

Obituary of Jayantha Dhanapala (30 December 1938 - 27 May 2023)



Jayantha Dhanapala (30 December 1938 – 27 May 2023) was a Sri Lankan diplomat who served as member of the Board of Sponsors of *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* and was a governing board member of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. Dhanapala was also a distinguished member of Constitutional Council of Sri Lanka and he was the Senior Special Advisor on Foreign Relations to President Maithripala Sirisena, and was Sri Lanka's official candidate for the post of Secretary-General of the United Nations, before withdrawing from the race on 29 September 2006. From 2007 he was the President of the *Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs*.

He entered the Sri Lankan diplomatic service and served in London, Beijing, Washington, D.C., New Delhi and Geneva. Dhanapala was appointed Ambassador in Geneva (1984–87)—he was also accredited to the UN and was appointed Sri Lanka's Ambassador to the United States of America based in Washington D.C. from 1995-97.

Dhanapala was widely acclaimed for his Presidency of the 1995 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review and Extension Conference, a landmark event in disarmament history, because of his crafting of a package of decisions balancing the twin objectives of nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament and the concerns of the nuclear weapon states and the non-nuclear weapon states which was adopted without a vote. *The New York Times* observed that Jayantha Dhanapala 'was a diplomat mostly unknown outside the arms-control world until he was elected to preside over this conference.'

Dhanapala was hand-picked by UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan to take on the challenging job of Under Secretary General to re-establish the Department of Disarmament after the UN reforms of 1997 (1998–2003). During his tenure, he piloted the UN's role in arresting the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, anti-personnel landmines, conventional weapons, and weapons of mass destruction while reinforcing existing norms and norm-building in other areas such as missiles. He also broke new ground both in-house in taking managerial initiatives in gender mainstreaming and in work-life issues, as well as in the disarmament field by innovating the exchange of weapons for a development programme in Albania and other areas, and also in the cross-sectoral linking of disarmament with development, the environment and peace education programmes. Dhanapala was appointed Secretary-General of the Secretariat for Coordinating the Peace Process (SCOPP) in Sri Lanka from 2004 - 2005. Dhanapala died in Kandy on 27 May 2023, at the age of 84.

Source: Wikipedia, 29 May 2023

Jayantha Dhanapala

Jayantha Dhanapala [was] a United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs (1998-2003) and an Ambassador of Sri Lanka to the USA (1995-7) and to the UN Office in Geneva (1984-87). He [was] the 11th President of the Nobel Peace Prize-winning *Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs* and member of several other advisory boards of international bodies. As a Sri Lankan diplomat Dhanapala served in London, Beijing, Washington D.C., New Delhi and Geneva and represented Sri Lanka at several international conferences chairing many of them including the historic NPT Review and Extension Conference of 1995. He was Director of the *UN Institute for Disarmament Research* (UNIDIR) from 1987-92. *Source:* SIPRI, 29 May 2023

Obituary of Hans Günter Brauch

I met Amb. Jayantha Dhanapala probably the first time when he was Director of the *UN Institute for Disarmament Research* (UNIDIR) from 1987-92 and when he was Under Secretary General of the UN Department of Disarmament (1998–2003) and corresponded with him when he was President of the *Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs* and between 2009 and 2011 about his preface on:

“Connecting Inconvenient Truths: Urgency of Nuclear Disarmament in a World of Pressing Problems” that may be downloaded free of any fee at: <<https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/bfm:978-3-642-17776-7/1?pdf=chapter%20toc>> to our Hexagon Volume V:

Hans Günter Brauch, Úrsula Oswald Spring, Czeslaw Mesjasz, John Grin, Patricia Kameri-Mbote, Béchir Chourou, Pal Dunay, Jörn Birkmann (Eds.): *Coping with Global Environmental Change, Disasters and Security – Threats, Challenges, Vulnerabilities and Risks*. Hexagon Series on Human and Environmental Security and Peace, vol. 5 (Berlin – Heidelberg – New York: Springer-Verlag, 2011): 5-9.

In 2015 I corresponded with him and the Pugwash Office in London about two possible Pioneer volumes on the award of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1995 to Pugwash and to Joe Rotblat and on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of Pugwash in 2017 that could unfortunately not be realised.

I remember him as a very modest person, a creative thinker and an extremely successful diplomat on disarmament affairs at the end of the Cold War and during the post-Cold War era. My thoughts are with his family in Sri Lanka. May his soul rest in peace!

Mosbach, Germany, 29 May 2029