



UN moves to replace Del Ponte at Rwanda tribunal

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THE UN Security Council intends yesterday to remove Carla Del Ponte as prosecutor for the Rwanda genocide court but retain her as chief prosecutor for the Balkan war crimes tribunal.

Def Ponte, a tough Swiss former attorney general, now holds both jobs for four-year terms, which expire on Sept. 14, and the 15-member council wants to split the posts. A U.S.-drafted resolution readied for adoption amends statutes for the Rwanda tribunal, based in Arusha, Tanzania. It asks Secretary General Kofi Annan to nominate a new prosecutor for the court trying perpetrators of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, which cost some 800,000 lives.

Diplomats expect the post to go to an African.

At the same time the council's resolution "welcomes the intention" of Annan outlined in a July 28 letter to reappoint Del Ponte as prosecutor for the Hague based tribunal on war crimes committed in the former Yugoslavia during the Balkan wars in the 1990s.

The resolution also asks the presidents of both UN tribunals to submit plans to end their work. The courts are to complete investigations by the end of 2004, complete most trials by 2008 and close down before the end of 2010.

Del Ponte had argued she was a victim of pressure from Rwanda as well as a "media campaign to destroy my reputation."

The Rwandan Tutsi-led government had stopped cooperating with the UN court after Del Ponte said she would also pursue possible crimes committed by the army in reprisal killings against the majority Hutus. Some 30,000 people were killed after the Tutsi army stopped the genocide.

To this end, the resolution called on Rwanda and neighbouring countries to assist the tribunal, "including investigations of the Rwandan Patriotic Army."