

Juan Manuel Santos named new Chair of The Elders

LONDON, 31 October 2024

The Elders are delighted to announce that [Juan Manuel Santos](#), former President of Colombia and Nobel Peace Laureate, is the new Chair of the organisation.

He takes over from [Mary Robinson](#), former President of Ireland and UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, who held the position since 2018. Mary Robinson will continue to play an active role as an Elder. The organisation was founded by Nelson Mandela in 2007 and previous Chairs have been Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Kofi Annan.

Juan Manuel Santos joined The Elders in January 2019 and has played a leading role in the group's work on conflict resolution and prevention, including a visit to Ukraine in August 2022 with Ban Ki-moon to meet President Zelenskyy and with victims of the Russian atrocities in Bucha and Irpin.

He has also been a strong voice in support of the Elders' work on the climate and nature crisis, and has represented The Elders in briefings to the UN Security Council and at prominent events including the Munich Security Conference and the High-Level Week of the UN General Assembly.

Juan Manuel Santos was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2016 in recognition of his efforts to end a civil war of more than 50 years in Colombia. He served as President of Colombia from 2010 to 2018, after having being Minister of Trade, Minister of Finance and Minister of Defence. Before that he was also a diplomat and a journalist.

[Juan Manuel Santos](#) said:

"It is a tremendous privilege and a great honour to serve as Chair of The Elders. Nearly thirty years ago, I met Nelson Mandela in Johannesburg, and we had a long conversation on the importance of peace for both of our countries. I remember very well that he concluded our talk by saying 'without peace, Colombia will never take off'. His words inspired me to start creating the conditions necessary to seek peace in my country, and still inspire me today to work to end conflicts across the whole world. I believe The Elders can play a critical role in today's troubled

world, building on the bold and inspirational leadership shown by my predecessors. To fill Mary Robinson's shoes as Chair will not be easy. I hope to be able to follow her example with the help of my fellow Elders."

[Mary Robinson](#) said:

"Being Chair of The Elders has been an honour, a challenge and a moral mission. I am proud of all that my fellow Elders and I have achieved, and now feel it is time to hand over the reins to Juan Manuel. Part of leadership is knowing when to stand down and make space for others. In these times of profound global uncertainty, I know that Juan Manuel will lead us with his unerring sense of duty, diplomacy and dedication. For my part, I will continue to play an active role in the group's work, particularly on the existential threat posed by the climate and nature crisis."

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About The Elders

The Elders are independent global leaders working for peace, justice, human rights and a sustainable planet. The group was founded by Nelson Mandela in 2007.

The Elders are [Ban Ki-moon \(Deputy Chair\)](#), [Gro Harlem Brundtland](#), [Helen Clark](#), [Elbegdorj Tsakhia](#), [Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein](#), [Hina Jilani](#), [Ellen Johnson Sirleaf](#), [Graça Machel \(Deputy Chair\)](#), [Denis Mukwege](#), [Juan Manuel Santos \(Chair\)](#), [Mary Robinson](#) and [Ernesto Zedillo](#).

[Lakhdar Brahimi](#), [Fernando Henrique Cardoso](#), [Jimmy Carter](#), [Ricardo Lagos](#) and [Muhammad Yunus](#) are Elders Emeritus.

[Desmond Tutu](#) (1931-2021) and [Kofi Annan](#) (1938-2018) were founding members of The Elders and served as Chairs from 2007 to 2013 and 2013 to 2018 respectively. [Ela Bhatt](#) (1933 - 2022) and [Martti Ahtisaari](#) (1937 - 2023) were members of The Elders from 2007 to 2016 and 2009 to 2018 respectively.

Find out more

For biographies of the Elders, blogs, photos, videos and more information about their work please go to www.theElders.org.

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