The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Azerbaijan Wins UN Council Seat, Slovenia Bitter

October 25, 2011



UNITED NATIONS — Azerbaijan has secured a seat on the UN Security Council for next year and 2013 after Slovenia withdrew from the race following 16 inconclusive rounds of voting.

Azerbaijan's victory was confirmed when it received 155 votes in the 193-nation UN General Assembly, ensuring that it joins Pakistan, Morocco, Guatemala and Togo as temporary members of the 15-nation council in January. Those four nations were elected to the council Friday.

The Security Council is the powerhouse of the United Nations, with the ability to impose sanctions and dispatch peacekeeping forces.

Western diplomats in New York said Azerbaijan might join other nations resisting any renewed U.S. and European Union push for UN sanctions against Iran or Syria next year. They said Pakistan would likely take a similar approach.

A Slovenian diplomat made clear his disappointment to the assembly when he announced

the decision of the tiny Alpine nation and European Union member state to withdraw after 16 rounds of voting failed to produce a winner.

"We don't approve the way this campaign was held, and we don't approve the way these elections were held," he said.

Slovenia had been trailing Azerbaijan by about 40 votes.

It will be the first stint on the council for Azerbaijan.

In the most competitive council elections for years, only Guatemala ran unopposed within its region. Pakistan scraped through in the first round of voting, defeating Kyrgyzstan for an Asian seat with the minimum required tally.

Pakistan will be joining its archrival India, which is on the council through 2012. Pakistan's UN ambassador, Abdullah Hussain Haroon, welcomed his country's election to the United Nations' elite body and said he expected to work well with his Indian counterpart, Hardeep Singh Puri, next year.

There are five veto-holding, nuclear-armed permanent members of the council — Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States — and 10 temporary elected members without vetoes. With India and Pakistan on the council next year, seven of the 15 members will be nuclear powers.

Lebanon, Nigeria, Gabon, Bosnia and Brazil will leave the council in January. The four temporary members that will remain through 2012 besides India are Colombia, Germany, Portugal and South Africa.

India joined the council this year and will stay through 2012. India and Pakistan have fought three wars, mainly over Kashmir, since gaining independence from Britain in 1947.

The last time the two nuclear-armed states served together on the council was in 1977. UN diplomats said they do not expect any regional tension as a result of Pakistan joining again. Pakistan has served six previous council terms.

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