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**UNITED NATIONS
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Veteran Sri Lankan Diplomat Jayantha Dhanapala Appointed as Chair of UNU Council

The Council of United Nations University, which met for its annual session earlier this month at UNU Centre in Tokyo, has elected Ambassador Jayantha Dhanapala of Sri Lanka as UNU Council Chair.

Amb. Dhanapala, who currently serves as Senior Adviser to the President of Sri Lanka, has had a distinguished four-decade career as a diplomat, peace-builder and disarmament expert. In his role as UNU Council Chair, he succeeds Peter Katjavivi, the Republic of Namibia's Ambassador to the Federal Republic of Germany.

The Council of United Nations University, which acts as the governing board of UNU, comprises 24 appointed members (who serve as individuals and not as representatives of their home countries), the Rector of UNU and 3 ex-officio members (the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, and the Executive Director of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research).

Amb. Dhanapala was appointed to the Council in May 2004 for a six-year term. With UNU Rector Hans van Ginkel planning to retire in 2007, Amb. Dhanapala's selection as UNU Council Chair comes at a transitional period for the University, and he will play a key role in overseeing the changeover.

"I am deeply honoured to be elected to lead the UNU Council at this time of momentous change for UNU, the entire UN system and the world," said Amb. Dhanapala. I am confident that, on the basis of its past achievements, UNU will consolidate and further develop its unique role as a UN 'think-tank,' generating and transferring ideas and knowledge through a network of scholars and institutions serving the purposes and principles of the UN. There are vast untapped intellectual resources in the world, especially in developing countries, and UNU has the capacity to mobilize them."

A brief profile of Jayantha Dhanapala

Jayantha Dhanapala worked briefly in the private sector before entering the Sri Lanka Foreign Service in 1965. After holding a series of diplomatic appointments in the UK, China, the USA, and India, and serving as Director of the Non-Aligned Movement Division of the Sri Lanka Foreign Ministry, in 1984 he was appointed Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the United Nations in Geneva (with concurrent accreditation to UN agencies in Vienna). In 1987, he was selected by the UN Secretary-General to be Director of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR).

Ambassador Dhanapala returned to the Foreign Ministry in Colombo in 1992, and in 1995 was appointed Sri Lanka's Ambassador to the USA (with concurrent accreditation to Mexico). In 1997, he retired from the Sri Lanka Foreign Service and joined the Centre for Non-Proliferation Studies, Monterey Institute of International Studies (USA). In 1998, he was appointed United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, a post he held until 2003. After returning to Sri Lanka, in 2004 he assumed duties as Secretary-General of the Secretariat for the Co-ordinating of the Peace Process and then as Senior Adviser to the President of Sri Lanka.

Amb. Dhanapala has received numerous international awards for his accomplishments in diplomacy and disarmament. In addition to his new role as Chair of the UNU Council, he serves on the advisory boards of such organizations as the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces; the Centre for Non-Proliferation Studies, Monterey Institute of International Studies; and the International Committee of the Red Cross. He serves on the Governing Board of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, and is Honorary President of the Geneva-based International Peace Bureau. He has written four books and several articles in international journals.

Amb. Dhanapala holds a B.A. degree in English Literature from University of Peradeniya (Sri Lanka), an M.A. degree in International Studies from American University (USA) and several honorary doctorates.

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