if the Nordics find the right way to communicate about them.[20]

3. For the EU

Recent campaigns showed sensitivities among UN member states on the issue of the representation of European Union countries at the Security Council.

Such sensitivities, exacerbated by the recent debates on the EU status at the General Assembly, will probably remain for a while. Even if the “anti-EU sentiment” fades away, EU countries can hardly expect to continue—as they did in the previous decade—to regularly get the two seats allocated to the WEOG at Security Council elections (except if they have a “clean slate,” with only two candidates for two seats, or if all three candidates are from the EU).

In this context, competition between EU members for elections at the Security Council—

[20] See *The Economist*, “The Next Supermodel,” Special Report on the Nordic Countries, February 2-8, 2013.

or other major UN elections—plays against the interest of EU members themselves. It gives a competitive edge to the non-EU candidates who enter the race and who can count on voters, including EU members, to split their support between EU and non-EU.

Within the EU, intra-European competition also generates disappointment for the candidate that is not supported by its closest partners and resentment among member states in case some EU members actually take sides in the campaign.

Vis-à-vis the UN membership, competition between EU members shows a lack of unity and solidarity within the Union and belies the European aspiration to a common foreign policy.

The members of the EU need to reflect on these perceptions and on ways to avoid competition among EU members at future elections.

This issue raises numerous difficulties both political—EU membership should not make it more difficult for countries to candidate to a seat at the Security Council—and technical—how to organize rotation between EU and non-EU countries for the WEOG seats or for the Eastern European seat?

A clear understanding among EU members that they need to work together to avoid electoral competition would strengthen the credibility of the EU foreign policy and would help enhance its contribution to the work of the UN.

4. For the UN membership

Big electoral campaigns are now a fact of life at the United Nations. The contest for seats at the Security Council is probably the most intense, but elections to other posts—such as the presidency of the General Assembly—or to other UN bodies—including ECOSOC and its subsidiary commissions or committees—are sometimes also very competitive. Countries tend to devote a larger amount of resources and mobilize at a higher political level to promote their candidacies. The stakes are higher than they used to be twenty years ago.

Some delegates believe that such competition is inherently a “healthy process” and a rare occasion for member states to present themselves to the UN membership and to submit their foreign policy to a reality check. Others are more “uncomfortable” with big campaigns and all the effort which is put into them. They consider that too much energy and resources are invested in these contests and distract from the real work of the UN.

Member states could consider various options to build on the merits of open debate and fair competition while at the same time limiting the risks of opportunistic actions which are not in the long-term interest of the organization.

4.1 Electoral campaigns require that candidates approach each potential voter and engage in a dialogue to find some common ground that can yield voter support. Bilateral

considerations are a decisive factor. But member states could also use this opportunity—more often than is currently the case—to **engage the candidates on policy issues** at the UN.

4.2 Substantial financial resources are invested in electoral campaigns at the UN—mostly for elections to the Security Council but also increasingly for elections to other bodies. Some countries are transparent about their campaign budget,[21] others are not. Candidates also leverage their development cooperation to woo voters, but the issue remains generally quite opaque.

Some reflection on these issues is needed. UN members cannot pretend to ignore them. There is probably not much point in trying to establish new rules or a code of conduct. But on a voluntary basis some countries could take the initiative to **promote transparency in electoral campaigns**, and this may create incentives for others.

On a voluntary basis, a candidate could:

- Be transparent from the very beginning of the campaign about its campaign budget (i.e., additional expenses for staff, communication, visits, compared to normal expenses in non-campaign years), and

- Reaffirm the rules and principles of its development cooperation (and preferably their consistency with internationally-agreed rules and guidelines, such as the ones of OECD-DAC).

Candidates would only need to disclose their additional expenses during the campaign years. This would not penalize those candidates who consistently devote important resources to UN funding or to activities related to the UN independently from their electoral ambitions.

Increased transparency could help limit the inflation of campaign budgets as well as opportunistic behaviors of countries that might adapt their development cooperation to short-term electoral purposes.

4.3 Beyond the issue of elections, interviews conducted for this survey shed light on a need for **a dialogue on the financing of development cooperation**.

Interviews for this study clearly showed diverging views among UN members on development cooperation and expectations related to it. Numerous delegates, in particular from the G77, indicated that donors are gauged according to the "visibility" of the aid they provide. According to interviews, new donors from the global south tend to prefer funding tangible projects, whereas traditional donors put the emphasis on more indirect forms of cooperation.

---

[21] All three WEOG candidates made this information available to their parliaments, and Australia also communicated about it to the larger public.

Each set of donors seems to follow its own rules: South-South cooperation for the new donors, OECD-DAC for the traditional ones, with little overlap between the two. If the shared goal is to promote development, there might be a need to reflect on how to create some common ground between these different models.

In addition to ODA and South-South cooperation, new modalities for funding international development are also emerging, such as innovative financing or revenue collected from emission trading. It would be useful to engage a dialogue on these opportunities and to reach a common understanding.

Methodology

The present study was undertaken by the International Peace Institute (IPI) at the request of the Foreign Ministry of Finland. Its objective is to provide an independent assessment and lessons learned of the 2012 elections for the WEOG seats at the Security Council.

IPI interviewed more than 50 delegates and senior officials from all regional groups in member states missions in New York and in capitals, as well as a few independent experts. For approximately 30 of these interviews, IPI used a semi-structured questionnaire—matching the headings of this report—which allowed new ideas to be brought up during the discussion as a result of what the interviewees were saying. The other 20 interviews were based on a more limited set of questions.

Most of these interviews took place in February and March 2012. All of them were conducted on a strictly confidential basis.

IPI is an international, not-for-profit think tank—with offices in New York and Vienna—dedicated to promoting the prevention and settlement of conflict by strengthening multilateral institutions. It conducts its work in an independent and impartial way.

IPI is grateful to the government of Finland for trusting the Institute with this study and for its willingness to promote transparency on a matter which is sensitive for all UN member states. IPI is also grateful to all officials, delegates, and experts who agreed to be interviewed and shared their views in the most candid way.

The interviews were conducted by Terje Rød-Larsen, President of IPI, François Carrel-Billiard, Managing Director, and Francesco Mancini, Senior Director of Research. François Carrel-Billiard served as *Rapporteur*.