

Who can lead a disarrayed world? Electing the next UN Secretary-General

Thursday, November 20, 2025 | 13:15-14:45 PM
Geneva Graduate Institute (IHEID), Ivan Pictet Auditorium
Chem. Eugène-Rigot 2, 1202 Geneva

Background

In 2026, United Nations member states will elect the next Secretary-General. Leading the world's most representative and comprehensive institution is often referred to as "the most impossible job in the world". It has become more complicated as the UN is currently under ever-increasing financial and political pressure, exacerbated by the general loss of legitimacy and trust that the rules-based international order musters. Against this geopolitical backdrop, FES New York commissioned a **study by professor Anjali Dayal** (Fordham University) to assess the challenges for the next SG selection process. The publication elaborates on the requirements and experiences that candidates should be equipped with; identifies potentials and hurdles for meaningful reform of the SG selection; and, towards that end, provides arguments and policy recommendations to forge coalitions among UN member states, academia, and civil society. **This event – co-organized by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Geneva Office, the Graduate Institute's Law Department, and the Global Governance Centre – marks the Geneva launch of the study.** It will provide a platform to discuss how the upcoming selection process is perceived from Geneva's unique vantage point as a hub of multilateral diplomacy. Together, we will reflect on what insights and perspectives the Geneva community can contribute to the global conversation on UN leadership and legitimacy.

Program

Opening

Felix Kirchmeier, Executive Director, Geneva Human Rights Platform / Geneva Academy
Renate Tenbusch, Director, FES Geneva

Panelists

Anjali Dayal, Associate Professor of International Politics, Fordham University New York and author of the study
Robert Piper, Assistant Secretary-General, Special Adviser on Solutions to Internal Displacement
Additional panelist – to be confirmed

Moderation

Nico Krisch, Graduate Institute