



## AS IT IS

# American Woman to Lead UN Communications Agency

September 29, 2022

Doreen Bogdan-Martin of the United States has been elected to head the International Telecommunications Union. The agency is known as the ITU. It works to set international **standards** for the use of electromagnetic signals for radio, internet and television communications.

Russia's Rashid Ismailov was the only other candidate in a vote Thursday among the agency's 193 member states. The election was held in Bucharest, Romania. The final vote count was 139 to 25. As many as 29 members chose not to vote.

Bogdan-Martin has worked for the ITU for 29 years. She is the first woman to reach the position of secretary-general and the first American since the 1960s.

She called the position “**immensely** important” and said it was an honor “for me and my country” to lead the organization.

The job begins on January 1 and lasts for four years.

Bogdan-Martin said she hopes her new job will be an “**inspiration**” to women.

She said her goal is to “deliver **affordable**, trusted and meaningful **connectivity** to all.” She called it a dream she wants to make real.

Universal connectivity is the idea of offering internet and communications technology to all people around the world.

Before the election, U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres asked voters to put “humanity's progress” first, as 2.9 billion people do not have internet access.

## Political questions

American officials have been interested in the position. Experts said outgoing ITU leader Houlin Zhao of China, an official of the ruling Chinese Communist Party, was too close with Chinese leaders. They criticized him as putting Chinese interests first.

In addition, some observers see an American winning the position in an election against a Russian as a political statement from the U.N. about the war in Ukraine.

Ismailov was once a deputy telecommunications minister in Russia. He also worked for the communications companies Eriksson, Nokia and Huawei.

International media observers have also been concerned about Russia's use of the internet and other communications technology. They accuse Russia of trying to **disrupt** elections, the activities of foreign companies and governments and of spying on people.

The United States has also been criticized for similar actions. Former intelligence worker, Edward Snowden, said the U.S. uses technology to spy on civilians and government officials. Snowden now lives in Russia. Russian President Vladimir Putin officially gave him Russian citizenship this week, the Associated Press reported.

I'm Dan Friedell.

*Dan Friedell adapted this story for VOA Learning English based on a report by the Associated Press.*

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## Words in This Story

**standards** -n. (pl.) a fixed measurement or required quality level set by a government or an oversight body

**immense** -adj. very big in size or amount

**inspiration** -n. an example that makes people want to do something

**affordable** -adj. something that is not too costly in a normal situation

**connectivity** -n. the ability to create and provide a connection between two or more points in a telecommunications system

**disrupt** -v. to prevent something from continuing as normal

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