

Fernando H Cardoso

Former President of Brazil; implemented major land reform programme, reduced poverty and significantly improved health and education; an acclaimed sociologist and global advocate for drug policy reform.

- President of Brazil 1995-2002
- Inaugural winner of the Mahbub ul Haq Award for Outstanding Contribution to Human Development, 2002
- Professor Emeritus of Sociology and Political Science at the University of São Paulo
- President of the Global Commission on Drug Policy

"The Elders believe that what is important is not to continue to do something for himself, but to serve others."

Work with The Elders

Fernando Henrique Cardoso has been a member of The Elders since the group was founded in 2007. He led the first Elders' delegation to the [Middle East](#) in August 2009 to support efforts to advance an Arab-Israeli peace – paying particular attention to the concerns of ordinary people in the region. A long-time friend of Israel, he continues to push for meaningful dialogue between Israeli and Palestinian leaders – even when this may be uncomfortable.

A strong advocate for engaging youth in social and political change, in June 2012 he welcomed a group of young activists to Brazil for the Rio+20 summit as part of [Elders+Youngers](#), a project promoting intergenerational dialogue on sustainable development issues.

In June 2016, Fernando Henrique Cardoso [stepped down](#) from his front-line role as a member of The Elders. Praised by Chair Kofi Annan for "*commitment to dialogue, democracy and development*", he remains an Honorary ("Emeritus") Elder.

Progressive president

Fernando Henrique Cardoso served two terms as President of Brazil from 1995 to 2002, having previously served as a senator, Minister of Foreign Relations and Minister of Finance. Under his leadership, Brazil recorded a decline in infant mortality rates, a fall in the number of child

labourers, the attainment of nearly universal primary education, a reduction in poverty levels, a drop in the number of people dying from AIDS and the resettlement of over 500,000 landless families.

In October 2002, the United Nations Development Program named Fernando H Cardoso the inaugural winner of the Mahbub ul Haq Award for Outstanding Contribution to Human Development. Then UN Secretary-General and now fellow Elder, Kofi Annan, welcomed the decision, declaring: "President Cardoso's longstanding dedication to human progress and his democratic leadership of Brazil have raised the standard by which governance can be judged throughout Latin America."

In May 2004 he founded the [Instituto Fernando Henrique Cardoso](#) in São Paulo. Bringing together politicians, intellectuals, civil society and young people, the Institute aims to produce and disseminate knowledge about the challenges of development and democracy in Brazil and the wider world.

Sociologist and political scientist

Fernando Henrique Cardoso's political activity is informed by his academic work. He has a PhD in Sociology and was a long time professor of Sociology and Political Science at the University of São Paulo, where he is now Professor Emeritus.

He was president of the International Sociological Association from 1982 to 1986 and continues to lecture at universities around the world. He has been visiting professor at the universities of California, Berkeley, Collège de France, Paris, Stanford, Cambridge, Paris-Nanterre, FLACSO, ILPES and CEPAL at Santiago, Chile.

In July 2012 he was awarded the [John W Kluge Prize](#) for lifetime achievement in the study of humanity.

Ending the war on drugs

From 2011-2016, Fernando H Cardoso was Chair of the [Global Commission on Drug Policy](#). The group released a groundbreaking report in June 2011 calling for the current 'war on drugs' to be replaced by a public health approach to drugs policy.

At the report's launch, President Cardoso said: "Let's start by treating drug addiction as a health issue, reducing drug demand through proven educational initiatives and legally regulating rather than criminalising."