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Poland's Campaign for a Non-Permanent Seat on the UN Security Council

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Poland is bidding against Bulgaria for a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council in the 2018 to 2019 term. This position would allow Poland to influence the discussion on global security and potential risks as well as being an opportunity to promote Poland on the global scene. To win the non-permanent seat, Poland should intensify the campaign, build a cohesive image for international partners and prepare for more than one round of voting.

The UN Security Council consists of five permanent and 10 non-permanent members which are elected for two-year terms. Seats are divided into five regional groups, two of which include Eastern European with a permanent seat for Russia and a non-permanent one for another nation elected from 22 countries. If the region nominates only one candidate, being granted a seat is only a formality. Such a situation occurred in 2015 when Ukraine was the single Eastern Europe candidate for 2016 to 2017, and in 2013 when only Lithuania bid for the seat. Two countries, Poland and Bulgaria, are bidding for the seat in the 2018 to 2019 term. If neither withdraws before June 2017, the UN General Assembly will have to choose by a two-thirds majority (129 votes).

International Discussion Forum. The UN Security Council aims to maintain peace and respond to threats and regional conflicts and is a key organ of the UN. Despite criticism of its inefficiency, the Council remains a central element of international dialogue amid tensions such as the current crisis in Ukraine. It can issue resolutions recommending certain actions to be taken by the international community, impose sanctions, and decide to implement peacekeeping operations. It is also the Security Council that decides on new UN members and nominates a candidate for the post of UN Secretary General before the General Assembly votes.

A presence on the Security Council gives a country the opportunity to present its stance on international security issues. Lithuania, which was a non-permanent member in the 2014 to 2015 term, strove for the Ukrainian conflict to be included on the SC agenda. Of the 34 meetings that addressed the topic, Vilnius instigated at least 12. Non-permanent members can also influence the final decisions of the Council. For example, Australia played an important role in negotiations on the text of a resolution on the Malaysian air crash over Ukraine, in which 38 of its citizens died, and on its adoption in June 2014.

Therefore, Poland could increase the scope of its diplomatic actions in issues such as the situations in Ukraine and Syria, the war on terrorism, the migration crisis and other risks for international security if it gains the seat for the 2017 to 2018 term. Membership of the Council could also offer Poland the opportunity to disseminate its own position on those issues, especially during the Security Council presidency. And non-permanent membership of the Security Council could increase a country's international standing, especially in the eyes of countries neighbouring conflict areas, international organisations and countries aspiring to permanent membership (Brazil, India, Germany and Japan), which want to be in continuous dialogue on all diplomatic levels with Council members. In addition, Poland's campaign and potentially successful bid could help to extend the reach of Polish activity beyond Europe. Finally, it may lead to the emergence of experienced staff and experts who could run for top jobs in international institutions.

Between Poland and Bulgaria. The most important feature of the campaign is to secure offers of reciprocal support. In exchange for a vote, one country supports the UNSC candidacy another, or lends its support on international or political issues, for example during a vote on a certain resolution. Bulgaria has already held a non-

permanent seat on the Security Council, in the 2002 to 2003 term. Sofia announced its candidacy for 2018 to 2019 in 2004, which enabled it to enter into early negotiations, for example by offering reciprocal support to India in 2007. Poland decided to bid for the same seat in 2009, one year after withdrawing its candidacy from the race against Bosnia and Herzegovina in support of the latter's statehood. Entering the race so late may mean that Poland has already lost some potential voters to Bulgaria. However, information on reciprocal support agreements is not public and, therefore, it is difficult to assess which candidate has gained more. Moreover, mutual support agreements are usually valid for only the first round of voting, so it would be possible for Poland to win over supporters of Bulgaria subsequent rounds.

Third countries also take into consideration other matters before supporting a candidate. This may also be a factor for countries that are not interested in exchanging support. From the geopolitical perspective, Poland may be considered a bigger and richer country than Bulgaria, and a closer ally of the United States, which may discourage developing countries, especially those that are sceptical of Washington. On the other hand, Bulgaria may be perceived as closer Russia, which could adversely affect the support of a few democratic countries, but which could also help it to win votes among the CIS countries. Arab countries and those of the wider Muslim world may have a positive perception of Polish support for raising the flag of the Palestinian Autonomous Territories in front of the UN building in New York in September 2015 (Bulgaria abstained). Financial support is an important factor for developing countries. According to OECD data, official development aid granted in 2014 by both countries did not exceed 0.1% of GNP, although nominally Poland has spent ten times more ($452 million) than Bulgaria ($49 million).

A country's commitment to the UN peacekeeping missions may also lend credibility to its bid for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council. Poland was deeply involved in "blue helmet" operations at the end of the 20th and beginning of the 21st centuries, but since closing the mission in Lebanon in 2009, Polish soldiers have not taken part in a UN peacekeeping operation. The current contingent consists of only three police officers and 11 experts. Bulgaria withdrew its armed forces from UN missions 10 years ago, and now has only one police officer and two experts serving such missions. Some countries may also take into account when and how often a candidate has served as a non-permanent member. Bulgaria had a seat in 2002 to 2003, and Poland in 1996 to 1997. In total Poland has been a member five times (for nine years altogether) and Bulgaria three times (for six years).

The bid for a seat on the Security Council may be affected by the election of the UN Secretary-General in June 2016. Most probably, for the first time in history, the post will be filled by a person from Eastern Europe. Two Bulgarians, Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO, and Kristalina Georgieva, EU commissioner for budget and human resources both stand good chances in the election. Should either of them win, it could, paradoxically, undermine the Bulgarian bid for the non-permanent seat. However, such a double is not unprecedented, as South Korea was elected as a non-permanent member of the in 2012 despite the fact that Ban Ki-moon had been nominated president for a second term, in 2011.

How to Increase the Chances? A Bulgarian withdrawal from the campaign in order to focus on the UN secretary general election would be the best scenario for Poland. However, if this does not happen, the competition will be tough. Previous campaigns, especially those of the Western European and Others Group, show that a country has to be extremely determined if it is to win a seat. Therefore, it is important for Poland to intensify the campaign, to contact potential supporters through various channels, and to ensure that its representatives mention the Polish candidacy at every possible meeting. Poland should also try to attend regional summits such as that of Non-Aligned states (to be held in Venezuela in 2016) and the summit of African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries.

During such meetings, representatives should try to address their message to particular receivers. Poland promotes itself by three general principles (solidarity, responsibility and commitment) and three priorities of potential Security Council membership (promotion of good governance and participation of women in public life, strengthening policies to prevent conflicts, and Security Council reform). Among developed countries, Poland should emphasise that it is a reliable NATO member, a stable economic partner, and a country that is fully engaged in its regional situation. Among developing countries, Poland should stress its endeavours to seek equality of opportunities, and highlight the improving Polish development and finance climate. It is also worth promoting Polish contributions to international law, as well as President Andrzej Duda's September 2015 statement that the "world is based on the strength of law, not the notion that might is right." A re-engagement in the UN peacekeeping missions might also send a positive message, and would additionally be an opportunity for Polish soldiers to gain experience during such operations.

The MFA and the Office of the President should intensify delegations of special envoys that strive to secure support, particularly from those countries in which Poland has no diplomatic mission. Promote the bid among developing countries should also be taken into consideration as, for the 78 ACP countries, this could be an opportunity to gain reciprocal support during inter-EU negotiations on the extension of the Cotonou Agreement between the EU and ACP after 2020.