

'Faith and inspiration' of late Kofi Annan needed now more than ever – UN chief Guterres

Outlining Mr. Annan's key achievements, the Secretary-General pointed to the mobilization of a global response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic, that led to millions of lives being saved.

He also pointed to the ground-breaking Millennium Development Goals ([MDGs](#)), which galvanized unprecedented efforts to meet the needs of the world's poorest, and have been credited with cutting world poverty by half.

The MDGs, said Mr. Guterres, provided the [blueprint for the 2030 Agenda](#), "today's ambitious blueprint for a better world."

Referring to current attacks on multilateralism, Mr. Guterres called Mr. Annan "principled and forceful in battling for the values of the [UN Charter](#)" and "a true UN-blue believer in a rules-based global order, who called the United Nations the 'last best hope of humanity.'"

Kofi Annan joined the UN system in 1962 as an administrative and budget officer with the [World Health Organization](#) (WHO) in Geneva, rising to hold senior-level posts in areas such as budget and finance, and peacekeeping.



UN Photo/Mark Garten

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres (centre right) at the memorial tribute for former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, pictured with Mr. Annan's wife, Nane Annan (centre left), and members of their family, at UN Headquarters in New York on 21 September 2018.

He was the first Secretary-General to rise through the ranks of the Organization, and he served for two consecutive terms as the seventh UN chief, beginning in 1997.

At a personal level, said Mr. Guterres, Kofi Annan was “uncommonly warm, accessible and of the people.”

The UN chief was joined by the [President of the 73rd General Assembly](#), Maria Fernanda Espinosa, Mr. Annan’s wife Nane and son Koje, senior UN representatives, representatives of regional group, and friends and former colleagues of Mr. Annan.

Ms. Espinosa said that it was fitting for the tribute to take place on [International Peace Day](#) – which was launched during Mr. Annan’s mandate – as no one laboured more tirelessly or consistently in the cause of peace than did Kofi Annan.

“Kofi Annan was a great [Secretary-General] because he understood that peace cannot be achieved in isolation. He subscribed fully to the principles set out in the preamble to the [UN Charter](#) and knew that they are mutually interdependent.

Succeeding generations will not be saved from the scourge of war until human beings can have faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and woman, and of nations large and small.”

Two members of [the Elders](#), the independent group of global leaders working for peace and human rights, founded by Nelson Mandela, also spoke: Mr. Annan’s successor as UN Secretary-General, [Ban Ki-Moon](#), and former Irish President [Mary Robinson](#), who also served as the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights from 1997 to 2002.



UN Photo/Kim Haughton

Former United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon delivers remarks to the

memorial tribute for former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, at UN Headquarters in New York on 21 September 2018.

Mr. Ban, speaking at the General Assembly for the first time since leaving office, said that “the international community was continually astounded by Kofi Annan’s razor-sharp intellect, moved by his guiding compassion and encouraged by his driving idealism.”

“His commitment to peace and conflict resolution, sustainable development, human rights and global education resonated powerfully with all those he came into across, including myself”

Following Mr. Ban, Mary Robinson spoke of Mr. Annan’s “courage, powers of persuasion and optimism that when we work together we can achieve great things. He believed passionately in the United Nations and its role in defending and progressing human rights.”

The last speaker was Mr. Annan’s son, Kojo, who told the General Assembly that one of his father’s favourite quotes came from Edmund Burke: “’The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.’ It was more than a quote. It was his code. My father’s race has ended, but the work continues. He believed this was the only work worth doing, creating a world where everyone can find home.”

Peace is at risk and violated in many places, but ‘we will not give up,’ says UN chief Guterres

According to the UN chief, the Declaration, [which turns 70 this year](#), provides a reminder that [peace takes root](#) when people are free from hunger, poverty and oppression and can thrive and prosper.

The Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)), adopted by UN Member States in 2015, also aim to serve this purpose by building a peaceful world through economic and social development for all with guaranteed human rights.

And yet, “when we are [celebrating](#) the 70th anniversary of the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#), we know that human rights are violated in so many parts of the world, we even know that the human rights agenda is losing ground,” he said at the ceremonial ringing of the Peace Bell to commemorate Peace Day.

“But we don’t give up because respect for human rights and human dignity is a basic condition for peace,” Mr. Guterres stressed. “We are here because we

are determined, and we do not give up."

"Peace is at risk. Peace is violated in so many places. But we will not give up," he underscored.



UN Photo/Cia Pak

Secretary-General António Guterres (right) at the annual ceremony held at UN Headquarters in observance of the International Day of Peace. In this photo he is joined by Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed (left) and General Assembly President María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés (centre).

Pointing to multiplying conflicts throughout world, he noted links between conflicts and terrorism, prevailing insecurity and suffering people, repeating: "But we don't give up."

Noting that the appeal for combatants to pause and respect the Day often goes unheeded, he said: "But we don't give up."

Mr. Guterres lamented that while extreme poverty is being reduced and inequality growing, "we don't give up because we believe inequality is one of the most important factors of instability and conflict."

Instead, he asserted, "we will pursue our Agenda, the [2030 Agenda](#), the Sustainable Development Goals, our struggle for a fair globalization because there is no development without peace but there is also no peace without development."

Calling peace "the unifying concept that brings us together at the United Nations," he repeated yet again: "We will not give up."

The International Day of Peace is commemorated annually on 21 September. Throughout the decades the ringing of the Peace Bell by the UN Secretaries-General has been a key element in its observance.

For an interactive story on the Peace Bell, click [here](#).

Alcohol abuse kills three million people a year, most of them men – WHO report

More one in 20 deaths in 2016 – 3 million people, mostly men – were caused by harmful use of [alcohol](#), according a report released on Friday by the World Health Organization ([WHO](#)).

“Far too many people, their families and communities suffer the consequences of the harmful use of alcohol through violence, injuries, mental health problems and diseases like cancer and stroke,” said [Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus](#), WHO’s Director-General, adding that “it’s time to step up action to prevent this serious threat to the development of healthy societies.”

WHO’s [Global status report on alcohol and health 2018](#) reveals that of all deaths attributable to alcohol, 28 per cent were caused by injuries (from traffic accidents, self-harm and violence); 21 per cent were due to digestive disorders; and the remainder were caused by cardiovascular diseases, infectious diseases, cancers, mental disorders and other health conditions.

Despite a reduction in heavy episodic drinking and the number of alcohol-related deaths since 2010, WHO says the figures of disease and injuries caused by alcohol remain “unacceptably high,” particularly in Europe and the Americas.

Currently, about 2.3 billion people drink an average of 33 grams of pure alcohol a day, roughly equivalent to two glasses (each of 150 ml) of wine, a large (750 ml) bottle of beer or two shots (each of 40 ml) of spirits. Europe has the highest per capita consumption – and [global consumption](#) is predicted to increase in the next decade, especially in South-East Asia, the Western Pacific and the Americas.

The report shows that some 237 million men and 46 million women are suffering from alcohol-use disorders and that these disorders are more common in high-income countries. School surveys indicate that, in many countries, alcohol use starts before the age of 15 with very small differences between boys and girls.

“All countries can do much more to reduce the health and social costs of the harmful use of alcohol,” said Dr. Vladimir Poznyak, Coordinator of WHO’s [Management of Substance Abuse](#) unit. “Proven, cost-effective actions include increasing taxes on alcoholic drinks, bans or restrictions on alcohol

advertising, and restricting the physical availability of alcohol."

The report shows that although almost all (95 per cent) countries have alcohol taxes, fewer than half of them use other price strategies such as banning below-cost selling or volume discounts. In addition, while many countries have bans on advertising on television and radio, the restrictions are rare when it comes to the internet and social media advertising.

"We would like to see Member States implement creative solutions that will save lives," Dr. Tedros said. "We must do more to cut demand and reach the target set by governments of a 10 per cent relative reduction in consumption of alcohol globally between 2010 and 2025," in line with [Target 3.5](#) of the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)).

WHO stressed that reducing the harmful use of alcohol will also help achieve several other health-related SDG targets, including for maternal and child health, infectious diseases, non-communicable diseases, mental health, injuries and poisonings.

Vulnerable children face 'dire and dangerous' situation on Greek island reception centres, UNICEF warns

Overcrowding in Greek island reception centres for refugees and migrants has made conditions for children there increasingly "dire and dangerous", the United Nations Children's Fund ([UNICEF](#)) said on Friday, warning that "severe emotional distress" affects many and that self-harm is a "possibility".

In an [appeal](#) to the authorities to do more to speed up the transfer of vulnerable people to the mainland, Lucio Melandri, UNICEF Country Coordinator in Greece, noted that the number of vulnerable children arriving on the islands in 2018 compared with last year had risen by one-third.

Approximately 80 per cent of the 20,500 migrants and refugees now on the Greek islands are being sheltered in "unsanitary, overfilled" centres, Mr. Melandri said.

According to UN refugee agency, the majority of the arrivals on the Greek islands so far this year have come from Syria (32 per cent), Iraq (20 per cent) and Afghanistan (19 per cent).

More than 5,000 of those in the Greek island facilities are children, and the UNICEF official highlighted particular concerns about the island reception facilities of Moria on Lesvos and Vathi on Samos, which he visited last week.

"More children and families arrive every day," he said. "The directors of the centres, both in Moria and Vathi, repeatedly expressed to us their concerns ...due to the threat children face on daily basis. The staff are overwhelmed, services are overstretched."

Speaking to journalists in Geneva, Mr. Melandri insisted that the Greek authorities and people "have done as much as they can" to help the vulnerable arrivals, but they could no longer cope.

Other EU States could help by pledging more resettlement places for children and by speeding up family reunification procedures, he added.

"With the capacity to host 3,100 people, the center in Moria as of today hosts nearly 9,000 people, including more than 1,700 children," he said. "The centre in Samos that was built for 650 people, now has 680 children, with a total of more than 4,000 people."

Under Greek law, refugees and migrants should spend a maximum of 25 days at a Reception and Identification Centre, but "despite tremendous goodwill and commitment", UNICEF said in a statement that some children have spent more than a year completing arrival procedures.

"Conditions in these camps are horrible for any single child, and any refugee camps around the world is a horrible situation for the child," Mr. Melandri said, adding that most of the children he had met had experienced the trauma of war.

"Children are exposed to any kind of threat: direct threats; abuse, violence, riots," he added. "They are exposed to indirect threats in not having opportunity to access basic vital services: access to appropriate nutrition, access to appropriate hygienic conditions, access to education opportunities. So it is really the worst situation in which a child could find itself."

In response to a question about children reportedly attempting suicide at Moria centre, Mr. Melandri replied that he was unable to comment on specific cases, although many were in severe emotional distress.

"I can assure to you that cases of self-harming, of violence against children, are unfortunately becoming a possibility, due to the conditions these children experience," he said.

Remembering Kofi Annan

He was fun to work for as well as inspiring – Fred Eckhard, spokesperson



UN Photo/Milton Grant

Secretary-General Kofi Annan (right) confers with his Fred Eckhard, his spokesperson, en route from Namibia to Angola, 22 March 1997.

Fred Eckhard, spokesperson for the late Secretary-General, recalled meeting Kofi Annan for the first time, long before his rise through the ranks to head the Organization.

With Pérez de Cuéllar at the helm and then-US President Ronald Reagan leading a strong conservative majority in Congress, intent on reducing contributions to the UN, Mr. Eckhard, himself an American, was hired by the UN Information Department. He was called in to brief the Budget Director, meeting Mr. Annan for the first time.

Later, during “an explosion of peacekeeping” missions, Mr. Eckhard became the Spokesman for Namibia, and then for Yugoslavia. “Now I’ve got the new Director of Peacekeeping looking over my shoulder, and that’s Kofi Annan”, he said at that time.

Back at Headquarters, after serving both those missions, journalists asked that Mr. Eckhard give the daily peacekeeping briefings, citing his “firsthand experience.”

With Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali in charge, Mr. Eckhard became embedded in Kofi Annan’s department, which led to open access and a “very positive relationship.”

“Boutros then began to see Kofi as a threat, and I was ordered to stop briefing on Peacekeeping,” the former Spokesperson said, so Mr. Annan hired him in the Peacekeeping Department as the Liaison with Troop-Contributing Countries.

After a year, Mr. Boutros-Ghali offered him a promotion if he agreed to stay in the Spokesman’s Office.

"So, I saw Boutros on one hand, I saw Kofi on the other, and I said, 'I'm going with this guy,'" indicating Mr. Annan.

If Boutros been reelected, Mr. Eckhard said his UN career would have been finished.

"But, as it turned out, no one expected it, Kofi was elected, and he made me his Spokesman," Mr. Eckhard stated, kicking off a long relationship of trust.

He began briefing Mr. Annan each morning as he entered the building, walking together from the basement, taking the elevator up to the 38th floor, down the corridor and into his office, discussing the morning news reports and the day's issues.

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"And, believe it or not, in eight and half years, he never once told me what to say to the press," Mr. Eckhard maintained.

And he trusted others as well.

The former spokesperson recalled when Shashi Tharoor, now a politician back home in India, was the UN Communications Director, how he would send cables to the field signing for Kofi Annan, "because Kofi trusted him to make the judgement, and Shashi said he grew so much with this freedom."

"And I think everyone felt that way who worked for him," he continued. "Kieran Prendergast, who was his Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, told me that Kofi trusted people before, or until, they prove themselves unworthy of that trust. Which, in the UN, is unusual. It's usually the other way around."

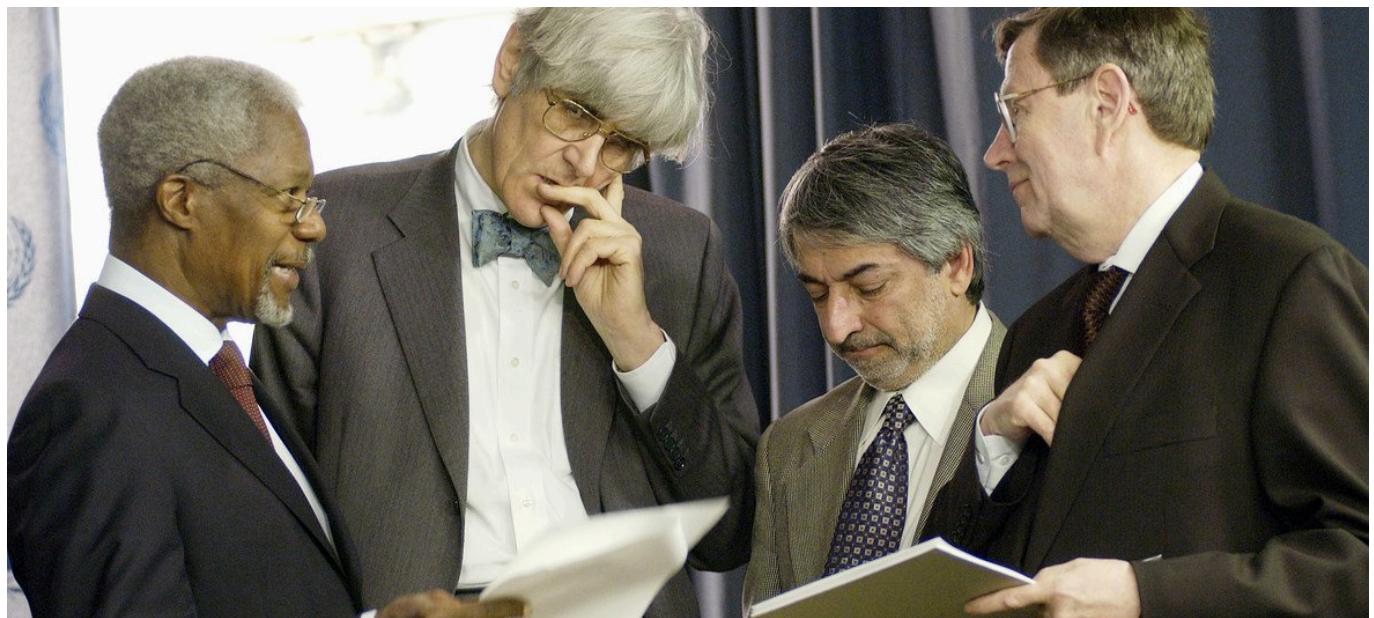
Mr. Eckhard felt that his former boss endeared himself to many by the way he did business.

"Other Secretaries-General tended to have this little insider circle of people of their own nationality," he said. "Kofi had a broad circle of people he consulted, and he picked people whom he got to know, he thought were interesting – thought brought something to the table, as a part of his staff."

And on a more personal note, the former spokesperson said the Mr. Annan was "secure, confident, serene, comfortable in his skin," and when he talked "he didn't just talk to you about work. He always asked about your spouse, about your kids, and very often remembered their names".

"He was fun to work for as well as inspiring," Mr. Eckhard concluded.

He possessed a rock star quality – Edward Mortimer, speechwriter



UN Photo/Stephenie Hollyman

Left to right: Secretary-General Kofi Annan goes over a speech on Iraq with Edward Mortimer, Director of Communications and Head of Speechwriting Unit; Salim Lone, Director of the News and Media Division, Department of Public Information; and Fred Eckhard, Spokesman for the Secretary-General. March 2003.

Edward Mortimer served as former Secretary-General Kofi Annan's speechwriter and communications director. He described Mr. Annan's leadership style as "not sort of banging tables and shouting or beating your chest, but bringing people together, and saying we are all on this same planet together."

"We sink or swim together," he asserted. "Be it climate change, be it mass epidemics, be it hunger, poverty, or be it very large-scale atrocities and violations of human rights."

"I think that is a lesson that the world still needs to learn, but the fact that people are still mourning Kofi Annan so strongly, indicates that there are many people in the world who realize that that's what's missing, and that that's the kind of leadership that's needed today."

Mr. Mortimer believed that everyone who knew Kofi Annan and worked with him would say that he was an extraordinarily nice person to work for, he was very kind and considerate, and he knew how to get the best out of people.

"I think that this sort of remarkable inner strength and calmness came partly from the very strong relationship he had with his wife, Nane, who travelled with him on many of his trips around the world," Mr. Mortimer said, noting that her "smiling, cheerful presence at his side added something important to his leadership."

The fact that people are still mourning Kofi Annan so strongly, indicates that there are many people in the world who realize that that's what's missing, and that that's the kind of leadership that's needed today

The former speechwriter, and senior journalist with the Financial Times, recalled that Mr. Annan had been recruited by the [World Health Organization](#) (WHO) in 1962, and that up until the 1980s he had worked for different Geneva-based UN agencies, such as the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

"That was where he met Nane," Mr. Mortimer explained. "She was a lawyer, working for UNHCR."

The former communications director did not find it surprising that at the end of his term as Secretary-General. they wanted to come back and live in Geneva. He also credited the late UN chief with bringing Switzerland into the UN fold.

"I think it's not a coincidence" that in 2002, during his time as Secretary-General "that the Swiss people voted to join the United Nations," he argues.

"It's not something that comes easily to a country like Switzerland, which is very careful about its independence; very distrustful of super-national systems. But I think the fact that the UN was led at that time by Kofi Annan who was somebody who many of them knew and felt a rapport with, I'm sure made a difference," elaborated Mr. Mortimer.

In his interview with UN News, he shared a charming episode about their life together, after his retirement. "He and Nane were living in Geneva, they'd find it difficult just to go for a walk in the street, because so often he was recognized and people would stop him and want his autograph and whatever," said Mr. Mortimer.

With a marathon underway in the city, the couple thought it would be a good time to go out for a walk, thinking that nobody would be interested in them, but focused on the race instead.

"One of the runners in the marathon came off the course and came up to him and asked for his autograph," said Mr. Mortimer. "So perhaps that gives you an idea of that rock star quality that he had."