

Kofi Annan, 1938-2018

By Dr. Christos A. Theodoulou, President of the UN Association of Cyprus and
Vice President of WFUNA, former staff Member of the UN in New York

On the 18th August 2018 died in a hospital in Bern, the capital of Switzerland, the former Secretary-General of the UN Kofi Annan, at the age of 80.

He was born in Ghana in 1938, in a well to do family. He studied in the US and at the Graduate Institute of International Studies of Geneva from 1961-62, time when I was in the University of Geneva and I entered the Graduate Institute the following year.

Kofi Annan was the 7th Secretary General of the United Nations and the first African south of the Sahara. He succeeded the Egyptian Boutros Boutros-Ghali in 1997 and was elected for two terms from 1997 to 2006.

Many tributes were paid to him, characterizing him as a “charismatic leader” dedicated to the ideas of the UN Charter.

His name was connected with the “Annan plan” for Cyprus, which was not accepted.

Among his achievements were the creation of the International Criminal Court in 1998 and the inspiration of the MDGS.

In 2001, he received the Nobel Prize for Peace, together with the UN, for their common action for the peace and justice in the world.

Among his grey moments was his failure, while in charge of the Peace-keeping Operations at the UN, in the war in Yugoslavia in 1992 and the subsequent slaughter in Srebrenica. Also the Genocide in Rwanda in 1994.

After his retirement from the UN in 2006, he moved to Geneva where he established the Kofi Annan Foundation, which was dedicated, among others, to improvement of agriculture in Africa and strengthening Human Rights in the world.

He was the chairman of the Elders, an elite group of former statesmen founded by Nelson Mandela and, for a brief period in 2012, he acted as a mediator in the Syrian Civil War.

Kofi Annan tried his best to help us live in a better and more peaceful world. In some of his efforts he failed like in Cyprus. For me, however, he is also someone who went to the Geneva Institute as I did and loved Geneva as I do.

Michael Møller, the director-general of the UN European Headquarters in Geneva and former UN Secretary-General's special representative in Cyprus, termed Annan's death an "enormous loss for the world".

23rd August, 2018