

1486th meeting, 17 January 2024

1 General questions

1.7 Election of the Secretary General - Procedure

The Secretariat recalls that, on 18 October 2023 (1478th meeting, item 1.7), the Deputies adopted the timetable for the election procedure of the Secretary General. The closing date for the submission of candidates is fixed at 10 January 2024.

By letter dated 1 December 2023, the Estonian authorities informed the President of the Committee of Ministers and the Secretary General that they propose the candidature of Mr Indrek Saar for the post of Secretary General (Appendix 1). The curriculum vitae of Mr Saar appears in Appendix 2.

¹ This document has been classified restricted until examination by the Committee of Ministers.



***Minister of Foreign Affairs
Republic of Estonia***

Tallinn, 1 December 2023

Excellencies,

Allow me to refer to the letter of 25 October 2023 from H. E. Mr. Krišjānis Karinš, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Latvia and then Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers, regarding the nomination of candidates for the election of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, due to take place in June 2024.

I have the honour to take this opportunity to officially present on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Estonia, the candidature of Mr. Indrek Saar for the position of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe.

Mr. Indrek Saar was the Minister of Culture in a significant time for Estonia - during our Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in 2016 and the Presidency of the Council of the European Union in 2017. He is a distinguished politician, former Chairman of the Social Democratic Party of Estonia. Previously, Mr. Indrek Saar has been a Member of the Estonian Parliament for four consecutive terms.

Mr. Indrek Saar has gained profound experience in relation to the work, activities and functioning of the Council of Europe over the years as a member of the Estonian delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe between 2007 and 2023. In this capacity, he has served in a prominent role of the Chairperson of the Committee on Rules of Procedure, co-rapporteur of country monitoring and participated in numerous election monitoring missions.

I am confident that Mr. Indrek Saar would be an excellent Secretary General of the Council of Europe considering his vision, commitment, high level managerial experience and communication skills to contribute to the future of the Organisation where democracy, human rights and rule of law are prerequisites for better lives.

Please accept, Excellencies, the assurances of my highest consideration.



Margus Tsahkna

H.E. Ms. Marija Pejčinović Burić
Secretary General of the Council of Europe
STRASBOURG

H. E. Ms. Dominique Hasler
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Liechtenstein
VADUZ

Letter of candidacy

The more turbulent the times, the more important the role of the Council of Europe as the guardian of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Our commonly shared values must firmly and consistently be the basis of all Council of Europe's decisions. This requires a maximum effort at all levels of the Organisation. While being united around common values, we are also individuals or represent countries with different worldviews, cultural backgrounds and experiences.

Our agenda continues to be dominated by the consequences of Russia's aggression against Ukraine. At the same time, we face democratic backsliding and substantial human rights challenges. Nor can we underestimate the impact of modern technologies on human rights. No single country can manage these challenges alone. This is where the strength of multilateralism lies.

I am proud of our Organisation's principled stance regarding current crises of human rights, the rule of law and democracy. It is a significant achievement that we have reached consensus on our role and reflected it at the highest political level in the Reykjavik Declaration. We should continue to implement, with utmost dedication, all that was agreed in Reykjavik in our daily work. This is what is expected of us.

Our ambition must be no less than being frontrunners and standard setters on a global scale. The Council of Europe already has many examples of great impact starting with the European Convention of Human Rights and the European Court of Human Rights.

The Venice Commission or Council of Europe conventions such as the one on action against violence against women and domestic violence or against trafficking in human beings, on prevention of torture and inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, protection of minorities or the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime are some additional examples of our leading role. Our objective concerning Artificial Intelligence and Digital Technology should be just as explicit. This also means that our Organisation needs to keep up with the times internally, as technological innovation will make our work more efficient, relevant and visible.

I remain convinced that my extensive and diverse leadership experience in politics, in particular as political party leader and Secretary General and member of both government and parliament, as well as in the field of performing arts, will serve as an excellent prerequisite for ensuring the organisational development of the Council of Europe, promoting its role and impact internationally and increasing its visibility.

Working in full synergy with both its statutory organs, the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly, and always defending human rights, democracy and the rule of law.



Indrek Saar

Curriculum Vitae

Personal Information

- Name: Indrek Saar
- Date of birth: 20 February 1973
- Nationality: Estonian



Professional Activities

- **2019–2023: Member of the Parliament of Estonia, Chairperson of the Social Democratic Party (SDE) Fraction**
 - Member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, substitute member of the European Union Affairs Committee, chairperson of the SDE fraction.
- **2019–2022: Chairperson of the Social Democratic Party of Estonia**
 - Led successfully the party's efforts to prevent a referendum on the definition of marriage only between a man and a woman proposed by the far right party in the government.
 - After the municipal elections in 2021 the Social Democratic Party was part of the coalitions in 22 municipalities all over Estonia (out of 79), including the capital Tallinn and the second two biggest cities in Estonia.
- **2015–2019: Minister of Culture of the Republic of Estonia**
 - Co-ordinated the cultural programme of the Estonian Chairmanship in the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in 2016.
 - Led the work of the EU Ministers of Culture and Sport during Estonia's Presidency of the Council of the European Union in 2017.
 - Co-ordinated the centenary of the Republic of Estonia with a wide cultural program all over the world.
 - As a member of the Government contributed to the successful campaign that brought Estonia a seat in the UN Security Council.
 - Streamlined the basis for funding sport.
 - Significantly increased the salaries of cultural workers and coaches.
 - Longest-serving Minister of Culture in the history of the Republic of Estonia.

- **2011–2015: Secretary General of the Social Democratic Party of Estonia**
 - Responsible for the day-to-day operations of the party and for leading its electoral campaigns.
 - During time as Secretary General, the party's membership grew by more than 30%.
- **2009–2011: Deputy Chairperson of the Social Democratic Party of Estonia**
 - Responsible for the party organisation.
 - Led the party's efforts to merge with the Estonian People's Party, which resulted in the party's best electoral result in independent Estonia in 2011.
- **2007-2015; 2019-2020; 2022-2023: Member of the Estonian Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE)**
 - Served as the chairperson of the national delegation, the chairperson of the Committee on Rules of Procedure as well as the vice-chairperson of the Socialists, Democrats and Greens Group.
 - Participated in election monitoring missions in Moldova (as the head of the delegation), Albania, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Montenegro, Serbia, Ukraine and Russia. Co-rapporteur of the PACE for the monitoring of Serbia.
 - Worked in several PACE committees: the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons, the Monitoring Committee, the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy, the Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee, the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media as well as the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination.
- **2007–2015: Member of the Parliament of Estonia**
 - 2007-2011 Member of the Legal Committee, vice-chairperson of the Social Democratic Party fraction.
 - 2011-2015 vice-chairperson of the Constitutional Committee (also embodies human rights topics).
- **2006–2007: CEO of the NO99 / Vanalinnastudio Theatre**
 - Created a new theatre called NO99, which made a significant impact to the Estonian and international culture.
 - Led a major restructuring of the theatre, which resulted in the theatre to be relaunched in less than a year.
- **2006–2009: Estonian Association of Performing Arts Institutions, Chairperson**
 - Led the Estonian Theatre Directors' Association. In 2006 the organisation, which had previously been limited to the leaders of state theatres, was transformed into the Estonian Performing Arts Association, a professional organisation representing the interests of all Estonian performing arts venues.

- **2004–2005: Advisor to the NO99 / Vanalinnastudio Theatre**
 - Assisted the financial turnaround of the theatre, which was in a state of both artistic and financial bankruptcy.
- **2002–2007: Deputy Chairperson of Rakvere City Council**
- **2000–2006: Estonian Theatre Directors' Association, Chairperson**
- **1996–2006: CEO of Rakvere Theatre**
 - Turned around the theatre's finances and operations, leading to a significant increase in attendance (from 20,000 to 60,000 per year) and a complete renovation of the theatre building.
 - In cooperation with the artistic director created a new vision for the theatre, which emphasised innovative productions and community engagement.
 - Received the Rakvere Civic Award for outstanding contribution to the theatre and the city of Rakvere.

Additional Professional Commitments

- Estonian Olympic Committee, Executive Committee Member
- Foundation for the Competence Centre for Physical Activity, Supervisory Board Member
- Estonian Actors' Union, Member
- Stage Combat Union, Member
- Estonian Public Broadcasting, former Supervisory Board Member
- Rakvere Theatre, former Supervisory Board Member
- Foundation NO99, former Supervisory Board Member
- Estonian National Opera, former Supervisory Board Member
- Estonian Academy of Arts, former Supervisory Board Member
- Estonian Cultural Endowment, former Supervisory Board Member

Awards

- 2001: Cultural Worker of the Year
- 2001: Estonian Cultural Endowment's Annual Award for Performing Arts
- 2005: Actor Ants Lauter Award
- 2007: Commander of the Order of Merit of Spain
- 2008: Rakvere Crown Medal
- 2019: Estonian Olympic Committee Medal of Merit
- 2023: Third Class Order of the State of Estonia
- 2023: Title of honorary associate of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and Assembly medal

Education

- 1996: Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre, acting, Master of Arts
- 1991-1992 Rønne Gymnasium, Denmark, exchange student
- 1991: Kuressaare 2nd Secondary School

Languages

- Estonian (mother tongue)
- English (fluent)
- Danish (fluent)
- Russian (fluent)
- German (basic)
- French (basic)

Hobbies

- Theatre
- Basketball
- Beach volleyball
- Cross-country skiing
- Beekeeping