

WTO to pick 1st female leader

GENEVA (AP) — The World Trade Organization announced Thursday that South Korea's trade minister and a Harvard-trained former Nigerian finance minister have qualified as the two finalists to become the next director general, ensuring a woman in the top job for the first time.

A selection committee said that Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala of Nigeria and Yoo Myung-hee of South Korea qualified for the final round in a race expected to end in the coming weeks. They were picked out of a pool of five candidates.

"Both of the women that are in the final round are remarkably well qualified. This is something on which everyone has agreed," WTO spokesman Keith Rockwell told reporters. "We've been impressed with them from the very beginning."

The Geneva-based WTO's General Council, made up of envoys from the 164-member body, eliminated Amina Mohamed, a former trade minister from Kenya; Mohammad Maziad Al-Tuwaijri, a Saudi former economy minister, and British former International Trade Secretary and Brexit proponent Liam Fox.

"Deeply grateful and honored to be selected for the final round in the selection process of the next @WTO Director General!" tweeted Yoo, who has a law degree from Vanderbilt University. "We need a capable & experienced new leader who can rebuild trust and restore relevance of the @WTO. I look forward to your continued support! Thank you!!!"



Okonjo-Iweala on Twitter thanked WTO members for their support and wrote that she was "happy to be in the final round."

A previous round had cut the list of candidates from eight to five. The winner is expected to be announced no later than early November.

The previous WTO director general, Roberto Azevedo of Brazil, made a surprise announcement in May that he would leave the job a year early, citing a "personal decision." He left without a successor on Aug. 31.



AP file photos
The candidates to become the next WTO director general, Yoo Myung-hee, of South Korea, left, and Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, of Nigeria, are seen in Geneva in July.

Azevedo's seven-year tenure was marked by intense pressure from U.S. President Donald Trump, who repeatedly accused the WTO of unfair treatment of the U.S. and started a trade war with China in defiance of the WTO system. In the past, Trump has threatened to pull the United States out of the trade body altogether.

The WTO's dispute settlement system is perhaps the world's best-known venue for resolving international trade disputes — such as those pitting plane-makers Boeing and Airbus in recent decades. But

the U.S. has clogged up the dispute settlement machinery by blocking any new members for its highest court, the Appellate Body, which has unable to address new disputes since last year.

The next director general will face the daunting task of keeping the United States on board amid Washington's allegations that China is engaged in unfair practices such as excessively subsidizing industries and stealing intellectual property — notably at the expense of Western businesses hoping to tap the expanding Chinese market.

EU urges West Balkans to create single economic area

PRISTINA (AP) — The European Union's enlargement commissioner on Thursday urged the countries of the Western Balkans to create a single economic area to better feel the benefits of the bloc's investment plans.

Oliver Varhelyi was in Kosovo as part of a tour of the Balkans. He urged Kosovo to "speed up the reforms because these investments go hand in hand with the reform efforts."

The EU this week approved a €9 billion (\$10.58 billion) package of grants for the Western Balkan countries through 2027.

Varhelyi said they are "in coordination with our international financial institution partners to create an additional €20 billion in guarantees for the region." The sum would amount to one-third of the region's GDP, and the EU expects it to boost the economy by 3% to 4%.

"It is crucial to have a single economic area in the Balkans, because these investments will only bring the benefits if these investments work regionally," Varhelyi said at a news conference with Kosovo Prime Minister Avdullah Hoti.

"The economic investment plan can be a game changer for the region. It can change significantly the landscape of this region within four to five years," he said.

The bloc wants to see further progress on issues relating to the rule of law, corruption, judiciary reform and better public administration.

Western Balkan countries are at different stages of EU membership: Serbia and Montenegro have already started negotiating some chapters of



Pool Photo via AP
European Commissioner for Neighborhood and Enlargement Policy Oliver Varhelyi speaks during an online press conference at the European Commission headquarters in Brussels on Tuesday.

the final deal, while Albania and North Macedonia have been given the green light to start talks. Kosovo and Bosnia-Herzegovina have signed a Stabilization and Association Agreement, the first step in the path to membership.

Varhelyi said he saw progress in the Kosovo-Serbia talks on normalizing their ties and welcomed the United States' renewed interest in the process.

He said many of the EU plans and those of the United States converged.

U.S. President Donald Trump's administration has been working to normalize relations between Serbia and Kosovo, and in September, Serbian President Aleksander Vucic and Kosovo's Hoti signed a deal at the White House that aims to normalize economic relations.

Later Thursday, Varhelyi visited the Serbian capital of Belgrade, where he said that the EU wants to see the region — where China and Russia are also vying for influence — move closer to the bloc.

National Day of Fiji

Publicity

A progressive, sustainable Republic of Fiji for all

By Isikeli Ulunairai Mataitoga
Ambassador of Fiji

On the special occasion of the Republic of Fiji's 50th anniversary of independence, it is with great pleasure and honor that I extend on behalf of H.E. the President of the Republic of Fiji, Major General (Rtd) Jioji Konusi Konrote, Honorable Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama Prime Minister, the government and the people of Fiji, warm greetings to Their Imperial Majesties the Emperor and Empress and the members of the Imperial Household. I also extend greetings to the government of Japan, Prime Minister Honorable Yoshihide Suga and the people of this great nation.

To all Fiji nationals and friends of Fiji in Japan, I extend a big "Bula Vinaka" to you all.

Fiji-Japan bilateral relations are underpinned by their shared belief in the rule of law, democratic principles, respect for sovereign rights of states and multilateralism under the auspices of the United Nations.

This year, 2020, marks the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the diplomatic relationship between Japan and the Republic of Fiji. It is also the 50th anniversary of Fiji's independence. On this historic occasion, we can look back with pride because of the development of closer bilateral relations between Fiji and Japan. Japanese development assistance to Fiji over the last 50 years has been directly responsible for much of the development of infrastructure that today underpins Fiji's socioeconomic development and makes it what it is today. In times of natural disaster rehabilitation, Japanese development assistance has always been available for rebuilding Fiji's lives destroyed and building back better infrastructure to support Fiji's economic resilience.

The good and close bilateral relations between our two countries have seen an increase in high-level visits between our respective leaders and in people-to-people exchanges.

Japanese assistance toward the development of Fiji's human resource and capacity development in the form of graduate and postgraduate studies in Japanese universities and other higher-level institutes of learning has significantly contributed to Fiji's socioeconomic sustainable development achievements. For all of this assistance, Fiji is deeply grateful to Japan for its support and understanding.

In the current COVID-19 pandemic era, Japanese government assistance to Fiji has been early and focused in meeting the identified priorities of the Fiji government and people.

Fiji is committed to deepening relations through high-level engagements particularly in key areas focusing on achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. People-to-people exchanges, one of the pillars of this cordial relationship, have surged in recent years, with in-

creasing interest from regional Japan to establish sister-school relations and sports exchanges. We acknowledge Fiji's increasing diplomatic footprint in Japan owing to the excellent work of our honorary consuls.

Fiji expresses its deep gratitude to the government of Japan for its continuous support through its development assistance over the last 50 years. Japan remains one of Fiji's major development partners, through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). Through JICA, Japan's numerous and generous support is evident in the form of loan provision, technical cooperation and volunteer programs in diverse areas such as infrastructure, maritime and fisheries, climate change, education and health.

We acknowledge the positive impact Japanese volunteers have had on the lives of the Fiji people in the last 50 years. Their work and contribution have touched the lives of countless Fijians, who have benefitted from their technical expertise and support. Technical cooperation is also ongoing in meteorology, electricity, water supply, disaster risk reduction, shipping and waste management. Fijian students are also studying under the Japanese Government Scholarship Program. Fiji is grateful to the government of Japan for such enduring support, especially in our times of greatest need.

May I extend our sincere appreciation to the govern-



ment and people of Japan for steadfast cooperation, to all our corporate sponsors, the honorary consulates of Fiji in Japan for their support and the genuine commitment to the promotion of goodwill between Japan and Fiji.



Courtesy of the Fiji Embassy

On Feb. 26, 2020, Fiji's Prime Minister Hon. Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama received Hon. Mr. Norihiro Nakayama, then parliamentary vice-minister for foreign affairs of Japan, who called on him at the Prime Minister's Office in Suva, Fiji.

Congratulations
to the People of
the Republic of Fiji
on the 50th Anniversary
of Their Independence

Akita-Fiji
Friendship Association
Chairman
Yoshiyuki Tsuji
Honorary Consulate of
the Republic of Fiji in Akita
Hon. Consul
Hiroki Miura

Congratulations
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Fiji Hokkaido
Honorary Consulate of
the Republic of Fiji in Ebetsu
(Hokkaido)
在江別(北海道)フィジー共和国名誉領事館
Hon. Consul Mr. Chikayuki Shimizu
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CONGRATULATIONS
to the People of
the Republic of Fiji
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of Their Independence

Honorary Consul of Fiji in Yokohama
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