

Muslim Council of Britain elections
20 June 2010

Mohammed Amin

Manifesto for Secretary General

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2) Purpose of this document

On 20 June 2010 the MCB must elect a new Secretary General as well as electing the other office bearers. This document explains why I am offering myself for that role, and provides information for potential electors.

I invite other potential candidates to publish similar information about themselves, and to join me in debating the issues and challenges facing the MCB.

3) Our country today

Many things about Britain in 2010 trouble me.

- The English Defence League claims to defend Britain from “Islamism” but promotes policies, such as banning the construction of new mosques that can only divide our country and deny Muslims their rights as citizens.
- The British National Party whose leaders regularly denounce Islam now has two members of the European Parliament.
- Violent attacks on Muslims are increasing.
- The cemetery where my parents are buried has been desecrated three times by anti-Muslim hooligans.
- Almost every day the media carry divisive stories about Muslims.
- Of all communities, Britain’s Muslims are the least well educated, the most likely to be unemployed and on many criteria have the worst health.

I have lived here almost all my life, and want to do everything I can to tackle the above problems.

4) Why Britain needs the MCB

Addressing the problems listed above needs concerted action by Muslims and wider society. Since 1997, the MCB has provided a platform for Muslim organisations to better engage and support each other, and collectively express common concerns to wider society and government. Its objectives listed below are as valid today as when they were first published.

- i. To promote cooperation, consensus and unity on Muslim affairs in the UK.
- ii. To encourage and strengthen all existing efforts being made for the benefit of the Muslim community.
- iii. To work for a more enlightened appreciation of Islam and Muslims in the wider society.
- iv. To establish a position for the Muslim community within British society that is fair and based on due rights.
- v. To work for the eradication of disadvantages and forms of discrimination faced by Muslims.
- vi. To foster better community relations and work for the good of society as a whole.

Today the MCB has over 500 affiliates, and hundreds of people have given their time as volunteers to serve on its committee. It brings together Sunni and Shia Muslims from many different ethnic backgrounds and different schools of thought. This diversity and connection with the grass roots is the essential strength of the MCB. With it, the MCB could transform the way Britain’s Muslims deal with their present disadvantages, and the way that Muslims integrate into our society.

The hard work of many volunteers has got the MCB to where it is today, but two names stand out.

Sir Iqbal Sacranie served as the founding Secretary General, and then after a gap served for another four years. His ability to connect with politicians has been particularly important for the MCB’s ability to represent its affiliates to Government, and especially for its promotion of Islamic finance.

Dr Muhammad Abdul Bari has led the MCB during four years of unprecedented focus on Muslims after 7/7 and unrelenting media hostility. During the last two years my involvement within the MCB has allowed me to watch him provide a calming influence as we have debated such potentially contentious issues such as how the MCB should deal with “The Jewel of Medina” and our position on attending the Holocaust Memorial Day commemoration.

5) The challenges facing the MCB

In such testing times, many challenges arise for the MCB. As mentioned above it has many strengths but I believe it would be more effective if:

- i. It had a full time Secretary General. It is very difficult role to combine the unpaid Secretary General role with a full time paid employment or business, as so many issues arise at short

notice at all times of the day. There are also a large number of meetings during the daytime that the Secretary General should attend.

- ii. It had stronger connections with successful Muslim individuals. Britain today has many Muslim millionaires and senior Muslim professionals and corporate executives. The MCB needs their help if it is to successfully address its many challenges.

6) What I want to achieve if elected

I would focus on the following.

a) Anti-Muslim hatred

While a few xenophobes and religious bigots will always hate Muslims, the support the British National Party and the English Defence League get from otherwise decent people demonstrates that the MCB needs to explain better why Muslims are an asset to our country, and how Islam, which inspires one quarter of the world's people, is an integral part of our common civilisation.

I would also stand firmly against those Muslims who provide fuel for this hatred.

b) Education

The statistics show Muslims underperforming at school. While the Department for Children, Schools and Families needs to do a better job, Muslims can do far more to engage with schools as parents and governors, and run more supplementary schools. It is our children's education that is at stake.

c) Health

The government collects health statistics by ethnicity, not religion. They show an epidemic of heart disease and type 2 diabetes among Britons of Pakistani and Bangladeshi ethnic origin. The MCB would be more vigorous with its health messages to British Muslims and can call upon thousands of Muslim doctors to support this.

d) Employment

Even adjusted for educational qualifications, Muslims fare much worse in the job market than non-Muslims. The MCB should campaign against discrimination but proactively work to provide mentoring and other help to young Muslims to increase their employability.

e) Political participation

This is our country and every Muslim needs to vote to choose its national and local government. Muslims should also join political parties and civil society organisations to the extent that they have the time and capability. The MCB needs to emphasise this message continuously, while of course remaining neutral between the political parties.

7) How I would go about it

The Secretary General needs to lead a diverse team chosen from all strands of opinion amongst our affiliates. I would perform the Secretary General role the same way that I have acted as chair of the BEC.

- Acting as the leader of a team, recognising that my colleagues have the right to their views which includes outvoting me whenever appropriate.

- Setting a fixed schedule of meetings for the whole year, and then sticking to that even if I or specific other people cannot attend. When I cannot be present, someone else from the BEC takes the chair.
- Starting and finishing all meetings on time. In the nearly two years that I have chaired the BEC, only one meeting has finished late, by five minutes.

f) A programme for action

Ideas and objectives are not enough; we will need to execute effectively. I cannot lay out a plan for the MCB post the elections, since the plan must be put together jointly by the new team. While the Secretary General must provide leadership, the programme will have to be that of the entire team.

Nevertheless, voters are entitled to know what I would have in mind if my colleagues concur with me.

i. Seeking more affiliated organisations

The MCB's authority to speak derives from our affiliates, now numbering over 500. However, we have insufficient representation amongst some of the newer British Muslim communities, and our coverage amongst the older communities is not complete.

Accordingly, I would spend a significant part of my time going to Muslim organisations to seek their affiliation.

ii. Building a correspondence response team

Muslims collectively are not very good at writing to complain or to thank people who have done something good for the community. This compares very badly with other communities; for example the Zionist community will inundate with complaints any politician who dares to criticise Israel.

I want to build a widely dispersed team of Muslims who will write letters and emails with the benefit of guidance from the MCB. If we can get enough people, I envisage using their time smartly so that each individual is only asked to write perhaps once per month.

iii. Improving the MCB's connections with successful Muslims

At mentioned above, I do not see much evidence of the MCB having strong connections with Muslim millionaires (of whom there are many) or successful Muslims in professional or corporate life.

As Secretary General I would visit such individuals on a one to one basis, to ascertain their views on the MCB's key priorities and how they might be able to help us.

iv. Building on our grass roots connections

Visiting mosques and other Muslim community organisations all around the country is an integral part of the Secretary General's role in my view.

As well as listening to their views, I would share my own perspectives, which include the following:

- This is our country. Both of my parents, and both of my wife's parents, are buried here. While nobody can predict the future, our children and our children's children will be living here, and it is our responsibility to make this country a better place for everyone, whether Muslim or non-Muslim.

- The Muslim community has many problems. While Government has its part to play in helping to solve them, fundamentally the solution to our problems will be found by Muslims themselves taking action. As the Quran says in 13.11 Muhammad Asad translation *“Verily, God does not change men’s condition unless they change their inner selves;”*

v. Communicating with the wider community

The Secretary General is seen by wider society as the key spokesman for the Muslim community of Britain. I would take this responsibility very seriously, and accept every opportunity to speak to the press, TV and radio, and to engage in public debate.

For the wider community, I would focus on a few key messages, including the following:

- Islam is just as much a “Western” religion as Judaism or Christianity, and has been present in Europe for over 1300 years. The contribution of Islam to European science and culture has been enormous, as demonstrated by the “1001 Inventions” exhibition, even if it has not yet been fully recognised.
- Britain’s Muslim community is a great asset to our country, and Muslims are contributing to our society at all levels. On the MCB website, each week with the individual’s permission we would feature a “Muslim of the week”, aiming to showcase Muslim contribution from people of all ages, genders and races and from all Islamic persuasions.

8) Measuring how we are doing

I would like the MCB to set out clear measurable criteria to help assess the impact that it is having. Some of the things to be measured can be influenced by the MCB directly. Others, potentially far more important, are not under the MCB’s control, but can be improved if we are effective in coordinating the efforts of our affiliates and in changing the climate of opinion in Britain amongst both Muslims and non-Muslims.

g) Measures under the MCB’s control

Some of the things to measure are:

- Increasing the number of affiliates.
- Measuring if our meetings start on time, with a quorum, and whether they end on time.
- Building up our revenues and our balance sheet reserves.

h) Wider measures the MCB can influence but not control directly

These are far more challenging, and need wide action in the whole Muslim community. The responsibility of the MCB is to provide leadership and guidance.

- How many Muslims are members of the mainstream political parties?
- Reducing the number of Muslim prisoners.
- Reducing the rate of reoffending by Muslim prisoners after they are released.
- Increasing the number of Muslims who are blood donors and organ donors.
- Increasing the number of Muslims in the police and in the armed forces.
- Reducing the unemployment rate amongst Muslims.
- Improving the academic performance of Muslim schoolchildren.
- Increasing the participation rate of Muslim women in the workforce.

9) What qualifies me for the Secretary General role?

i) What I think the Secretary General role needs

In the last two years as BEC chair and a member of the CWC, I have been able to observe the inner workings of the MCB in some detail. From this, I believe that the Secretary General role has the following requirements:

vi. Time

As mentioned above, I believe the MCB needs a full time Secretary General. I retired from PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) at the end of 2009 and am now free to spend my time as I wish. Accordingly, I am available full time since I have no work related obligations.

I would devote virtually the whole of my time to the MCB, and to free up time would resign from the following:

- The Council of the Chartered Institute of Taxation
- The Policy & Technical Committee of the Association of Corporate Treasurers
- Vice Chairman of the Conservative Muslim Forum
- Treasurer of the Muslim Jewish Forum of Greater Manchester

I also believe that the MCB Secretary General should not be part of the leadership group of any political party, which is another reason why I would resign my role as Vice Chairman of the Conservative Muslim Forum. However, as I would be encouraging all Muslims to join one of the mainstream political parties, it would be inconsistent of me not to remain a grassroots member of the Conservative Party myself.

I am on the advisory panels of two other charities, Good Business Practice and The Three Faiths Forum, and I would continue with these as being the type of outreach work that the MCB should be engaged in. Similarly, I would remain on the Council of the Muslim Jewish Forum of Greater Manchester despite standing down as Treasurer to free up time. None of these activities causes any conflict with the MCB in my opinion.

vii. Location

As Government and the media are centralised in London, the Secretary General needs to be in London most of the time. That makes the role difficult to fulfil without a home in London.

While I have a house in Manchester, since early 2008 I have owned a flat in London, which is within 45 minutes walking distance of the MCB office. I can spend as much time in London as I need to, and estimate I am currently here about 85% of the time.

viii. Strong writing skills

The MCB has to issue many documents to the media and Government. While others can undertake most of the basic drafting, the Secretary General is in practice the ultimate arbiter of what the MCB says, since detailed drafting decisions cannot be referred back to the CWC or the Office Bearers collectively. Accordingly, to discharge these responsibilities properly, the Secretary General needs to be familiar with all of the nuances of the English language.

English is my first language as I have lived in the UK since I was under two years old. My 30 year career as a tax adviser has required exceptional ability to read complex tax law and then write letters about it that clients can understand. For over a decade, I have been writing articles about taxation, treasury and Islamic finance issues for publication in magazines. Samples of my work can be found by Googling me and via my website.

ix. Strong public speaking skills

The Secretary General is often before large audiences or television cameras. Accordingly, the role needs someone who feels comfortable addressing such audiences and being interviewed.

Since my early 30's, I have been a regular presenter to audiences on taxation issues. Over the last three years, I have spoken around the world on Islamic finance, making presentations on every continent except Antarctica. Quite often the audiences have not been native English speakers, so I have needed to concentrate on being exceptionally clear.

I am comfortable giving live TV and radio interviews. Again, my website will contain links to some of my work.

x. Management experience

The MCB is a small but complex organisation with its volunteers and its office staff. Accordingly, the Secretary General needs to understand how teams operate effectively, which requires both management and leadership skills.

As a partner in PwC, I needed to manage a team of people to serve my clients. I also had the opportunity to observe some of the largest companies from the inside as their advisor. I served for 5 years on the board of the Manchester Training and Enterprise Council, and in 2003 was elected by the PwC partners to serve on the firm's Supervisory Board. Accordingly, I have experience of what works and does not work in organisations, as well as having attended the formal management training that firms like Arthur Andersen and PwC provide for their staff and partners.

xi. Maturity

The MCB faces difficult questions almost daily, and the Secretary General needs to have a clear vision of where the MCB should be going, and the inner calm to navigate through the many pressures the role entails.

I am aged 59, which gives one the perspective and inner calm that comes with age. Indeed, I am older than any of the three people who have served as Secretary General.

j) What the role does not need

While the Secretary General must of course be a Muslim, he does not need to be an Islamic scholar since the role is an essentially practical one. This is demonstrated by the three persons who have been Secretary General so far.

10) More information about me

This section is intended to explain why my life so far equips me for the Secretary General role. I would never overstate any facts, but regard it as equally wrong to practice false modesty by understating the facts.

k) How I came to be here

My parents were both born in villages in Jullundur, India, during the British Empire, in very poor families. Neither of them was able to go to school, which was one of the greatest regrets of my father's life.

My grandfather was killed accidentally when quite young, and as the eldest son my father Shadi Mehrban came to the UK for the first time in 1933. His first daughter was born after he left India, grew to the age of about 13 and died of an illness without my father ever seeing her. He worked as a door to door pedlar and as a professional wrestler, and was here during World War 2. He was one of the people who founded the Manchester Central Mosque in Victoria Park, Manchester.

After Partition, my father spent six months searching in refugee camps before he found my mother's family. Another daughter was born, and then my father returned to the UK. A few months later, he received a letter that at long last he had a son, Mohammed Amin. He celebrated this news in the traditional way, by preparing a meal for friends, at the Victoria Park mosque in Manchester. The 20 or so guests included many students and academics from the university.

After the meal, they wanted to have a collection of money for the baby. My father refused and asked them instead to raise their hands for a dua that his son should become as educated as they were. My life has shown that Allah granted their wish.

While I was very small, my sister who was a year or so older than me caught an infection and died. Having lost two children while he was far from them, my father then wrote to my mother, telling her to bring me to Manchester. I arrived in Britain in July 1952, aged 1 $\frac{3}{4}$, and my earliest memory is of a tantrum at our house in Manchester, wanting to go home to my grandmother, my uncles and my pet baby goat.

In those early years, my mother hated Britain for its weather and alien people, and because she missed her own mother. She stayed here for only one reason, my education, and never saw her mother again as my grandmother died about a decade later. My parents made enormous sacrifices for me, which could never be repaid, but I did the one thing that I could which was to stay with them instead of pursuing a career far away in London or overseas, and they lived with me until they died.

l) Education

My parents always stressed that education was the route to a better life, and I was absorbed in books from the time I first learned to read. I passed the 11+ examination to attend a state grammar school where in 1968 I obtained 4 A levels, all at grade A.

From there, I went to Clare College, Cambridge, where I obtained a mathematics degree, class 3. (I had not worked very hard.) I then went to Leeds University, where I obtained a Graduate Certificate in Education with a distinction in the written work.

In 1977, I qualified as a chartered accountant, having been placed fifth in the country (out of about 4,200 candidates) in the Part 1 examination.

In 1978 I became an associate of the Institute of Taxation, with a distinction in the examination.

In 1995, at the age of 44, I did the examinations to become an associate member of the Association of Corporate Treasurers.

In 1999, I became a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Taxation by submitting a fellowship thesis on "A detailed review of the new UK tax rules on corporate debt." This thesis was awarded the Institute medal for the best fellowship thesis submitted in 1999.

m) Career

After university, I spent one year teaching at a comprehensive school in Oldham. While there, I discovered accountancy, and trained as an accountant with a small firm in Ashton under Lyne and Hyde.

I left that firm upon qualifying as a chartered accountant and specialised in taxation, joining Arthur Andersen, then the largest accounting firm in the world, in their Manchester office. After three years, I was promoted to manager and then three years later left to join a small firm in Wigan. I became a partner there after 18 months, but another 18 months later realised I was not happy and joined Price Waterhouse (now PwC) as a senior manager in 1987.

I became a partner in 1990, and was the first Muslim partner in Price Waterhouse in the UK.

While I have been a tax advisor since I qualified, within tax there are many specialisms, and in the 1990's I specialised in the taxation of treasury transactions, which is the reason I joined the Association of Corporate Treasurers, and later became the leader of PwC's treasury taxation network in the UK.

In 2003, I was elected by PwC's partners to be a member of the Supervisory Board. This is an elected committee of partners which has the responsibility of seeing how well the firm's management is running the firm, approving the firm's accounts, overseeing the admission and retirement of partners etc.

Starting in 2005, I became an expert in the taxation of Islamic finance and then in Islamic finance more generally, being appointed as PwC's UK Islamic finance leader in 2007 and part of PwC's four person global Islamic finance leadership team. Some of the places I have made presentations on Islamic finance are New York, Toronto, Sao Paulo, Tripoli, Dubai, Jakarta, Melbourne, Moscow, and Kazan, as well as other European cities.

On 31 December 2009 I retired from PwC.

n) Willingness to serve generally

It has always been my nature to get involved and help. Some of my various roles within PwC have been mentioned above.

I joined our school chess club when I was 16, and almost immediately became the boy who helped the relevant teacher to run the club, acting as the captain of the school chess team. At Cambridge and Leeds I played the Japanese board game of go, and helped to run the go club in both universities.

In Manchester, I had joined a chess club, and quickly became involved in helping to run it including becoming club president. Our club was part of the Manchester & District Chess Association, and I was elected onto the MDCA Council, serving in various capacities, including being the MDCA president for two years. The MDCA was a constituent unit of the British Chess Federation so I attended BCF Management Board meetings. In 1985 I was asked to become unpaid finance director of the BCF, which I did for five years including the year that the BCF staged the world chess championship in London.

Professionally, after joining the Institute of Taxation I got involved with the branch, serving as treasurer, then secretary and then branch chairman. Nationally I got involved around 2000 and in 2003 was elected onto the Council of the Chartered Institute of Taxation. Similarly, in 2004 I joined the Policy & Technical Committee of the Association of Corporate Treasurers.

o) My desire to serve the Muslim community

Eight years ago, in 2002, I went on Hajj with my wife, and this changed my life. The key turning point was the day I stood at Arafat, asking for blessings from Allah. As I stood there, I became more and more aware of how good Allah has been to me all my life, and how much I wanted to share with other British Muslims the blessings that Allah has given me.

The Quran, 3.110 Muhammad Asad translation, says:

YOU ARE indeed the best community that has ever been brought forth for [the good of] mankind: you enjoin the doing of what is right and forbid the doing of what is wrong, and you believe in God. Now if the followers of earlier revelation had attained to [this kind of] faith, it would have been for their own good; [but only few] among them are believers, while most of them are iniquitous:

Unfortunately, looking at the British Muslim community, with its levels of poverty, crime and poor education, it was hard to argue that it was the best community. I wanted to do what I could to help change that.

Returning from Hajj, I became absorbed again with my professional work at PwC. However, around September 2003, I attended an internal course, "Running the rest of your life", which partners attend about seven years before they plan to leave the firm. All partners attending are given the same advice: whatever you wish to do after PwC, you must make a start while still at the firm.

Accordingly, I started doing this, assisting Lord Bhatia on some of his projects, joining the MCB's Business & Economics Committee (BEC) as a member, and joining the Conservative Muslim Forum. In June 2008 I sought and obtained election to the MCB's Central Working Committee (CWC) and was appointed as chair of the BEC.

p) My wife

After your parents, nobody influences you for the better or worse than your spouse.

Unlike my father, Tahara's father was very highly educated, being a non-practicing barrister with four degrees. She came to Britain at the age of 11, speaking no English, but got her "A" levels. Her parents had no hesitation in letting her go away from home to attend Keele University, where she graduated in Chemistry and Biology with a minor in Education.

When we got married, she was in her second year of teaching at a school in Folkestone, and completed the year. She then had 17 years at home bringing up four children, before returning to teaching on 24 hours notice to cover for an absent teacher at our daughters' school.

Tahara had previously helped in a voluntary capacity at the Manchester Muslim Preparatory School, then in its early days. Accordingly, she moved to working there and served for one year as a class teacher. The head teacher position then became vacant, and she obtained it, serving as the school head teacher for 10 years before retiring in 2007. In her last year, the school won the award for the best Muslim primary school in the North region at the Global Peace and Unity Event, and won it again the year after she had retired.

We have always sought each other's counsel, and my standing for Secretary General is fully supported by Tahara.

q) My personal approach to Islam

As a child I attended the mosque Sunday school, and learned the Arabic letters so I could sound the Quran, but never proceeded much further than the first couple of thirtieths. We were not taught to understand Arabic, and I saw no point in reading something out that one could not understand. However, as a teenager I read the Quran in English translation.

I then got absorbed in my career, until I went on Hajj. I took several Islamic books with me to read, the most important being "*To be a European Muslim*" by Tariq Ramadan, which was the start of my adult Islamic education. Since then I have read several other of his books, including "*Islam, the West, and Challenges of Modernity*", "*Western Muslims and the Future of Islam*", "*The Messenger: The Meanings of the Life of Muhammad*" and am currently reading "*What I believe*."

The other writer who has contributed most to increasing my Islamic knowledge is Mohammad Hashim Kamali, starting with "*Islamic Commercial Law: An Analysis of Futures and Options*", then "*A Textbook of Hadith Studies: Authenticity, Compilation, Classification and Criticism of Hadith*" and most recently "*Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence*."

After returning from Hajj, I purchased the full English translations of Bukhari, Sahih Muslim and Sunan Abu Dawood; although in practice I find research easier using the free electronic copies available on the internet.

It is not easy to summarise any person's belief concisely. However, perhaps the most fundamental point about my belief is that I see Islam as a direct relationship between each individual Muslim and Allah. Accordingly, I do not see it as the right of any other person to direct or control how you practice your religion, although advice is always permissible as long as it does not stray into coercion.

11) The constitutional position

The MCB constitution is freely available from its website at <http://www.mcb.org.uk/downloads/MCBCON2002.pdf>

Clause 4.1.2 (c) states: *“The General Assembly shall elect every two years 25 individuals as national representatives and up to 12 individuals as zonal representatives to the Central Working Committee who shall be known as “the elected members’ of the Central Working Committee, provided that no member body and/or its branch/branches can have more than 5 of its members elected to the Central Working Committee.”*

I am currently an elected member of the Central Working Committee (CWC.) The next General Assembly will take place on 20 June and insha’Allah I will seek nomination and re-election to the CWC.

As well as the elected members of the CWC, there are also nominated members and co-opted members as set out in clause 4.2.1.

Clause 4.2.4 (a) of the constitution states: *The Central Working Committee shall elect, from among its elected members, the following office bearers:*

- (I) *the Secretary General*
- (II) *the Deputy Secretary General*
- (III) *the Treasurer”*

This election takes place on the same day as the election of the CWC, and will also be on 20 June. Accordingly, if insha’Allah I am successful at being elected to the CWC on that day, I will seek nomination for the role of Secretary General, and am willing to serve if elected.

The constitution also sets out the responsibilities of the Secretary General in clause 4.2.5 (a):

“The Secretary General shall

- I. be responsible for convening the General Assembly, preparation of the necessary working papers and agenda and maintaining a record of proceedings and resolutions in a Minutes Book.*
- II. direct the work of the Central Working Committee in implementing the policies set by the General Assembly.*
- III. present a report of activities to the annual meeting of the General Assembly.*
- IV. be the official spokesperson of the MCB.*
- V. The Secretary General shall be responsible for maintaining a record of proceedings and resolutions of the Central Working Committee in a Minutes Book”*

Accordingly, internally the Secretary General is responsible for the smooth running of the MCB but has no more voting power at the CWC than any other member. Externally he or she is the external face of the MCB as the official spokesperson.

12) Is it Islamic to put oneself forward like this?

I have had it suggested to me that it is not the Islamic way to put oneself forward like this. I always take religious questions very seriously, and when tackling them go through the following process:

- i. Find the original sources and read them
- ii. Ensure that I understand what the source is saying
- iii. If it is a hadith, how authentic is it?
- iv. Consider the implications at the time the text arose
- v. Consider what the text means for us today

Below, I have set out how I worked through this question.

i. Find the original sources and read them

Firstly, I searched an electronic version of the Quran for “leader” or “leadership”, which found two instances but nothing relevant to the question, and then for “governor” or governorship” which found no instances.

When I searched Bukhari and Sahih Muslim I found many hadith, and read through all of them quickly. Some were not relevant to this question, but several were. I have selected the following as being the most apposite in relation to this question:

Bukhari Volume 9, Book 89, Number 263: Narrated Abu Musa:

Two men from my tribe and I entered upon the Prophet. One of the two men said to the Prophet, "O Allah's Apostle! Appoint me as a governor," and so did the second. The Prophet said, "We do not assign the authority of ruling to those who ask for it, nor to those who are keen to have it."

Sahih Muslim Book 20, Number 4489: It has been narrated by Abu Musa who said:

Two of my cousins and I entered the apartment of the Holy Prophet (may peace be upon him). One of them said: Messenger of Allah, appoint us rulers of some lands that the Almighty and Glorious God has entrusted to thy care. The other also said something similar. He said: We do not appoint to this position one who asks for it nor anyone who is covetous for the same.

To avoid repetition, I have not quoted other hadith which contain the same message, such as Bukhari Volume 9, Book 84, Number 58, and Sahih Muslim Book 20, Number 4490. Nor have I quoted other hadith which refer to leadership but do not directly address the current question, such as Bukhari Volume 5, Book 58, Numbers 136 & 137; Volume 9, Book 88, Number 179; Volume 9, Book 89, Numbers 260 & 261; or Sahih Muslim Book 20, Number 4549 and Book 20, Numbers 4491 & 4492.

ii Ensure that I understand what the source is saying

The two hadith quoted above are quite clear, and do not need complex interpretation. The Prophet (peace be upon him) states quite clearly that he would not appoint to a leadership position anyone who asked for that position. Accordingly, it is quite clear that it is these hadith that underlie the question “Is it Islamic to put oneself forward like this?”

iii If it is a hadith, how authentic is it?

I don't hold myself out as a hadith scholar. However, as previously mentioned a few years ago I read the book “*A Textbook of Hadith Studies: Authenticity, Compilation, Classification and Criticism of Hadith*” by Mohammad Hashim Kamali, and found it fascinating. It explained how much effort hadith collectors such as Bukhari and Muslim put into sifting for authenticity the hadith that they found, while at the same time being clear that the hadith in their collections still vary in the extent of the reliance that one can place upon them.

In this case, as the hadith in question occur in both Bukhari and Sahih Muslim, with different lines of narration, I see no reason to doubt their authenticity. The content of the hadith also looks like something that the Prophet (pbuh) might be expected to have said.

iv Consider the implications at the time the text arose

The Prophet (pbuh) was at that time the supreme earthly leader of the Muslim community. Islam was spreading in Arabia and many leadership roles needed to be filled. At that time, holding a leadership role, such as the governor of a province, could bring many personal benefits to the holder. Accordingly, the Prophet (pbuh) turned down volunteers, while relying upon his personal knowledge of his companions to decide whom he could trust with such gubernatorial responsibilities.

v. Consider what the text means for us today

The text is directly relevant when the same circumstances recur, namely:

- A single overall leader who is in a position to decide whom to appoint. An example would be a corporate CEO who can appoint divisional managers.
- The CEO is in a position to directly assess the merits of the applicant and of other people whom he could appoint to the position even if those people have not applied.
- Positions which are attractive to their holders, such as appointment as a divisional manager which might mean a pay rise or other benefits.

In such circumstances, the example of the Prophet (pbuh) cautions the CEO to think carefully before simply appointing the person who has asked for the job. That person may not be the best equipped, or may indeed be completely unsuitable. Even in such circumstances, the hadith cannot be applied by the CEO without thought; the CEO may conclude after careful consideration that out of all the potential candidates that the CEO knows about, the volunteer is in fact the most suitable to appoint.

Where the same circumstances do not occur, the hadith is not relevant. For example, according to the US census bureau, in November 2008 the USA had over 206 million citizens of voting age. Each person had one vote in selecting the president. Unless someone had put themselves forward for election, the citizens would have had no chance of knowing who was available for the position.

Even with much smaller numbers, if decision making authority rests with multiple people, one needs to rely upon people volunteering. For example, in 2008 PwC had only about 850 partners, but each had one vote in the selection of a new Senior Partner. While each partner knew some of the other partners well, until some candidates put themselves forward for the Senior Partner role, the 850 had no way of knowing who was available or assessing their merits.

In the case of the MCB, there is no one person who has the right to decide who the new Secretary General will be. That right vests in the CWC, and that CWC will not be constituted until 20 June. Accordingly, unless candidates put themselves forward for the role, the people who will constitute the CWC have no opportunity of knowing who is available or of assessing their merits.

To summarise, having studied the sources, I believe that offering myself for the role is perfectly compatible with Islamic principles. Indeed, if I think I am capable of fulfilling the role, I see it as my Islamic duty to offer myself; it is up to the new CWC to decide whether to accept the offer.

13) Closing comments

All my life Allah has showered blessings on me, and I never forget that nothing happens unless He wills it. If by becoming Secretary General I can help the community, then I hope that Allah will make this possible and give me the guidance that I will need in the role.