

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 8 January 2024, the Belgian authorities informed the President of the Committee of Ministers and the Secretary General that they propose the candidature of Mr Didier Reynders for the post of Secretary General. The corresponding letters and the curriculum vitae of Mr Reynders are attached.

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

**ROYAUME DE BELGIQUE**

Ministre des Affaires étrangères,
des Affaires européennes et du Commerce extérieur,
et des Institutions culturelles fédérales

Ms Marija Pejčinović Burić

Secretary General of the Council of Europe
STRASBOURG

Ms Dominique Hasler

Minister of Foreign Affairs of Liechtenstein
VADUZ

Your letter of

Your references

Our references

Date

HL/DD

08/01/2024

to be mentioned in all correspondence

Subject: Procedure for appointing candidate(s) for the post of Secretary General of the Council of Europe

Madam Secretary General,
Madam Chairwoman of the Committee of Ministers,

I have the honour to refer to the procedure for the nomination of candidates for the post of Secretary General of the Council of Europe.

On behalf of the Government of the Kingdom of Belgium, I have the honour to officially present the candidacy of Mr Didier Reynders for the post of Secretary General of the Council of Europe. I would be very obliged if this candidacy could be transmitted to the Committee of Ministers.

Mr Reynders is currently European Commissioner for Justice, a position he has held since December 2019. In this capacity, he is responsible for ensuring that the rule of law is respected in the European Union. In this context, he has worked closely with the Council of Europe throughout his mandate as Commissioner.

In this capacity, he is strongly committed to supporting Ukraine, both on matters concerning responsibility for international crimes committed in this conflict, and with regard to compliance with the Union's restrictive measures, as well as the reconstruction of Ukraine.

Prior to this, Commissioner Reynders held a number of high-level ministerial posts in the Belgian federal government from 1999 to 2019. He was Minister of Finance from 1999 to 2011, then Minister of Foreign and European Affairs from 2011 to 2019. From 2004 to 2019, he was also Deputy Prime Minister. In 2019, he was also Minister of Defence.

I am convinced that Didier Reynders' experience at national and international level, his commitment to democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights, and his solid network make him a very strong candidate. His values-based political vision and his negotiating and communication skills are all assets from which the Council of Europe would benefit.

Attached to this letter you will find Mr Reynders' letter of application and curriculum vitae.

Please accept, Madam Secretary General, Madam Chairwoman of the Committee of Ministers, the assurance of my highest consideration.



Hadja Lahbib



I would like to inform you of my candidacy for the position of Secretary General of the Council of Europe. Building on the experience gained during my career, I am determined to contribute to defending the values of the organisation, its strategic orientation and its outreach in Europe and the world.

In Reykjavik, in 2023, the Heads of State and Government committed themselves to strengthening the role of the Council of Europe in the European multilateral architecture and global governance. In a geopolitical context characterised by numerous regional and global challenges and crises, including the Russian aggression against Ukraine, and where values such as the rule of law are being called into question, the Council of Europe's action on human rights, democracy and the rule of law is more essential than ever.

My experience as Belgian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Foreign and European Affairs and Defence, and then as European Commissioner for Justice, has enabled me to acquire in-depth knowledge of multilateral issues and to develop a high-level network. I have strong competences in intergovernmental negotiations, as I have shown when I chaired the Eurogroup at the time of the introduction of the euro, or the ECOFIN Council in 2001 and 2010.

As European Commissioner responsible for the respect of the rule of law, I have been committed to promoting an approach based on dialogue and equal treatment between States. Then Minister for Foreign and European Affairs, in 2016 I proposed the establishment of a peer review of the situation of the rule of law in each EU Member State. The annual report on the rule of law, published by the Commission since I took office, encourages reforms and allows for such a dialogue. In this context, I have been working closely with the Council of Europe, including the European Court of Human Rights, the Venice Commission and GRECO. The annual report will be extended in 2024 to include the most advanced candidate countries in their accession negotiations to the EU. Moreover, my work on the protection of personal data or in view of establishing ethical rules on artificial intelligence illustrates my commitment to defend the rights and dignity of everyone.

The Russian aggression against Ukraine recalls the importance of an international order based on respect for the law. As European Commissioner for Justice, I have been fully committed to ensuring that international crimes do not go unpunished, but also that Russia will contribute to reconstruction efforts. I would be honoured to continue this commitment in support of Ukraine as Secretary General.

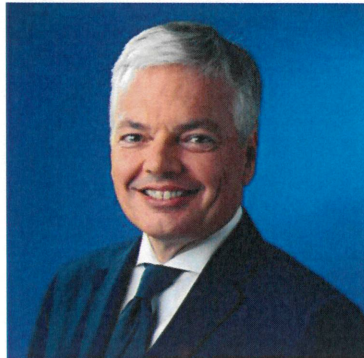
Having had the opportunity to lead the Belgian departments of Finance, Diplomacy and Defence, and now the Directorate-General for Justice and the Internal Audit Service of the European Commission, I have shown leadership, assisted by high-quality teams, in multicultural and international contexts. During my national and European political career, I have been able to make use of my ability to negotiate with high-level interlocutors and to communicate to large audiences, both in English and French.

I wish to strengthen the role of the Secretary General and its relations with the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly. My ambition is to work closely with both bodies, through increased exchange of information and coordination. It is also important to promote synergies between the Council of Europe and the European Union at the highest level, while preserving the unique system specific to the Council of Europe, to which the European Union must adhere.

I want to be an ambitious and unifying Secretary General, guaranteeing respect for diversity and the defence of our common values.

Didier REYNDERS

Didier REYNDERS



Current position: EU Commissioner for Justice, in charge of the Rule of Law, consumer protection, data protection and the Commission's Internal Audit Service

Previous government positions: Member of the Belgian federal government from 12 July 1999 to 30 November 2019

- Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Affairs, in charge of Beliris and Federal Cultural Institutions (October 2014 – November 2019), and of Defence (December 2018 – November 2019).
- Minister of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and European Affairs (2011 - 2014)
- Deputy Prime Minister (18 July 2004 – 30 November 2019), also Minister in charge of the Belgian Buildings Agency (2003 - 2011), Minister of Institutional Reforms (2004 - 2011), Minister in charge of the National Lottery, the Federal Holding and Investment Company (FHIC) and insurance companies (2007 - 2011)
- Minister of Finance (1999 - 2011)
- President of the Ecofin (July - December 2001 / July - December 2010)
- Chairman of the Eurogroup (2001)
- Chairman of the G10, meeting of the main creditor States (2002)
- Member of the G7 (2001)

Political activities

- Chairman of the Mouvement Réformateur (MR) (2004 - 2011)
- Member of the Bureau and Deputy Chairman of the Liberal International (2005 - 2011)
- Chairman of the liberal PRL-FDF Group in the Belgian Parliament (1995 - 1999)
- Member of Parliament (1992-1999)
- Chairman of the Brussels Federation of the MR (2013 - 2019)
- Member and Leader of the MR group of the Uccle Town Council (2012 – 2018)
- Chairman of the Provincial and District MR Federation of Liège (1995 - 2004)
- Leader of the MR Group of the Liège Town Council (1995 - 2012)
- Member of the Liège Town Council (1988 - 2012)
- Chief of staff of the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Justice and Institutional Reforms, Jean Gol (1987 - 1988)

Academical functions

- Lecturer at the Université libre de Bruxelles (2017 - 2019)
- Visiting Lecturer at the Louvain School of Management – Université catholique de Louvain (2007 - 2019)
- Visiting Professor – HEC Management School of the University of Liège (2005 - 2017)
- Lecturer / Visiting Professor at the Hautes Etudes commerciales of Liège (1989 - 2004)

Other professional activities

- Chairman of the National Society of Airways (1991 - 1993)
- Chairman of the National Railway Company of Belgium (1986 - 1991)
- Director General of the Local Authorities Department of the Ministry of the Walloon Region (1985 - 1988)
- Lawyer (1991 - 1985)