

Martti Ahtisaari

Former President of Finland; Nobel Peace Laureate and expert in international peace mediation, diplomacy and post-conflict state building.

- President of Finland 1994-2000
- Nobel Peace Laureate 2008
- Founder of Crisis Management Initiative
- Honorary citizen of Namibia

“All conflicts can be resolved. Wars and conflicts are not inevitable. They are caused by human beings. There are always interests that are furthered by war. Therefore those who have power and influence can also stop them. Peace is a question of will.”

Work with The Elders

Martti Ahtisaari joined The Elders in 2009, bringing three decades’ experience in international diplomacy and conflict mediation.

President Ahtisaari visited the [Korean Peninsula](#) with his fellow Elders Gro Brundtland, Jimmy Carter and Mary Robinson in April 2011. In response to high levels of tension and mistrust between North and South Korea, he stressed that progress could only be achieved by the resumption of meaningful dialogue between the parties.

In July 2012, he travelled to South Sudan as part of a two-stage Elders delegation to the region to encourage dialogue between [Sudan and South Sudan](#). As well as meeting political and religious leaders, the Elders spent time at a refugee camp near the border and called on the international community to step up humanitarian assistance to those displaced by recent fighting.

Martti Ahtisaari has been continually engaged with The Elders’ initiative in [Myanmar](#). During the September 2013 visit, the delegation met with leaders and civil society representatives involved in supporting the peace process with ethnic minority armed groups and addressing ongoing violence in Rakhine state. In March 2014, Martti Ahtisaari and Gro Harlem Brundtland visited Mae La refugee camp and Mae Tao Clinic, on the Thailand-Myanmar border where they saw the resilience of those living in exile. From this he urged that the international community support a trust-worthy, inclusive peace process in Myanmar. In December 2014, President

Ahtisaari and other Elders met with representatives from the government, the military and civil society including ethnic women's groups. The Elders called on the warring parties to end their fighting and discussed opportunities for building a new and inclusive federal state, including the 2015 election.

In January 2014, he travelled to [Iran](#) with Kofi Annan, Desmond Tutu and Ernesto Zedillo where they met with various leaders including President Hassan Rouhani. The Elders discussed easing of regional tensions, the spread of extremist violence internationally, the issue of human rights and the Syrian crisis, as well as supporting progress being made in the international negotiations over Iran's nuclear programme.

Martti Ahtisaari joined The Elders delegation to **Moscow** in April 2015. Led by Kofi Annan, President Ahtisaari along with Lakhdar Brahimi, Gro Harlem Brundtland, Jimmy Carter and Ernesto Zedillo visited Russia to discuss key geopolitical issues. During the trip, The Elders met with President Vladimir Putin, Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, as well as former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev.

Diplomat and peace-maker

Before being elected President of the Republic of Finland in 1994, Martti Ahtisaari enjoyed a distinguished career serving his country and the United Nations.

Between 1973 and 1976 he was Finland's Ambassador in Tanzania. He held several UN roles in Namibia from 1975-1990, and as UN Special Representative he oversaw the country's transition to independence in March 1989 – and was subsequently made an honorary Namibian citizen.

From 1992-1993, while State Secretary in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, Martti Ahtisaari chaired the Bosnia-Herzegovina Working Group of the International Conference on the former Yugoslavia, and was later Special Adviser to the UN Secretary General's Special Representative for the former Yugoslavia. In 1999, as Finnish President, he negotiated with Slobodan Milošević to end the fighting in Kosovo.

Post-Presidency: working to resolve conflict

Martti Ahtisaari founded and chairs [Crisis Management Initiative \(CMI\)](#), a non-governmental organisation committed to helping the international community practice more effective preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and post-conflict state building.

Since leaving the office of President, he has continued to focus on conflict resolution. Most notably, in 2005 he facilitated the peace process between the Government of Indonesia and the Free Aceh Movement that ended thirty years of conflict.

President Ahtisaari helped to advance the Northern Ireland peace process as Inspector of the Irish Republican Army's weapons dumps, alongside fellow Inspector Cyril Ramaphosa, in 2000-2001. In 2005 he was appointed Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General for the future status process for Kosovo to oversee the process determining whether Kosovo would become an independent state or remain part of Serbia.

In recognition of "his important efforts, on several continents and over more than three decades, to resolve international conflicts", Martti Ahtisaari was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in December 2008.

Global initiatives

As well as heading Crisis Management Initiative, Martti Ahtisaari is active in several other non-governmental organisations. He is Co-Chair of the [European Council on Foreign Relations \(ECFR\)](#), a pan-European think-tank that aims to research and promote debate on the development of European values-based foreign policy. He also serves as:

- Chairman of the Independent Commission on Turkey
- Director-at-Large of the Imagine Nations Group
- Member of the Silatech Board of Trustees
- Member of the Prize Committee of the Mo Ibrahim Foundation
- Member of the Global Commission on Elections, Democracy and Security
- Expert adviser to the 2014 OHCHR Investigation on Sri Lanka