

## Spirituality Committee Appoints New Senior Adviser

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New York, United States -- The NGO Committee on Spirituality, Values and Global Concerns-New York (CSVGC-NY) has appointed Ambassador Isaiah Chabala, a former ambassador of Zambia to the United Nations and to the European Union, as its senior advisor.

Ambassador Chabala is the founder and president of Visionary Empowerment Inc., an organization that strives to empower communities, break the cycle of poverty and realize the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by promoting gender equality through training and education.

In his remarks during a CSVGC-NY general meeting on February 23, 2017, he introduced the growing recognition of the importance of spirituality in actualizing the SDGs through the lens of a holistic, integrated purpose for individuals and communities.

He shared the following interview with former U.N. Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson, which was published in the UN Insider. The article is followed by the [Vision Statement of the CSVGC-NY](#).

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IDN-InDepthNews UN Insider

Deputy UN Chief Deems Culture and Spirituality Important

By Ramesh Jaura

NEW YORK (IDN) – The outgoing United Nations Deputy-Secretary-General Jan Eliasson has urged world leaders to stop dividing humanity into "us and them" and said that it is important "to realize that there is an element of spirituality needed in what we do."

In an extensive and in-depth [interview with UN News](#), he described the "Syria tragedy" as his "greatest disappointment" and obliquely criticized the Security Council for having missed an opportunity to adopt a binding resolution four years ago.

Asked what advice he would have for his successor, Amina Mohammed, Eliasson said: "I don't think she needs much advice! She ... has worked in the UN intensely. She is one of the architects, one of the most important architects, behind the [Sustainable Development Goals](#). She is also very well anchored in government, which I was also before I came to the UN, except that for her it was Nigeria and for me it was Sweden. So we have similar backgrounds."

He added: "My advice for her is to stick very strongly to her basic strength – namely the credibility and standing she has in the world with the Sustainable Development Goals. If these Goals can now be translated to national planning, she will have done a historic job."

Eliasson hopes that she, together with the new Secretary-General (António Guterres), "will also see the beauty of working together on peace and security, and development and human rights, as one, and accepting what I would call the 'horizontal approach,'" which he said is "in her from the beginning."

Expanding on his "departing message for world leaders" requested by UN News, the outgoing deputy secretary-general said: "I am very worried about this trend of identifying yourself in contrast to others, rather than together with others.

"Whether it is your religious belonging, or your ethnic group, or your tribe in some countries, that trend means that you are actually undermining the equal worth of all human beings, because you easily consider the 'us' superior to the 'them.' And that feeds polarization and division, and then you are more prone, in that situation, to be receptive to fearmongering, and even selling hatred."

He added: "In today's world we don't need more hatred, we don't need more fear. We need more hope, and realization that we live together. The most important word in today's world is, in fact, 'together.' And that is also the name of a campaign that the UN is now leading to help make nations accept this need to fight xenophobia. That is the most basic message that translated itself into how we, in the future, deal with migration and refugees, how we deal with development, how we deal with root causes to end conflicts earlier."

Referring to spiritual aspects, apparently close to his heart, Eliasson said: "I would hope to have revived [Dag Hammarskjöld](#)'s tradition of pointing to culture, and music in this case, and the spiritual dimension of the work at the UN, and to realize that there is an element of spirituality needed in what we do."

Like Hammarskjöld, the second UN secretary-general (April 10, 1953 to September 18, 1961), Eliasson is a Swedish national. Hammarskjöld died in a[n airplane] crash in Northern Rhodesia then, Zambia now. And this happened to be the day after his 21st birthday. He was "a great hero" when Eliasson grew up.

So he felt very deeply that he wanted to do something for international cooperation, for peace and development, and human rights. "I think at that time I was heading for the foreign ministry and the UN."

When Hammarskjöld's book, *Markings*, came out a couple of years after his death, Eliasson read it at the age of "26 or 27," and he thought it was a bit mystic. "I didn't connect as much as I now do, after many years," he told UN News.

Meanwhile, *Markings* gives him great consolation and great inspiration. "I had a wonderful experience at the UN, one of my most informal ones, when 500 people came to the [ECOSOC \[United Nations Economic and Social Council\]](#) hall to listen to me read parts from *Markings* which have meant the most to me, and the Swedish pianist [Per Tengstrand](#) played Beethoven, Bach, Grieg, Chopin in between my readings. I don't think I've had such an attentive audience! I still have people coming to me and saying they will never forget that moment."

Building up on that experience, Eliasson said: "We have to go deeper. We have to find the deeper sources of energy. If we get stuck in daily routines and not get back to the basic values, and these include basic human sentiments that come out from music or culture or art, then we are losing the beauty of life, and the beauty of how we can work. I think we should allow ourselves to let that dimension come out stronger because the UN is a very special organization."

UN News wanted to know what historians would say about his contribution to international affairs. Eliasson said it would be presumptuous for him to speculate on that, and added: "I hope that [outgoing SecretaryGeneral] Ban Kimoon) will be and should be remembered for his pioneering work on the climate change agreement, that that could be the turning point to avoid the existential threat to humanity."

Eliasson said he had played a more modest role on that issue; it was Ban who was leading that. But he added that his contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals and the UN [secretary-general's] initiative Human Rights Upfront -- "when we lifted and strengthened the human rights pillar, and put it on par with peace and security and development work" -- would be remembered.

Eliasson was appointed as deputy secretarygeneral of the UN in July 2012. What were "the greatest disappointments" for him in that post? The Syria tragedy, he said. "Since the first day I arrived, I have worked on this issue. And I have felt huge disappointments -- several times we have not been able to find a solution, an end to this conflict."

Eliasson added: "In the summer of 2012, we had a chance: The Security Council could have had a resolution, a binding resolution, on the basis of [former SecretaryGeneral] [Kofi Annan](#)'s negotiation at the end of June 2012 -- we missed that opportunity at a time when there was no ISIS, no Daesh, and at a time [when] you had a decent opposition, well formed and well coordinated.

"They could have sat down, in line with the transitional arrangement that was planned, and started writing a constitution and then had elections. ... That was four years ago; in the meantime hundreds of thousands of people have been killed; refugees are in neighboring countries and destabilizing world political conditions."

Eliasson was born "in the midst of the Second World War, in humble circumstances far from the trappings of international diplomacy." And yet he rose to become the second highest official of the United Nations.

UN News: What comes to mind when he reflects on that? Eliasson: "The feeling I have when you describe this is simply gratitude. I am extremely grateful that I was given this opportunity, that I was born in a country where, at that time, it was possible for a person from my background to have an education."

His father had seven years of schooling; his mother, just four -- every second day, in the countryside where she lived. "My aunt died of tuberculosis, more or less from a lack of food, the right food, and the cold little hut they lived in, in the province of Halland in Sweden," Eliasson recalled.

"For me, then, to be the first one in the family to have that opportunity, I feel almost as though I owe it to hundreds of years of predecessors in the family who never had a chance. They were working in a way that was unbelievable, under conditions that were horrible," he added.

"And now, I was the first one to have that chance. My parents didn't really show great expectations, but I knew they had them, of course. Their dreams were translated to me and to my brother. So I had a

tremendous motivation to win, to be the best at everything, whether it was sports or school. I always applied to the most difficult courses. I had this sense of competition built into me, both with negative and positive sides to it."

On the national level, he also served as the president of the 60th session of the UN General Assembly; the secretary-general's special envoy for Darfur; the secretary-general's personal representative for Iran/Iraq; and the first UN undersecretary-general for humanitarian affairs.

His areas of focus included operations in Africa and the Balkans, as well as initiatives on landmines, conflict prevention and humanitarian action. In the early 1980s, Eliasson was part of the UN mediation missions in the war between Iran and Iraq, and he served as a mediator in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict for the [Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe \(OSCE\)](#) in the early 1990s. [IDN- InDepthNews – December 31, 2016).

IDN is the flagship of [International Press Syndicate](#).

<http://www.indepthnews.net/index.php/global-governance/un-insider/876-deputy-un-chief-deems-culture-and-spirituality-important>

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VISION STATEMENT of the NGO Committee on Spirituality, Values and Global Concerns-New York (CSVGC-NY)

Week of Spirituality 2016

"SDG Success – The Spiritual Indicators"

"There are moments in history when our humanity fills us with hope and courage; when we discover our common spirituality and values, and build a shared vision of where the future must lead. We are at such a moment today – and we must seize it."

Message of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to the Moral Imperative Event to End Extreme Poverty, September 24, 2015

There is a growing recognition of the potency of coupling spirituality with the practical means of ensuring human beings' basic needs. The NGO Committee on Spirituality, Values and Global Concerns-New York (CSVGC-NY) affirms the creation of a culture in which spirituality and adherence to universal principles are recognized as key factors and essential components in the implementation and accomplishment of the Sustainable Development Goals, as a means to creating peace and well-being on our planet.

Spirituality is a common foundation of human oneness that supersedes the world of beliefs and practices, illuminating a path toward cohesive, unifying values and ethics. An essential foundation for life that resides in the heart, it has the potential to motivate all beings to work together harmoniously and dynamically toward this shared vision.

In a new economic paradigm, spirituality serves as a force for change toward a world that is one community, interconnected and interdependent, with shared ethical and spiritual values that will create the transition to a sustainable way of life. The spiritual indicators of sustainability include social well-being and ecological integrity, and reflect the values underlying the individual and collective choices and behavior necessary to achieve sustainability.

Among those factors are sustainable lifestyle practices, modeled by many cultures that for centuries have passed down the knowledge, skills and values which support healthy consumption and production, placing value on people and the ecosystem, "leaving no one behind." Other factors promote inclusive and peaceful societies, providing access to justice for all, resolving some of the factors that contribute to conflict and instability, which impede sustainability. Spirituality nurtures a spirit of resilience, strength and hope that leads to great optimism in the face of challenges and hardships.

CSVGC-NY urges that we find the "common spirituality and values" in our international processes, and build upon them a vision of the future that we are all proud of, which includes a healthy world for our children and generations to come. The Sustainable Development Goals are the means, but through our commitments and actions we must show the way. Let us seize the moment together.