

**ANNAN, Kofi Atta, Ghanaian international civil servant and seventh Secretary-General of the United Nations (UN) 1997-2006, was born 8 April 1938 in Kumasi, Gold Coast (now Ghana) and passed away 18 August 2018 in Bern, Switzerland. He was the son of Henry Reginald Annan, export manager, and Rose Victoria Eshu. In May 1965 he married Titi Alakija, a self-employed woman, with whom he had a daughter and a son. They were divorced in 1983. On 10 September 1984 he married Nane Maria Lagergren, lawyer and artist, who had one daughter from a previous relationship.**



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Annan came from an elite family in Ghana. Both of his grandfathers and an uncle were judges. His mother belonged to the Fante ethnic group, while his father, an export manager for a Lever Brothers subsidiary, was half Fante and half Asante. From 1954 to 1957 Annan attended the Mfantsipim School, an elite Methodist boarding school in central Ghana, directed by missionaries. When Ghana obtained independence from the United Kingdom (UK) under the leadership of Kwame Nkrumah in 1957, Annan experienced the enthusiastic atmosphere. However, he did not belong to Nkrumah's party, but rather was linked to the missionaries. Both his family and school taught him various languages, including French, English and several African languages, among them Akan and Kru. In 1958 he began to study economics at the College of Science and Technology in Kumasi. He joined the National Union of Ghanaian Students and became its Vice President. When attending a conference in Sierra Leone, a representative of the Ford Foundation offered him a scholarship to study in the United States (US). In 1961 this grant allowed him to attend Macalester College in St. Paul, Minnesota, which at the time recruited many African-American students as well as foreign students from Africa. The college was committed to internationalism and started flying the United Nations (UN) flag on campus from 1950. At Macalester Annan earned a Bachelor's degree and then secured a grant from the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace to continue his studies in economics at the Graduate Institute of International Studies in Geneva, Switzerland (1961-1962).

In 1962 Annan obtained a low-ranking job as a budget officer with the World Health Organization (WHO) in Geneva. He also worked in two field offices while employed by the WHO. In 1965 he married Titi Alakija, a Nigerian woman from a well-to-do family, with whom he would have two children. In 1965 they moved to Addis Ababa in Ethiopia, where he became an administrative officer in the personnel section of the UN Economic Commission for Africa

(ECA), which at the time was headed by Robert Gardiner. Three years later Annan became special assistant to the head of administration at the ECA and in November 1968 he was sent to New York for a year of training at UN headquarters. Upon his return he became chief of ECA's personnel section, but felt dissatisfied with the work. In June 1971 he decided to have a sabbatical year in order to study at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he participated in the Sloan Fellow management programme, designed to train the 'ideal manager', and earned a Master's degree in June 1972. He returned to his ECA post in Addis Ababa but, in August, he was transferred to the UN Office in Geneva as a manager in the administration. In 1974 he was assigned to the UN Emergency Force in Cairo and Ismailia in Egypt as chief personnel officer for civilians working with this UN peacekeeping mission. Later that year he left the UN to work as Managing Director of the Ghana Tourist Development Board. Like Gardiner, who had returned to Ghana and had urged him to do the same, he wanted to contribute to his country, but there were few opportunities to promote tourism under military rule.

In 1976 Annan returned to the UN in New York, where he was Deputy Chief of Staff Services at the Office of Staff Services of the UN Secretariat until 1980 when he moved to Geneva again to become Deputy Director of the Division of Administration and then Head of Personnel Service for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Between 1981 and 1983 he also was a Governor of the UN International School in Geneva. In 1983 Annan divorced Alakija. They had a troubled relationship, but stayed together for many years. In 1984 Annan married Nane Lagergren, a legal officer at the UNHCR who he met at a party in Geneva. She was also divorced and had a child. In 1984 the couple moved to New York, where Annan became Director of the Budget Division of the Office of Financial Services at the UN Secretariat. In 1987 UN Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar appointed Annan as Assistant Secretary-General in charge of human resources. Annan was also a Board member of the UN Joint Staff Pension Fund and Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the UN International School USA (1987-1991). In 1990 Annan became Assistant Secretary-General for Programme Planning, Budget and Finance and Controller. In September of that year Pérez de Cuéllar sent Annan to Iraq to help work out the repatriation of some 900 UN staff and many thousands of Asian and African workers, who were being held hostage by Saddam Hussein. Annan succeeded in securing their release and in arranging airlifts to evacuate many out of Iraq. In 1992 UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali named Annan Deputy Chief of the newly established Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), where he created a centre that monitored the numerous UN peacekeeping operations. In March 1993 Boutros-Ghali promoted Annan to Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations.

In 1994, while in this New York position, Annan was faced with the mass slaughter of Tutsis by the Hutu majority government during the Rwandan civil war. The UN, the US, the UK and Belgium were criticized for their inaction and failure to support the UN Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR). Commander Roméo Dallaire, who directed UNAMIR and learned about the plans for the mass extermination of Tutsis, requested permission to act and prevent this from occurring but saw his requests for leeway and support turned down by DPKO. Dallaire found himself unable to play a role while the mass killings and displacements took place. In 2004 Annan recognized that he could and should have done more to prevent the genocide. His biographer Stanley Meisler (2007: 86) observes: 'There is no doubt that Kofi Annan lives with guilt over Rwanda'. Annan, according to Meisler (2007: 95), did not ignore the warning about genocide, but tried to deal with it in a different way than proposed by Dallaire, as Annan hoped that a meeting with the Rwandan President would change the situation. However, while DPKO leaned on peacekeeping rules with a focus on reciprocal violence, Dallaire tried to provide evidence that Rwanda was 'both a civil war and a site of crimes against humanity organized by Hutu extremists against the Tutsi population'. Barnett and Finnemore (2004: 124) explain DPKO's response as the result of an organizational culture

in which the focus remained on killings as part of civil war, rather than being open to Dallaire's wider understanding on the spot: 'At no time did DPKO or Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali seek information that might have caused them to alter their initial assessment'.

In November 1995 Boutros-Ghali appointed Annan as his Special Representative to the Former Yugoslavia, where the breakup of the country ended with the Dayton Agreement for peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Several international organizations were mandated to implement and monitor the agreement. Annan was caught in the middle of high politics when he coordinated the peacekeeping efforts with the UN Ambassadors from the US, the UK, France and Russia to oversee the transition from the UN Protection Force to the multinational Implementation Force led by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. By late 1996 the US vehemently opposed the reappointment of Boutros-Ghali as UN Secretary-General. Because Boutros-Ghali was from Africa, but was not allowed a second term, the search for his replacement was focused on African candidates. Since no Secretary-General had ever come from sub-Saharan Africa, individuals from this region were seriously considered. Annan had a reputation that made him a suitable candidate. He was recognized as thoroughly knowing the UN organization and capable of handling difficult situations, such as in Iraq and the Former Yugoslavia. He was also acceptable to conservative US politicians, such as Jesse Helms, Chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Annan moreover gained the support of US President William Clinton's administration. France preferred someone from a francophone state, but gave in when the three African states in the Security Council supported Annan, who was elected by the Council on 13 December (unanimously) and by the General Assembly on 17 December 1996 (by acclamation).

Annan started as UN Secretary-General on 1 January 1997, the first office-holder who had spent almost his entire career within the UN System. He had excellent knowledge of the organization and when he began as Secretary-General he had full support from the US government, which expected him to reform the organization. His relationship with the US was cordial, not friendly or admiring. Annan often said that the US needed the UN and the UN the US (Bauer 2006: 198-199). In July Annan issued his detailed programme for reform in the report *Renewing the United Nations*, which included both a streamlining of the UN Secretariat and a realignment of the agencies in order to rationalize reporting lines and enhance accountability. His point of departure was not to do less (as the US preferred), but rather to increase the UN's capacity to act within existing resources. The General Assembly approved the first package of reforms in November, which included an elimination of Secretariat positions, resulting in a cut in administrative costs. This eventually encouraged the US to repay part of the back dues owed to the UN. The reform also created an independent auditing department and the new position of Deputy Secretary-General, occupied by Louise Fréchette in January 1998. Annan also addressed member states. In 1997 he issued a report on Africa, urging Africans to stop blaming their ills on colonialism and calling for the Organization of African Unity to stop tolerating governments that come to power through military coups. Annan supported the creation of the International Criminal Court, which was established in 1998, in spite of US reluctance.

In February 1998, when Saddam Hussein denied access to weapon inspectors unless the UN-imposed economic sanctions on Iraq were lifted and the US threatened to respond with air strikes, Annan, in an effort to break the impasse, visited Baghdad to discuss the issue with Hussein. His independent diplomatic move was met with disapproval by the US and the UK, but resulted in an agreement with Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz to accept UN resolutions and allow inspections. The US then called off the air strikes. In June 1998 Annan delivered a lecture in the UK in which he argued that the UN may intervene in a state, if that is the only way to protect its endangered inhabitants. This proved to be the beginnings of the Responsibility to Protect principle (often referred to as R2P), which was discussed by an international

commission in 2001 and adopted by the 2005 high-level UN World Summit. In 1999 Annan issued a report on the Srebrenica massacre of July 1995 during the Bosnian War, in which he assigned blame to both the UN Secretariat and Security Council members. The same year an independent commission issued a report on the Rwanda genocide, also blaming the Secretariat and Council members. Annan's report *We the Peoples: A UN for the Twenty-First Century*, published in April 2000, gave the UN System new inspiration. In September it was discussed at the UN Millennium Summit in New York, where world leaders adopted eight Millennium Development Goals. This 15-year programme aimed to reduce poverty and hunger and to enhance health and well-being as well as economic development and set explicit quantified goals. In August 2000 the UN issued the so-called Brahimi Report on UN peace operations. This report resulted from a panel called by Annan and directed by Algerian diplomat Lakhdar Brahimi, which called for better-equipped UN forces with the authority to intervene and prevent massacres in any country. The creation of permanent UN blue helmets, ready to intervene anywhere in case of an emergency, was advocated. This would be the first step towards the establishment of a permanent UN military force which would be able to react rapidly. This widely read report helped to establish better information capabilities for the UN and more provisions related to peacekeeping in Security Council decisions.

On 27 June 2001, six months before his first term was to conclude, the Security Council unanimously nominated Annan for a second term, followed by an enthusiastic acclamation in the General Assembly on 29 June. This uncommon re-election process took place rather early (as proposed by Bangladesh) and neglected the existing rotation scheme since Annan's five-year first term was viewed as completing Africa's time as Secretary-General that had begun under Boutros-Ghali (with Asia expecting a nominee from its region). In October the UN and Annan were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, with the Nobel Committee praising Annan for bringing new life to the organization. However, the September 11 attacks against the US by the terrorist group al-Qaeda resulted in what the US government termed the War on Terror and an invasion of Afghanistan, which would severely impact the UN. The next day the UN Security Council passed a resolution that confirmed the right of the US to attack al-Qaeda in self-defence. US allegations of a connection between al-Qaeda and Saddam Hussein resulted in the plan to also invade Iraq. US President George W. Bush decided to seek UN authorization for this and addressed the General Assembly in September 2002. In November the Security Council unanimously passed Resolution 1441, demanding that Iraq readmit inspectors and get rid of all weapons of mass destruction. Annan convinced Iraq to allow inspections directed by Hans Blix and Mohamed El-Baradei of the International Atomic Energy Agency. In February 2003 US Secretary of State Collin Powell failed to convince the Security Council about the existence of weapons of mass destruction. The US then invaded Iraq without a UN mandate, despite Annan's attempts to prevent the invasion. In May the UN accepted the de facto situation and Annan sent a mission to Iraq, headed by UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Sérgio Vieira de Mello, who developed a better relationship with the Iraqis than the US officials headed by Paul Bremer. When, in August 2003, a suicide car bomber attacked the UN headquarters in Baghdad, Vieira de Mello and 21 other persons were killed. Annan removed all staff and in October a UN report concluded that the organization had failed to provide enough security for its staff. In an interview with the BBC in September 2004 Annan said that the war in Iraq, from the UN Charter point of view, was illegal, which angered the Bush administration. Annan sent Brahimi to Iraq for consultations about an Iraqi interim cabinet and in October committed himself to peace in Iraq by addressing the leaders of the US, the UK and Iraq, asking for a ceasefire. This angered the Bush administration once again and Republicans accused Annan of trying to influence the US presidential election. With ongoing cool relations between the UN and the US, a series of small scandals in the UN's handling of the Oil-for-Food Programme gave the UN and Annan unwelcome publicity. The programme, established in 1995, allowed Iraq to sell oil on the world

market in exchange for food and medicine for its citizens who were affected by the economic sanctions. It was discovered that Annan's son Kojo was connected to a Swiss firm that won a contract in the programme. Annan asked US Federal Reserve Chairman Paul Volcker and South African judge Richard Goldstone to investigate all allegations. The final 2005 report accused Annan of a substandard performance in monitoring the programme and confirmed that Kojo had leveraged his father's position to obtain the contract, but it also stated that most of Saddam's illicit profits came from oil smuggling, 'much of it condoned by the US, and not from the oil-for-food program' (Meisler 2007: 343). Annan (2013: 383) later admitted: 'I was surprised and disappointed that my son was not more clear on his relationships with this enterprise'.

In *Strengthening the UN: An Agenda for Further Change*, published in September 2002, Annan advocated for better management of the UN and improved media coverage. He sought to associate civil society more closely with the UN by establishing a Panel of Eminent Persons on UN-civil society relations, chaired by former Brazilian President Fernando Henrique Cardoso. The 2004 report *We the Peoples: Civil Society, the United Nations and Global Governance* focused on the enlargement of democracy and growing importance of non-state actors. The report contained proposals to transform the role of the UN in the world and suggested that civil society and the private sector should be closely associated with UN action. Another High-Level Panel in charge of making an inventory of threats, challenges and changes linked to globalization recommended changes in the main UN bodies, especially the Security Council, in the report *A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility* issued in November 2004. Annan used the UN World Summit in September 2005 to introduce new ideas and mechanisms in the UN, among them the Responsibility to Protect principle. In his *In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All* he advocated for an enlargement of the Security Council, a doubling of official development assistance and a one-billion-dollar fund to help victims of disasters. He also called for the creation of a Human Rights Council, replacing the inefficient and much criticized Human Rights Commission. The General Assembly approved the creation of this Council in 2006. Annan also succeeded in creating the Peacebuilding Commission, which was inaugurated in June 2006, as a result of the World Summit, based on the idea that the UN must help countries to build a lasting peace after the end of armed conflicts. Enlarging the Security Council, in order to make the Council more representative of the current world, proved to be impossible due to vested interests of the five permanent members. Annan proposed two solutions. One was a Council with 24 instead of 15 seats, with six new permanent seats (but without veto) and three rotational seats. The other solution had eight new semi-permanent seats for four years and one new non-permanent seat. Both solutions would have given a place to states such as Brazil, Germany, India, Japan and South Africa. Annan also continued the reform of the UN System administration he had started in 1997. He (2013: 151) felt that the UN 'became progressively an institution aiming at preserving itself'. In 2006 he promoted an extensive reform programme of UN personnel practices, but was criticized for introducing new public management methods, based on quasi-market structures and performance standards, in the UN administration. Nonetheless, some activities were outsourced to the private sector, among them the educational and cultural actions of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization under the leadership of Director-General Koichiro Matsuura.

Like all Secretaries-General, Annan had to persuade governments to provide troops for peacekeeping operations and funding for development aid and disaster situations. Profoundly affected by poverty and disease in the world, Annan (2013: 228) underlined in 1999 that AIDS killed ten times more people than armed conflicts did. This encouraged him to launch the Millennium Development Goals in 2000. Anxious to strengthen the links between the UN and civil society he supported the creation of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, which began operations as a public-private partnership in 2002 and attracted funding

from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. He also wanted to strengthen the ties between the private business sector and the UN in order to promote development. Having studied management, Annan was not afraid of contacting enterprises. At the World Economic Forum 1999 Annual Meeting in Davos, Switzerland he launched the Global Compact and encouraged international enterprises to join the Compact voluntarily and respect its ten principles, including human rights, labour norms, environmental protection and the struggle against corruption. While more than 7,000 enterprises from 135 countries joined the Global Compact, the Compact was also criticized. Globalization critics, such as ATTAC and Amnesty International, saw ‘a dangerous proximity with multinational firms’ (Bauer 2006: 178). They warned that firms benefited more from the Global Compact than the UN or the workers, as firms used this to clear their public image.

Annan’s second term in office ended on 31 December 2006. In his farewell speech he criticized US foreign policy and urged the US to be more multilateral, to accept an enlargement of the Security Council and to better respect human rights, especially in the fight against terrorism. Annan’s major achievement as an international statesman was putting the UN in the foreground. He developed a good relationship with the Security Council and with the media. He did not appoint many Africans in the UN, but rather acted as a world citizen in his effort to bring the peoples of the world together as well as in the administrative organization of the UN. He improved staff morale considerably following the departure of Boutros-Ghali. He was embraced more than Boutros-Ghali because he was less isolated, communicated intensively and sought consensus and harmony. He was soft spoken, but dignified, and came across as relaxed and serene. Some people even reproached him for being too gentle and conflict-shy (Bauer 2006: 119, 142).

In 2007 Annan established the Kofi Annan Foundation as an independent not-for-profit organization to promote better global governance. Annan remained active in several institutions. In 2007 he was appointed as head of the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa. He also chaired the foundation of the World Organisation Against Torture as well as the African Progress Panel. He furthermore belonged to The Elders, which gathers elder statesmen, peace activists and human rights advocates in the service of peace and human rights. In 2007 the African Union asked Annan to head a Panel of Eminent African Personalities to find a peaceful solution to the electoral crisis in Kenya. The panel helped to convince the two principal parties to the conflict to participate in the Kenya National Dialogue and Reconciliation Process. In February 2012 Annan was appointed as the UN and Arab League Joint Special Envoy to Syria in order to try to find a solution for the Syrian civil war. In April of that year he brokered a UN-backed ceasefire, but fighting between the Syrian army and the rebels continued. As a result, Annan resigned. In September 2016 Annan was asked to lead the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State in Myanmar in order to find a solution for the persecution of the Rohingya people. The Annan Commission released its final report in August 2017. Annan tried unsuccessfully to engage the UN in resolving the crisis. He was still involved in this effort when he passed away after a short illness in August 2018. His body was returned to Ghana, where a state funeral was held.

**ARCHIVES:** Summary of AG-029 Secretary-General Kofi Annan (1997-2006) at the United Nations, see <https://search.archives.un.org/downloads/secretary-general-kofi-annan-1997-2006.pdf>.

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**Chloé Maurel**

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