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Kofi Annan

Ghanaian statesman and secretary-general of the United Nations

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BY **The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica** Last Updated: Aug 14, 2021 | [View Edit History](#)

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Born: April 8, 1938 • [Kumasi](#) • [Gold Coast](#)

Died: August 18, 2018 (aged 80) • [Bern](#) • [Switzerland](#)

Awards And Honors: [Nobel Prize \(2001\)](#)

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Kofi Annan, in full **Kofi Atta Annan**, (born April 8, 1938, [Kumasi](#), [Gold Coast](#) [now Ghana]—died [August 18, 2018](#), [Bern](#), Switzerland), Ghanaian international civil servant, who was the [secretary-general](#) of the [United Nations](#) (UN) from 1997 to 2006. He was the corecipient, with the United Nations, of the [Nobel Prize](#) for Peace in 2001.

Annan, whose father was governor of [Asante](#) province and a hereditary paramount chief of the [Fante](#) people, studied at the University of Science and Technology in Kumasi before enrolling at Macalester College in St. Paul, [Minnesota](#), U.S., where he received a bachelor's degree in economics. He continued his studies at the Institute for Advanced International Studies in [Geneva](#). He earned a [master's degree](#) while a Sloan fellow at the [Massachusetts Institute of Technology](#) in 1971–72.

Annan began his career with the UN as a budget officer for the [World Health Organization](#) in Geneva in 1962. With the exception of a brief stint as the director of tourism in [Ghana](#)

... particularly in his skillful handling of the transition of peacekeeping operations from UN forces to NATO forces.

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KOFI ANNAN

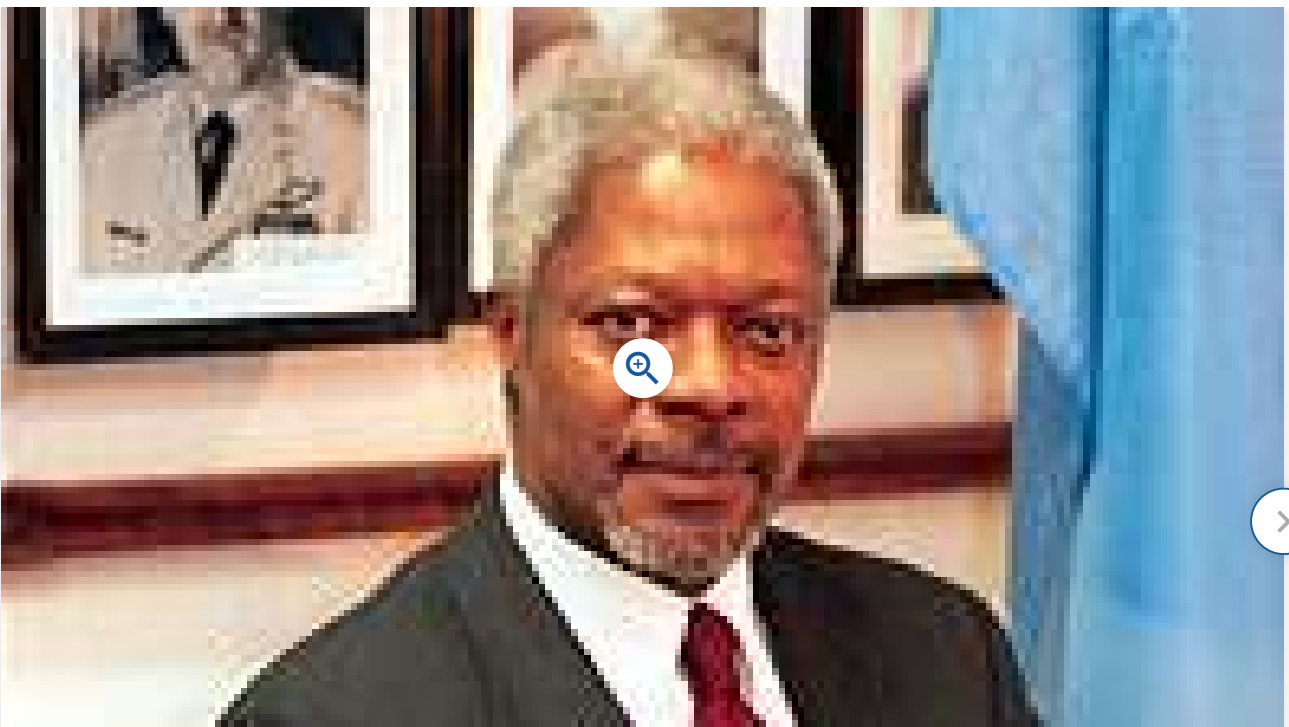
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Because [Boutros Boutros-Ghali](#), Annan's predecessor as secretary-general, had alienated some member nations—most notably the United States—with his independent and aloof style, Annan entered office with the tasks of repairing relations with the United States and reforming the UN [bureaucracy](#). Soon after becoming secretary-general, he introduced a reform plan that sought to reduce the organization's budget and streamline its operations, moves that were welcomed by the United States. Other priorities included restoring public confidence in the UN, combating the [AIDS](#) virus, especially in Africa, and ending [human rights](#) abuses.



Kofi Annan

Kofi Annan, 1996.

Image: AP/Wide World Photos

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In 2001 Annan was appointed to a second term. Later that year the [September 11 attacks](#) occurred in the United States, and global security and terrorism became major issues for

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explore the UN's response to global threats, and he included many of its recommendations in a major reform package presented to the UN General Assembly in 2005. A number of measures were later adopted; the proposal to expand the Security Council from 15 to 24 members was among those rejected. In 2005 Annan was at the centre of controversy following an investigation into the [oil-for-food](#) program, which had allowed Iraq—under UN supervision—to sell a set amount of oil in order to purchase food, medicine, and other necessities. A report described major corruption within the program and revealed that Annan's son was part of a Swiss business that had won an oil-for-food contract. Although Annan was cleared of wrongdoing, he was criticized for his failure to properly oversee the program. In 2006 Annan's term ended, and he was succeeded by [Ban Ki-Moon](#).



[chimpanzee expert Jane Goodall and UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan](#)

Renowned chimpanzee expert Jane Goodall (left) with UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan during a ceremony to honour Goodall as UN Messenger of Peace, April 2002.

Image: Osamu Honda/AP

In 2007 Annan was named chairperson of the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), an organization aiding small-scale farmers; AGRA was funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the [Rockefeller Foundation](#). He later played a crucial role in resolving the Kenyan election crisis that began in late December 2007, eventually [broker](#)ing a power-sharing agreement between the government and the opposition.


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University of Ghana. In 2007 he founded the Kofi Annan Foundation, a [not-for-profit organization](#) that promotes peace, sustainable development, human rights, and the [rule of law](#).

In February 2012 Annan was appointed Joint Special Envoy for [Syria](#) by the United Nations and the [League of Arab States](#). His core diplomatic effort consisted in delivering to the Syrian government a six-point proposal for ending the country's civil war, a plan [endorsed](#) by the Security Council. The proposal enjoined Pres. [Bashar al-Assad](#)'s government to take significant steps, including ending all fighting operations. The Syrian government formally accepted the plan in March but continued its attacks on rebel forces and on popular demonstrations. In August Annan announced his demission as Joint Special Envoy, citing a lack of unity and political will among world powers to resolve the conflict.

Annan coauthored a number of works. The memoir *Interventions: A Life in War and Peace* (cowritten with Nader Mousavizadeh) was published in 2012.

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 This article was most recently revised and updated by [Letricia Dixon](#), Copy Editor.

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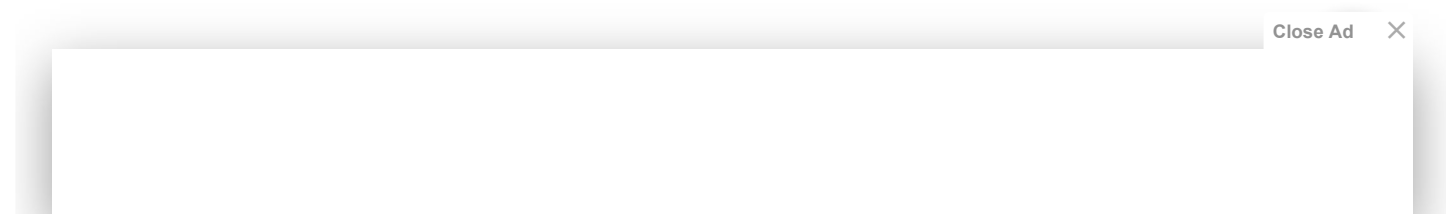
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L' Occupation du monde

Doguicimi de Paul Hazoumé

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