

Kofi Annan



Kofi A. Annan was the seventh Secretary-General of the United Nations, serving two terms from 1 January 1997 to 31 December 2006 and was the first to emerge from the ranks of United Nations staff. In 2001 Kofi Annan and the United Nations were jointly awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace with the citation praising his leadership for “bringing new life to the organisation”.

Current activities

Since leaving the United Nations, Kofi Annan has continued to press for better policies to meet the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable, particularly in Africa. He has also continued to use his experience to mediate and resolve conflict. In Kenya in early 2008, Mr. Annan led the African Union’s Panel of Eminent African Personalities to help find a peaceful resolution to the post-election violence.

In addition to his work with the Kofi Annan Foundation, Mr. Annan serves as the Chairman of the Africa Progress Panel (APP) and the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA). He is also a Board member, Patron or Honorary member of a number of organisations, including the UN Foundation and The Elders. Mr. Annan currently serves as the Chancellor of the University of Ghana, a Global Fellow at Columbia University in the United States, and Li Ka Shing Professor at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at the National University of Singapore.

UN Secretary-General

One of Kofi Annan’s main priorities as Secretary-General was a comprehensive programme of reform aimed at revitalising the United Nations and making the international system more effective. He was a constant advocate for human rights, the rule of law, the Millennium Development Goals and Africa and sought to bring the organisation closer to the global public by forging ties with civil society, the private sector and other partners.

At Mr. Annan’s initiative, UN peacekeeping was strengthened in ways that enabled the United Nations to cope with a rapid rise in the number of operations and personnel. It was also at Mr. Annan’s urging that, in 2005, Member States established two new intergovernmental bodies: the Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council. Mr. Annan likewise played a central role in the creation of the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, the adoption of the UN’s first-ever counter-terrorism strategy, and the acceptance by Member States of the “responsibility to protect” people from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. His “Global Compact” initiative, launched in 1999, has become the world’s largest effort to promote corporate social responsibility.

Mr. Annan undertook wide-ranging diplomatic initiatives. In 1998, he helped to ease the transition to civilian rule in Nigeria. Also that year, he visited Iraq in an effort to resolve an impasse between that country and the Security Council over compliance with resolutions involving weapons inspections and other matters – an effort that helped to avoid an outbreak of hostilities, which was imminent at that time. In 1999, he was deeply involved in the process by which Timor-Leste gained independence from Indonesia. He was responsible for certifying Israel’s withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000, and in 2006 his efforts contributed to securing a cessation of hostilities between Israel and Hizbollah. Also in 2006, he mediated a settlement of the dispute between Cameroon and Nigeria over the Bakassi peninsula through implementation of the judgement of the International Court of Justice. His efforts to strengthen the Organisation’s management, coherence and accountability involved major



investments in training and technology, the introduction of a new whistleblower policy and financial disclosure requirements and steps aimed at improving co-ordination at the country level.

Early career

Mr. Annan joined the UN system in 1962 as an administrative and budget officer with the World Health Organization in Geneva. He later served with the Economic Commission for Africa in Addis Ababa, the UN Emergency Force (UNEF II) in Ismailia, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Geneva and in various senior posts in New York dealing with human resources, budget, finance and staff security. Immediately before becoming Secretary-General, he was Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping. Mr. Annan also served as Special Representative of the Secretary-General to the former Yugoslavia (1995-1996) and facilitated the repatriation from Iraq of more than 900 international staff and other non-Iraqi nationals (1990).

Personal

Kofi Annan was born in Kumasi, Ghana, on 8 April 1938. He is married to Nane and between them they have three children.

Source: Kofi Annan Foundation, kofiannanfoundation.org