

Human rights community mourns passing of Sir Nigel Rodley, former UN rights expert

27 January 2017 – Expressing sadness at the passing of noted rights icon, Sir Nigel Rodley, the United Nations human rights wing today recalled the contributions of one of the “best known public faces, and most eloquent voices” of the UN Human Rights Committee.

Affectionately known to the human rights community as ‘Sir Nigel,’ the rights expert passed away on 25 January, at the age of 75.

“He would speak directly and frankly to anyone, even the most powerful; yet would also treat everyone with great humanity and kindness,” Rupert Colville, the spokesperson for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), told the regular bi-weekly media briefing in Geneva.

In addition to serving at the Human Rights Committee – the independent expert body that monitors worldwide implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights – for 16 years between 2001 and 2016, Sir Nigel was a former UN Special Rapporteur on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment from 1993 to 2001, a devoted human rights defender and also an academic.

“For us at the UN Human Rights Office, he was someone who was always willing to pass on his knowledge and experience to a younger generation,” said Mr. Colville.

Sir Nigel was also the Professor of Law and Chair of the Human Rights Centre at the University of Essex in the United Kingdom. Many of his students are now working at OHCHR as well as at various other human rights institutions around the world.

Quoting OHCHR staff, he added: “Sir Nigel could be sharp, and he certainly pointed out your mistakes, but he was also generous with his praise.”

AUDIO: OHCHR spokesperson Rupert Colville speaking on what made Sir Nigel so special.