



The
Elders



**FINDING HOPE
IN OUR COMMON
HUMANITY**

ANNUAL REVIEW 2021

THE ELDERS

The Elders are a group of independent leaders, brought together by Nelson Mandela in 2007, who use their collective experience and influence for peace, justice and human rights worldwide.



MARY ROBINSON
CHAIR



BAN KI-MOON
DEPUTY CHAIR



GRAÇA MACHEL
DEPUTY CHAIR



GRO HARLEM BRUNDTLAND



ZEID RAAD AL HUSSEIN



HINA JILANI



ELLEN JOHNSON SIRLEAF



RICARDO LAGOS



JUAN MANUEL SANTOS



ERNESTO ZEDILLO

Martti Ahtisaari, Ela Bhatt, Lakhdar Brahimi, Fernando Henrique Cardoso and **Jimmy Carter** provide continued wisdom and support as 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.



MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

“Our aim is to tackle the root causes of global problems, to hold leaders accountable for their actions, and to speak truth to power, however unpopular that may be.”

Mary Robinson

The past year was one of intense activity and readjustment for The Elders, as the COVID-19 pandemic continued to impact every aspect of our work.

Throughout the year and across all initiatives, we remained true to our core values of supporting courage where there is fear, fostering agreement where there is discord and inspiring hope where there is despair – the mandate bequeathed to us by our founder, Nelson Mandela.

We had a poignant reminder of the power of these values at the very end of the year, when our beloved friend and first Chair, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, died on 26 December at the age of 90.

His passing saw a global outpouring of sadness, but also many recollections of inspiring moments from his rich, joyful and courageous life.

“Arch” was a driving force in making The Elders what it is today. His words, his life and his legacy will continue to inspire what we do as Elders in the year ahead.

Arch would often talk of ‘Ubuntu’, the African concept that we are only human through the humanity we show to others. In committing to put this idea into practice in our daily lives, we can all pay tribute to his legacy.

As this report of our annual activities shows, too often in 2021 leaders failed to act according to the values Arch spent his life advocating.

They did not act with boldness and urgency to tackle the pandemic - and the chasms of inequality and injustice it has opened up - as a global challenge that needs global solutions.

They did not constrain the aggressive nationalism and political cynicism Arch deplored, which have continued to drive conflicts and suffering worldwide: from Ethiopia and Afghanistan to Myanmar and Palestine.

They did not respond to the global refugee crisis with the ambition, solidarity and empathy it deserves.

As Elders we have engaged publicly and privately on these challenges. Our aim is to tackle the root causes of global problems, to hold leaders accountable for their actions, and to speak truth to power,

however unpopular that may be – as Arch always did.

These values were at the heart of the “State of Hope” series of online dialogues that we launched in July 2021, which brought together Elders, experts, fellow former leaders and young activists to discuss where hope lies now and in the future, and how we can draw inspiration from remarkable leaders like Arch and Nelson Mandela to deliver progress in the future.

Accountability is critical here, especially to secure the action the world needs on the climate crisis in 2022. We welcome the fact that, following COP26 in Glasgow last November, all countries now accept the necessity of limiting their emissions so global temperature rises are kept to 1.5°C. To do so, the promises made at COP26 need to be implemented, or faith in the multilateral process could be fatally undermined.

We also start 2022 with hope. In a statement released on 3 January the world’s five nuclear states affirmed that “a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought” - a statement The Elders have long been calling for, and I have welcomed. These are simple words, but they demonstrate tremendous potential for collaboration between nations to reduce the risks of the unimaginable horrors of nuclear war. It is now time for that potential to be realised, and words turned into actions. Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 reinforces the importance of that challenge.

2022 will mark the 15th anniversary of The Elders. This will be a poignant moment as we reflect on friends and comrades who are no longer with us, including Arch and Kofi Annan, but also a chance to re-engage and recommit to achieving the hopeful, just and peaceful world they fought for all their lives.

As this report shows, The Elders can have meaningful impact on many issues in a variety of ways: sometimes through public advocacy, sometimes through private diplomacy, sometimes immediately and sometimes over time. In the year ahead we will continue to strive with humility to realise Madiba’s vision and honour the legacy of all those noble fighters for justice in whose footsteps we tread.

Mary Robinson



FOREWORD BY THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

“The world’s slow, erratic and partial emergence from the worst of the pandemic created opportunities, and gave us fresh energy and hope to face further changes ahead.”

Alistair Fernie

It is a privilege to write this Foreword as the new Chief Executive of The Elders. I started in my role on 1 November 2021, following the retirement of my predecessor David Nussbaum. I was pleased to inherit a Secretariat in good shape, with dedicated staff, well-established systems and governance, financial stability, and a strong ethos of service to the Elders.

The past twelve months were a time of transition for The Elders. COVID-19 restrictions on travel and meetings continued to restrict what we could do. This meant much of our work was done through digital public advocacy, rather than in-person private diplomacy.

But as the year went by, the world’s slow, erratic and partial emergence from the worst of the pandemic created opportunities, and gave us fresh energy and hope to face further changes ahead.

This review shows how The Elders continued to work in 2021 towards the goals of the existing strategy, but showed agility in adjusting to a changing world.

In our conflict work, we continued our long-standing engagement on Israel/Palestine with a notable public intervention by Ban Ki-moon, calling for a fresh approach to the conflict that recognises the current Israeli occupation arguably constitutes apartheid.

We also responded to new crises as they emerged, including in Myanmar, Ethiopia and Afghanistan. We used Elders’ strong multilateral relationships to shine a light on the need for concerted international responses in accordance with the UN Charter.

Our health work continued applying learning from our support for Universal Health Coverage to argue for better pandemic preparedness and response, particularly pushing G7 and G20 leaders

to implement the recommendations of the Independent Panel on Pandemic Preparedness and Response (co-chaired by Ellen Johnson Sirleaf).

The Elders’ meetings with the UN Security Council in New York, our two Board meetings in Washington DC, and Mary Robinson’s high-profile presence at COP26 in Glasgow were the first opportunities for Elders to do face-to-face meetings since the pandemic began. These meetings underscored the huge value of personal contact in achieving the Elders’ challenging objectives.

We will learn from and consolidate the innovations in digital communications we have practised of necessity in 2020 and 2021. But we look forward to 2022 being a year when we will be able to not only visit major cities to do face-to-face diplomacy, but get Elders back to the countries where conflicts and crises are happening, to hear from the vulnerable people our mandate obliges us to serve.

2022 will be a year of further transition, as we review progress against our 2018-22 strategy, and design a new strategy for 2023-27. We will be consulting widely on that, in a spirit of humility and learning. I look forward to hearing a range of views from around the world on how best The Elders can use their distinctive experience and wisdom to help the planet become a safer, fairer and more sustainable place.

Following the end of the year under review, Russia invaded Ukraine. At the time of writing, The Elders has started responding to this major geopolitical event. The full consequences of the Russian invasion and reactions to it, including the impact on The Elders’ work in 2022 and beyond, is currently hard to predict, but could be very significant.

Alistair Fernie
Chief Executive



The Elders gather in Washington DC for their board meeting, October 2021.

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“The Elders use their independence, collective experience and influence to work for peace, justice and human rights.”

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Photo: The Elders / Jeff Moore

ARCHBISHOP DESMOND TUTU (1931-2021)

The Elders were profoundly saddened by the death of their dear friend and former Chair Archbishop Desmond Tutu on 26 December 2021.

“Arch”, as he liked to be called, was the first Chair of The Elders from 2007-2013. He played a vital role in shaping the organisation, its values and its work. Like The Elders’ founder, Nelson Mandela, Arch was an implacable and tenacious opponent of apartheid, and his years of struggle in South Africa made him a fierce defender of equality and human rights worldwide.

From the very beginning, Archbishop Tutu was heavily involved in The Elders’ work on peace and reconciliation, visiting divided and conflict-ridden countries including Cyprus, Israel/Palestine, Côte

d’Ivoire, Sudan and South Sudan and Iran. In all these visits, he emphasised the importance of dialogue, openness, compassion and resilience in the search for peaceful solutions to overcome conflict and sectarian divisions.

Mary Robinson, Chair of The Elders, said: *“The Elders would not be who they are today without his passion, commitment and keen moral compass... we mourn his death but affirm our determination to keep his beliefs alive.”*

In 2022 and beyond, the Elders will be guided by his vision that *“evil doesn’t have the last word... Joy and laughter, caring and compassion; those are what prevail in the end”*.

THE ELDERS' WORK

The Elders was founded in 2007 by Nelson Mandela to “support courage where there is fear, foster agreement where there is conflict and inspire hope where there is despair”.

Charged with this mandate, the Elders use their independence, collective experience and influence to work for peace, justice and human rights worldwide. Working both publicly and through private diplomacy, they engage with global leaders and civil society to resolve conflict and address its root causes, to challenge injustice, and to promote ethical leadership and good governance.

The organisation's collective identity is strongly rooted in the mandate bestowed by Mandela, years of collective endeavour and a shared sense of mission and values. The Elders' independence and integrity are fundamental, enabling them to speak freely and boldly, working both publicly and behind the scenes to help tackle complex and seemingly intractable issues.

The Elders' role is often catalytic: they create space for others whose causes are aligned with their vision for a better future, and aim to strengthen the voices of emerging leaders with integrity.

The Elders also seek to give a platform to some of those whose voices are often not heard, for example through sharing their experiences publicly when they hear directly from marginalised people about the consequences of conflict or other failures of leadership, or bringing those stories into international forums.

The Elders' range of approaches to their work has included:

- o **International travel (country visits, speaking at international conferences, holding high-level and grassroots meetings)**
- o **Participation in virtual international events and meetings**
- o **Letters sent privately, sometimes with a public statement issued in parallel**
- o **Private discussions with government and other leaders**
- o **Convening or co-hosting meetings and events with select public audiences**
- o **Public statements, often with follow-up media work, opinion pieces, blogs or interviews.**



Mary Robinson and Zeid Raad Al Hussein speaking at an International Peace Institute event in June 2021.

THE ELDERS' FRAMEWORK AND STRATEGIC PLAN

The 2018-22 Strategic Framework has been designed to provide institutional coherence to ongoing policy and communications activities.

The Elders' Strategic Framework is arranged around three key themes:

- o Governance and Leadership
- o Conflict, its Causes and Consequences
- o Inequality, Exclusion and Injustice

Under the umbrella of these three themes, The Elders focus on six programmes of work:

- o Ethical Leadership and Multilateral Cooperation
- o Climate Change
- o Conflict Countries and Regions
- o Refugees and Migration
- o Universal Health Coverage
- o Access to Justice

Many of the issues on which The Elders work cannot neatly be contained within one theme, but encompass elements of two or all three. The Elders favour a holistic approach which considers all the diverse aspects to any geopolitical problem, and includes the range of relevant stakeholders when trying to arrive at a sustainable outcome. In particular, equality for women and girls is a theme through every area of our work. We also seek to empower young people and promote intergenerational dialogue to arrive at sustainable solutions for current and future generations.

One comparative advantage of the group is that its members represent no vested interest and are free from national or institutional influence. The Elders can "speak truth to power" from a genuinely objective standpoint, and use their position to amplify the voices of marginalised and disempowered groups, particularly victims of conflict and discrimination.

More information about all the work of The Elders, can be found online at: www.theelders.org/what-we-do



Lakhdar Brahimi addresses the United Nations Security Council on maintaining international peace and security, September 2021.



SUMMARIES OF PROGRAMMATIC INITIATIVES

ETHICAL LEADERSHIP AND MULTILATERAL COOPERATION

NUCLEAR NON-PROLIFERATION AND DISARMAMENT

The Elders continued to focus on nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament in 2021, even though COVID-19 caused the further postponement of the Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference originally planned for April 2020.

The year started on a positive note with the decision in January by the new Biden Administration in the United States to renew the New START (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty) with Russia for five years, ending months of uncertainty. The Elders welcomed this in a

statement, and urged all nuclear powers to take further steps towards disarmament in light of the entry into force of the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW).

In March, the United Kingdom announced its intention to raise the cap on its nuclear warhead stockpile from 180 to 260. In response, Mary Robinson released a statement on behalf of The Elders criticising this decision, and emphasising that this would have a negative impact on the NPT Review Conference.

FINANCIAL TIMES

“President Biden should have the courage of his convictions, resist the weapons lobby and act boldly to reduce the existential threat of nuclear catastrophe.”

Gro Harlem Brundtland, December 2021.

The statement was picked up by Reuters and received widespread coverage, with a potential global audience of 700 million people. The Elders’ tweet on the statement was liked by the Biden Administration’s nominee for Under-Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security, Bonnie Jenkins. The statement was also specifically welcomed by ICAN, the Nobel Peace Prize-winning campaign for the Nuclear Ban Treaty. Such traction of The Elders’ statement highlights how an intervention on digital platforms can resonate with policymakers and opinion-formers.

Throughout the year, Elders used public and private meetings to keep the spotlight on the existential threat posed by nuclear weapons, alongside other threats higher up policymakers’ agendas such as climate change and pandemics. This included Mary Robinson’s address to the UN

Security Council in September, private meetings with UNSC members in June and September, and the Elders’ meeting with US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan in Washington DC in October.

In December, concerned at reports that the US Nuclear Posture Review was being overly influenced by hawkish elements in the Pentagon and the military establishment, Gro Brundtland wrote an op-ed in the Financial Times urging President Biden to stick to his campaign pledge of introducing a “sole purpose” policy for the US nuclear arsenal based only on deterrence and retaliation. As a former leader of a NATO member state, her views resonated with policymakers and helped counter the argument put forward by those seeking a more aggressive stance from President Biden, suggesting that US-allies were opposed to a “sole purpose” doctrine.



Photo: Adobe Stock / alexyz3d

The Elders have a long-standing position that all P5 nuclear states should recommit to the Reagan-Gorbachev maxim that “a nuclear war can never be won and must never be fought”. **When a joint P5 statement backing this position was eventually published on 3 January 2022, The Elders welcomed the decision and urged all nuclear powers to treat this as a prompt for further positive steps** towards multilateral disarmament in the year ahead.



Reaction from Beatrice Fihn, Executive Director of the International Campaign Against Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) and Nobel Peace Laureate 2017.



Ernesto Zedillo, Mary Robinson, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and Lakhdar Brahimi at the United Nations Security Council, September 2021.

UN AND P5 ENGAGEMENT

The Elders' long-standing engagement with the P5 states and other members of the UN Security Council gained fresh momentum in 2021, as relaxations of COVID-19 restrictions meant it was possible again to hold in-person meetings in New York.

The Elders sent letters to all the members of the Security Council in February, emphasising the importance of collaboration on the Security Council and of leadership in tackling global threats and strengthening the multilateral system. The letters also emphasised the Elders' interest in maintaining close dialogue with the Council.

These letters garnered positive responses and **Elders addressed the Council on three separate occasions in 2021**: Ellen Johnson Sirleaf addressed an open virtual debate in January on women, peace and security; Ban Ki-moon spoke at a high-level open debate in April to condemn the coup in Myanmar and urge a collective response from the Council; Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Mary Robinson and Lakhdar Brahimi jointly addressed the Council in September at the invitation of the Irish Presidency.

On this occasion, Mary Robinson spoke about the broad topic of the Council's responsibilities with regard to conflict prevention, while Lakhdar

Brahimi spoke specifically about the situation in Afghanistan, where the Taliban had seized control following the precipitous withdrawal of US and other foreign forces. This event marked Lakhdar Brahimi's last public engagement as an Elder before assuming Emeritus status.

Alongside these public sessions, delegations of Elders also held private meetings with Permanent Representatives in New York in both June and September. These in-person meetings were an opportunity to renew contacts and present the Elders' collective identity and agenda to the Council. The meetings led to productive side-discussions with both permanent and non-permanent members which continue to inform programmatic planning across a wide range of initiatives. Many Permanent Representatives followed up afterwards with the Elders' Secretariat to convey **the high value they place on these meetings, not only to hear directly from the Elders but also because they offer a space for more candid discussions** than formal Council sessions. This underscores the importance of the trust in which The Elders are held at the highest levels of international diplomacy and the value of sustained engagement with the UNSC over several years.



“To say that the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan is dire would be an understatement and the needs are most urgent.”

Lakhdar Brahimi, September 2021.

Throughout 2021, The Elders supported initiatives to develop ideas for strengthening the UN system. This helped to inform the UN Secretary-General's report *Our Common Agenda*, which was launched in September ahead of the 76th General Assembly.

Our Common Agenda outlines the response of Secretary-General Guterres to the UN75 declaration, and sets out his agenda for his second term in office. The Secretariat submitted an Elders paper to the UN Secretary-General in April outlining a range of proposals for strengthening the UN system, in response to a direct request by the Secretary-General for input from the Elders to his report. In May, Lakhdar Brahimi spoke at a private roundtable event organised by the Stimson Center with experts, UN officials and member state representatives to feed in recommendations to the *Our Common Agenda* report.

Elders have also continued to highlight the importance of multilateral cooperation, for instance through Mary Robinson's video address for an event organised by the President of the General Assembly for the International Day of Multilateralism in April, and in a public event organised with the International Peace Institute

(IPI) in June, where Mary Robinson and Zeid Raad Al Hussein were interviewed by James Bays, diplomatic editor for Al Jazeera in New York.



US Ambassador to the UN Linda Thomas Greenfield welcomes the Security Council briefing by Mary Robinson and Lakhdar Brahimi, September 2021.



Mary Robinson speaking at COP26, Glasgow, November 2021.



CLIMATE CHANGE

The over-arching focus of the Elders' engagement on climate issues in 2021 was working to support a successful outcome to the COP26 climate negotiations hosted by the UK in Glasgow in November.

To this end, the Elders made public and private interventions, ranging from speeches and opeds to bilateral meetings with heads of state and government and sharing platforms with young activists from civil society, all with the aim of pushing for progress to meet the 1.5 degrees Celsius target, and the \$100 billion target for climate finance for developing nations.

Throughout the year, Elders published op-eds in diverse national and regional media to maintain pressure on critical countries in the run-up to COP26. On the global level, Ricardo Lagos published a call in *El País* in January for a "fossil fuel registry" to spur the decarbonisation of the global economy.

In April, Ban Ki-moon authored two geographically-specific op-eds; firstly in the *South China Morning Post* calling on China, Japan and South Korea to end coal use and funding, and secondly in the German financial daily *Handelsblatt* calling on then-German Chancellor Angela Merkel to use her final months in office to show bold leadership on climate finance.

The New York Times

“For the sake of the planet and particularly for Africa, leaders must seize the moral imperative and commit to decisive action.”

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, November 2021.

As scientific warnings and extreme weather events intensified over the year, and as worries grew that progress at COP26 could be stifled by certain interests particularly wedded to a fossil-fuel economy, the Elders chose to be even more direct in urging laggard governments to step up.

Australia was a prominent example of such a country, and Mary Robinson gave several interviews to Australian media in the latter half of the year directly urging Prime Minister Scott Morrison to join other leaders in raising ambition.

Ban Ki-moon also authored an op-ed in The Canberra Times in August, urging Australia to halve its emissions this decade and commit to net zero by 2050. These interventions were appreciated by Australian climate activists and civil society.

The Elders maintained a steady drumbeat of activity and advocacy in the months prior to the Glasgow conference and the G20 summit in Rome

which immediately preceded it. This included a meeting with US Special Envoy on climate John Kerry in Washington in June, and a live press event at the National Press Club in Washington DC in October, where Mary Robinson and Ban Ki-moon addressed a global audience of climate journalists on the steps that leaders needed to take to make COP26 a success.

The two Elders spent an hour briefing around 30 international journalists, and the event resulted in around 40 articles in US, European, Australasian and African outlets, including prominent coverage in the Sydney Morning Herald and The Age.

As the summit got underway in November, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf authored a front-page op-ed in the New York Times emphasising the African perspective and the need for climate justice for developing countries in general, particularly with regard to climate finance.



Ban Ki-moon and Mary Robinson brief global journalists on the key priorities for climate action at the National Press Club, Washington DC.

These interventions were also complemented by a series of guest blogs published on the Elders' website by a diverse selection of young climate activists, including indigenous voices and campaigners from small island states particularly vulnerable to rising sea levels. This blog series not only enabled the Elders to publicly amplify the activists' voices, but also led to private discussions between Elders and activists that deepened the trust and esteem in which The Elders are held by this critical constituency.

At COP26 itself, the Elders contributed to wider efforts to influence the pledges that important countries brought to the summit. **On climate finance, The Elders were credited as being influential in encouraging donor countries to**

meet their commitments; whilst on reducing emissions, Australian civil society thanked the Elders for their work pressing the Australian government to lift their ambition.

Throughout the summit, Mary Robinson had a specific role as co-host of Sky News TV's rolling coverage. This was a role that had been cultivated throughout the year on the basis of her distinctive and powerful voice, and recognition of the unique position The Elders enjoy in the climate advocacy and activist ecosystem.



A selection of some of the young activists who participated in the intergenerational blog series with Elders throughout 2021.

Through her daily broadcasts, Mary Robinson was able to shape the reporting of the negotiations. One of her interviews – an emotional response to the news that national commitments amounted to a terrifying 2.4 degrees world – went viral on social media and was re-broadcast on CNN and Channel 4.

On the closing day of COP26, the Elders' verdict that Glasgow “represents some progress, but nowhere near enough to avoid climate disaster... People will see this as a historically shameful dereliction of duty”, was picked up by the world's biggest news agency - the Associated Press - in their concluding report of the summit, and syndicated over 500 times across 27 countries.



Mary Robinson speaks to Sky News at COP26, November 2021.



The Israeli West Bank barrier.
Photo: The Elders / Muath Khatib



CONFLICT COUNTRIES AND REGIONS

With COVID-19 restrictions curtailing possibilities for country visits and bilateral meetings for most of 2021, the majority of the Elders' work on conflict was focused on engagements at a multilateral level and public interventions such as statements, speeches and op-eds.

Three conflicts dominated the Elders' agenda in the period: Israel/Palestine, Myanmar and Ethiopia, with a surge of activity on Afghanistan following the US withdrawal and Taliban takeover in August. This included public statements and Elders' addresses to the UN Security Council focused on the humanitarian and human rights situation, and the need for inclusive government to build stability.

On Israel/Palestine, the decision by the Palestinian Authority in April to cancel long-overdue elections was another example of the political stagnation in the occupied Palestinian territories and the challenges in attempting to renew any political dialogue. The Elders conveyed their disappointment at this step via a public statement in April and private exchanges with stakeholders.



Israel and Palestine Director for Human Rights Watch welcomes Lakhdar Brahimi's speech to the UN Security Council, September 2021.

FINANCIAL TIMES

“An end to the occupation must remain the primary goal, with the immediate priority being the pursuit of equal rights for all living between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea.”

Ban Ki-moon, June 2021.

In May, a major escalation in violent conflict between Israel and Gaza led to widespread destruction and civilian deaths. The Elders issued a statement calling for urgent action by the UN Security Council, and for the root causes of the conflict to be addressed to avoid further cycles of violence.

In light of this escalation and the decision by the International Criminal Court to open an investigation into war crimes by all sides in the conflict, Ban Ki-moon published an op-ed in the Financial Times calling for a new approach to the conflict by the international community.

He argued that this approach should acknowledge the fundamental asymmetry of the conflict between the occupier and the occupied. It should be based on equal rights, respect for international law and an end to the occupation. It amplified the growing calls for a new approach that avoids perpetuating the status quo, and drew on evidence published by credible sources that the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories arguably constitutes apartheid.

Ban Ki-moon's op-ed received significant attention from a wide range of stakeholders, including Palestinian and Israeli civil society groups, as well as expert observers and campaigners in the US and Europe. **As acknowledged by one high profile**

international expert on the Middle East, it has helped place the question of apartheid at the centre of legitimate debate on Israel/Palestine.

Throughout the period, the Elders continued to work closely with The Carter Center, participating in online workshops to hear directly from Israeli and Palestinian civil society organisations about the challenges they face and the shrinking political space on both sides for independent voices and campaigning.

Lakhdar Brahimi joined these sessions, offering his perspective and reflecting on his past experience in the region. Participants expressed their gratitude that the Elders continue to advocate on issues of civic space and rights in the Israel/Palestine context, and valued the workshops as a tangible sign of solidarity.

On Myanmar, the Elders' planned focus on the continuing plight of the Rohingya people within the country and those forcibly displaced into refugee camps in neighbouring countries was disrupted by the military coup on 1 February. The Elders issued a statement condemning the detention of Aung San Suu Kyi and other leaders of the National League for Democracy, and the violent crackdown against protesters that has persisted since the coup.



Israeli air strikes amid a flare-up of Israeli-Palestinian violence, Gaza, May 2021.
Photo: Reuters / Ibraheem Abu Mustafa.

Ban Ki-moon used an address to the UN Security Council in April to urge a coordinated response to the coup by the UNSC, ASEAN and the wider international community, aimed at achieving a return to democratic transition and the establishment of civilian rule in Myanmar, and averting further bloodshed and civil war.

Subsequent efforts have been focused on the role of ASEAN as the leading regional actor, and the UN Security Council's responsibility to support and strengthen ASEAN's role. In her address to the UN Security Council in September, Mary Robinson highlighted the importance of UN-ASEAN cooperation in finding a political solution to the crisis, and ensuring a comprehensive COVID-19 and humanitarian response.

On Ethiopia, the Elders remained deeply concerned about the continuing violent conflict and reported human rights abuses in Tigray, and the conflict's spillover into other regions of the country. They issued two statements on the conflict in May and November, and also used their various addresses to the UN Security Council throughout 2021 to highlight the issue. Elders also undertook private diplomacy on the conflict, and it was raised in conversations with US government officials during their two board meetings in Washington DC, in June and October.

The Elders will remain engaged on these three conflicts in the year ahead, as well as other countries included in the existing strategic plan. On Iran, the Elders will continue to encourage a return to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).





Hina Jilani speaks at the United Nations.



REFUGEES AND MIGRATION

Promoting greater compassion for refugees and migrants, and safe and legal pathways for those forcibly displaced from their homes, has been an area of focus for The Elders for the past five years.

A crucial element of this agenda is promoting and empowering the voices of refugees and migrants themselves. To this end, in June 2021 Mary Robinson participated in a virtual training workshop series for refugee-led organisations around the world, organised by Independent Diplomat in partnership with the Global Refugee Network. Mary Robinson focused on encouraging refugees to tell their own compelling stories to

decision-makers, and to forge new alliances with different groups across the public and private sectors. Her intervention was warmly received by all participants.

On the diplomatic front, the Elders wrote in October to the leaders of ASEAN calling for greater responsibility-sharing across the bloc for resettling Rohingya refugees. To mark World Refugee Day in June, quotes calling on European Union states to also step up on responsibility-sharing were issued by Mary Robinson and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, ahead of the EU's Resettlement Forum in July.

TIME

“The Global North’s regressive asylum policies stand in stark contrast to the generosity of developing countries.”

Ban Ki-moon, June 2021.

In July, Ban Ki-moon published an op-ed in TIME magazine to mark the 50th anniversary of the 1951 Refugee Convention. He criticised policies including the forcible returns of Afghan refugees whose asylum claims have been refused by several European countries, and Australia and the UK’s promotion of off-shoring of asylum-seekers and discrimination against those arriving through irregular routes.

The op-ed was well received by leading advocacy groups such as International Rescue Committee and by UNHCR, and helped position The Elders as a powerful voice on these issues ahead of the High Level Officials Meeting on the Global Compact on Refugees in December.

Hina Jilani was invited to address this meeting, and demanded that wealthy countries finally meet their obligations in terms of responsibility sharing for refugee resettlement and asylum, and greater financial support for the countries hosting the highest numbers of refugees worldwide.



Mary Robinson interviewed by Euronews, March 2021.



Ernesto Zedillo addresses delegates at the Skoll World Forum 2021.



UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE

COVID-19 continued to dominate the global health agenda in 2021, and the Elders' focus was to support the work and recommendations of bodies addressing the impact of the pandemic and seeking to prepare for future health emergencies.

The Elders also continued to advocate for the implementation of Universal Health Coverage as one of the best ways of strengthening the resilience of public health systems to cope with COVID-19 and future pandemics, drawing on their report "Building Back Better for Universal Health" published in December 2020.

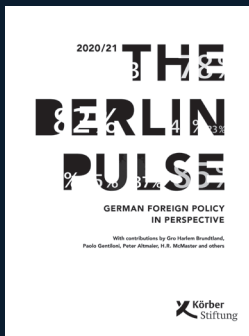
The fundamental arguments for and imperatives behind UHC remain the same and will continue to apply once the threat of COVID-19 has passed: providing a safety net for the poorest and most vulnerable members of society is in everyone's interests as it strengthens social cohesion, economic productivity and healthy communities.

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and Ernesto Zedillo were both significantly involved in the work of the

Independent Panel on Pandemic Preparedness and Response (co-chaired by Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and former New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark), and Gro Brundtland served until July as the Co-Chair of the Global Preparedness Monitoring Board, which warned about the threat of a global influenza-style pandemic back in September 2019.

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and Ernesto Zedillo also addressed the virtual Skoll World Forum in April to discuss the IPPPR's work and broader issues pertaining to the global response to COVID-19 and the need to achieve UHC as part of a broader holistic path to global health and sustainable development.

Throughout 2021, the Elders provided collective support for the work of the IPPPR and the GPMB. **The IPPPR co-chairs requested two separate meetings with all the Elders to provide feedback and counsel ahead of their report in May, indicating the value of the group's collective deliberations and the esteem in which they are held by their peers.**



“COVID-19 has revealed a collective failure to take pandemic prevention, preparedness and response seriously and prioritise it accordingly.”

Gro Harlem Brundtland, November 2021.

Pandemic preparedness and response was a prominent agenda item in the Elders’ meetings with the UN Security Council in New York, and in discussions with UN Secretary-General Guterres in September.

The Elders also spoke out publicly on vaccine equity and access to medicines in Africa with a letter to G7 leaders in September, building on consultations between Graça Machel, Mary Robinson and former UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown.

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf spoke of the threat of pandemics at the global virtual unveiling of the 2021 Doomsday Clock in January. She also addressed the COVID-19 Summit convened by the White House on 22 September in her capacity as Co-Chair of the Independent Panel, repeating her call for the IPPPR report’s recommendations to be implemented in full.

Although travel restrictions made it harder to follow up on the country-specific advocacy that The Elders had undertaken prior to the pandemic, the Secretariat remained in dialogue with government officials and health experts in South Africa – where Gro Brundtland and Ricardo Lagos had visited in 2019 in support of President Ramaphosa’s UHC reforms.

If conditions allow, there may be the possibility of a return visit to South Africa in 2022 to renew

support for the National Health Insurance (NHI) agenda and highlight the critical importance of vaccine equity in fighting COVID-19 and preparing for future pandemics.



Mary Robinson speaks to BBC Newsnight, April 2021.



Women's rights protest in Washington D.C. USA.



ACCESS TO JUSTICE

The Elders' work on access to justice in 2021 was structured around two main pillars: supporting the Generation Equality Forum (GEF) events that had initially been planned for 2020 to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration on women's rights, and highlighting the ways in which COVID-19 has exacerbated global inequalities and made it harder for vulnerable groups to access justice.

Ahead of the GEF, in February The Elders and Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies hosted a high-level advocacy convening in which 44 experts, activists and advocates from four continents formulated messages and policy recommendations to enhance access to justice for women.

El País

“The coronavirus outbreak has exacerbated existing inequalities for women and girls in many ways.”

Ban Ki-moon, June 2021.

Mary Robinson joined leading figures from government, the private sector, youth movements and civil society to make recommendations in the form of sample commitments on gender-based violence and on feminist movements and leadership.

During the convening participants identified five recommendations for advocacy messaging ahead of the GEF: to i) increase women’s leadership in the justice sector; ii) increase funding for legal empowerment and justice services for women; iii) provide people-centred justice services to survivors of gender-based violence; iv) invest in data and analysis of women’s justice problems and experiences; v) reduce incarceration of women by increasing the use of alternative sentences.



Digital engagement by partners in response to the Elders’ online convening ahead of the Global Equality Forum, June 2021.



Art installation in Bonn, Germany.

These recommendations, as well as one focused on the nexus between climate justice and access to justice for women, were also captured in a series of infographic posts that were shared with participants and partners, as well as on social media, in the run-up to the main GEF events.

The Elders also published on their website a guest blog by Jayathma Wickramanayake, the UN Special Envoy on Youth, on the need to change the global narrative on gender-based violence and access to justice. The Special Envoy had participated in the February convening and directly approached the Elders' Secretariat about the blog, indicating the value that senior officials and opinion-formers place on having their messages appear on Elders-branded platforms.

A filmed message from Mary Robinson, Hina Jilani and Graça Machel was shown during the first week of GEF events in Paris in May. The film highlighted each of the calls to action that came out of The Elders' February convening as a route to building a better world for all, and was welcomed as "an important and timely intervention" by the GEF event moderator on its pre-release preview. Additionally, released the week before the GEF, an

Elders' Finding Humanity podcast episode with Hina Jilani and Mary Robinson focused on access to justice for women as an essential tool for ending the scourge of gender-based violence.

The film was also delivered as a keynote message at a high-level event on the first day of the forum and featured in the official "Virtual Village" of the GEF. It was shared via social media by organisations and individuals including Anita Bhatia (Deputy Executive Director of UN Women), ATLAS Women, Michelle Morse (Vice President for Girls and Women Strategy at the UN Foundation) and UN Women's HeForShe campaign.

These advocacy discussions were complemented by public engagement from male Elders to highlight the need to tackle violence against women at all levels and in all countries. Ban Ki-moon wrote an op-ed in *El País* in June calling on women's rights to be at the heart of the global recovery from COVID-19, and a subsequent commentary in *The Independent* (UK) in December to mark Human Rights Day by highlighting the importance of women's rights and the need to combat institutionalised misogyny, prejudice and discrimination.



Infographics summarising the outcomes of the high-level advocacy meeting convened by The Elders in February 2021 on access to justice for women, ahead of the Generation Equality Forum.

As part of the 16 Days of Activism campaign against gender-based violence, The Elders produced a series of digital interventions, including infographics and personal reflections, in which Ban Ki-moon, Zeid Raad Al Hussein, Juan Manuel Santos, Mary Robinson and Graça Machel offered their reflections on how leaders must meet their responsibilities, regardless of gender, to end this persistent injustice. The campaign also included an Elders' Finding Humanity podcast episode where Ban Ki-moon and Mary Robinson reflected on their personal motivations on gender equality and feminism.

This digital campaign was shared widely on social media by activists with whom the Secretariat had built trusted relationships over the course of the year, helping to position The Elders as a respected source of leadership and inspiration on justice and gender.

The culmination of a year-long focus during 2021 on the impact of COVID-19 on an already precarious situation was the publication in January 2022 of a new policy paper on access to justice for women and the rule of law. This will set the tone for continued advocacy in 2022.

Ban Ki-moon preparing to record his video State of Hope address, July 2021.



Juan Manuel Santos delivering his State of Hope lecture in Bogotá, Colombia, July 2021.



COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT

Public communications was at the heart of most Elders' activities in 2021, given physical travel and private meetings remained significantly constrained due to COVID-19. As well as supporting individual programme objectives, The Elders' communications work also broadcasts the organisation's wider messages, profile and values to a range of target audiences.

The central focus of this form of organisational communications in 2021 was the "State of Hope" series of online talks, articles, debates and exchanges, which placed Elders' reflections on the nature of contemporary challenges in the context of the mandate bequeathed to the organisation by its founder, Nelson Mandela, to "inspire hope where there is despair".



Launched on July 18, Mandela's birthday and the anniversary of the founding of The Elders, the State of Hope series featured specially-filmed lectures by Mary Robinson, Ban Ki-moon, Graça Machel, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, Hina Jilani and Juan Manuel Santos.

Each lecture focused on a different aspect of hope, and how it pertains to specific questions of human rights, conflict resolution, the space for civil society and efforts to tackle climate change, the pandemic and the broader challenge of the Sustainable Development Goals.

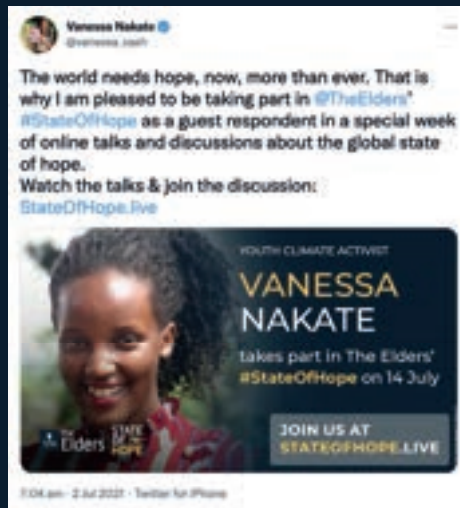
Each Elder's intervention was responded to by notable global figures to spark a wider digital conversation, including former UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown, Nobel laureate Malala Yousafzai,

former Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, Ugandan climate activist Vanessa Nakate, NASA astronaut and scientist Commander Chris Hadfield, and former UN Human Rights Commissioner Louise Arbour.

These digital conversations were streamed to over 82 million people worldwide on social media. There were 1.5 million views of The Elders' social media State of Hope content, delivering 46,000 comments, 'likes' and shares. In the launch week 36 media articles were published with a potential audience of 66 million people, including specially-commissioned op-ed articles by Mary Robinson, Hina Jilani and Juan Manuel Santos for Project Syndicate which also included links to the online lectures.



The European Leadership Network promotes the Elders' "Finding Humanity" podcast on nuclear disarmament, April 2021.



Ugandan climate activist Vanessa Nakate supports the "State of Hope" initiative, July 2021.



US Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland meets Mary Robinson at COP26, November 2021.



The United Nations highlights Mary Robinson's address to the Security Council on protecting women's rights in Afghanistan, September 2021.

This and other significant digital engagements – including a second series of the "Finding Humanity" podcast collaboration, with episodes focusing on access to justice, gender-based violence, the role of the UN Security Council and future pandemic preparedness – resulted in further growth in reach on the Elders' digital channels.

In the second half of the year, since the State of Hope launch in July 2021, the Elders' website saw a 36% increase in traffic on the same period last year, and a 61% increase on the previous four months.

The State of Hope talks remain accessible for all on www.stateofhope.live and continue to be shared and engaged with. They will act as a foundation for conversations that emerge in State of Hope gatherings in 2022 and beyond.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

FOR THE YEAR TO
31 DECEMBER 2021

Income

The Elders' income for the year was £3.0 million (2020: £3.0 million). This includes £0.30 million (2020: £0.12 million) of restricted funding used for our Programmatic work. All restricted income was fully expended during the year.

Expenditure

The Elders' expenditure for the year was £2.8 million (2020: £2.6 million). This relates primarily to the delivery of a global programme of activities agreed by the Elders, supported by a Secretariat based in London. The Secretariat provides the Elders with policy research, conducts advocacy and communications work, and is responsible for logistics and other support activities.

Reserves

The approach of The Elders is to maintain sufficient available reserves to enable normal operating activities to continue for a period of time, should a shortfall in income or unexpected expenditure occur, taking account of potential risks that may arise. The policy is to maintain available reserves sufficient to meet at least 12 months' normal operating expenditure.

Reserves at the end of 2021, all unrestricted, were £3.4 million (2020: £3.1 million), of which £0.3 million were represented by fixed assets, leaving available reserves of £3.1 million which represents about 11 months' normal operating expenditure. This is less than the amount determined by the reserves policy described above. Normal

operating expenditure for The Elders is considered to be £3.4 million a year. This represents pre-pandemic operating expenditure and is in line with post pandemic expectations and anticipated levels of travel.

The coronavirus pandemic continued to impact travel in 2021, with costs lower than anticipated. Whilst still somewhat challenging, the fundraising environment improved from the previous year. As a result, £1.1 million of our 2022 income is unrestricted and contracted and a further £1.5 million is anticipated in unrestricted income. This will help to underpin the financial resilience of the organisation.

Carbon-offsetting

The Elders have partnered with UK-based charity Climate Stewards to offset the carbon emissions generated by business flights. Although travel was restricted again in 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, The Elders donated £4,622 to Carbon Stewards, based on total flight emissions of 231.1 tonnes of CO². Carbon Stewards will use these funds across its portfolio of community-based projects in Kenya, Uganda, Ghana and Mexico. These projects include tree-growing schemes in schools, fuel-efficient cooking stoves and water filter construction, and all are designed to reduce carbon emissions in a sustainable, inclusive way for the benefit of local communities.

**THE ELDERS FOUNDATION STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
(Incorporating the Income and Expenditure Account)
YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021**

	2021			2020		
	Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	Total £'000	Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	Total £'000
INCOME FROM:						
Donations and grants						
- General	2,712	-	2,712	2,845	-	2,845
- Project funding	-	300	300	-	128	128
Investments	6	-	6	9	-	9
Other	7	-	7	1	-	1
TOTAL INCOME	2,725	300	3,025	2,855	128	2,983
EXPENDITURE ON:						
Raising funds	309	-	309	306	-	306
Charitable activities						
Ethical Leadership	454	22	476	401	25	426
Climate Change	472	105	577	624	17	641
Conflict Countries and Regions	394	18	412	359	8	367
Refugees and Migration	194	10	204	188	5	193
Universal Health Coverage	199	10	209	168	4	172
Access to Justice	469	135	604	392	69	461
Total charitable activities expenditure	2,182	300	2,482	2,132	128	2,260
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	2,491	300	2,791	2,438	128	2,566
Net income and net movement in funds	234	-	234	417	-	417
Fund balances brought forward	3,162	-	3,162	2,745	-	2,745
FUND BALANCES CARRIED FORWARD	3,396	-	3,396	3,162	-	3,162

THE ELDERS FOUNDATION BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2021

	2021 £'000	2020 £'000
FIXED ASSETS		
Tangible assets	299	347
CURRENT ASSETS		
Debtors	422	329
Short term deposit	1,900	1,105
Cash at bank and in hand	1,528	2,234
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	3,850	3,668
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	(623)	(654)
NET CURRENT ASSETS	3,227	3,014
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES	3,526	3,363
Creditors: amounts falling due after more than one year	(67)	(149)
Provision for liabilities	(63)	(50)
TOTAL NET ASSETS	3,396	3,162
THE FUNDS OF THE CHARITY		
Represented By:		
Tangible Fixed Assets	299	347
General Funds	3,097	2,815
TOTAL UNRESTRICTED FUNDS	3,396	3,162

The Elders are grateful to the members of the Advisory Council, whose support and advice enables them to carry out their work.

Richard Branson
Virgin Unite

Peter Gabriel
The Peter Gabriel Trust

Jeremy Collier
Jeremy Collier Foundation

Don Gips
Skoll Foundation

Srik Gopal
Humanity United

Lisa Harris

Dorine Manson
Dutch Postcode Lottery

Randy Newcomb
Omidyar Group

Jean Oelwang
Virgin Unite

Mabel van Oranje
Girls Not Brides

Sally Osberg

Muneer Satter

Shannon Sedgwick Davis
Bridgeway Foundation

Jeff Skoll
Skoll Foundation

Lulit Solomon
Jeremy Collier Foundation

Amy Towers
The Nduna Foundation

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- Chandra Jessee, InMaat Foundation
- European Climate Foundation
- Marjorie Layden, WEL Foundation
- Pax sapiens Foundation
- Templeton World Charity Foundation
- Wellspring Philanthropic Fund



**“ The Elders can speak freely and boldly,
working both publicly and behind the scenes.**

**They will reach out to those who most need
their help.**






**They will support courage where there is fear,
foster agreement where there is conflict and
inspire hope where there is despair.**

Nelson Mandela 2007, Founder of The Elders



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