

PRESS COMMUNIQUE

PEACE BUREAU TO AWARD MACBRIDE PRIZE TO SRI LANKAN DIPLOMAT

CEREMONY TO BE HELD AT BIBLIOTHECA ALEXANDRINA, NOV. 11, 2007

Geneva, 8 Nov. 2007. The International Peace Bureau announced today that it will award the organisation's annual Peace Prize to **Jayantha Dhanapala**, a highly-respected Sri Lankan diplomat, who has devoted his career to disarmament and global justice. The award will be made during the international seminar entitled *Books or Bombs? Sustainable Disarmament for Sustainable Disarmament*, to held in collaboration with the Institute of Peace Studies at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina from Nov. 11-12.

AWARD DATE: Sunday 11 Nov, 2007

TIME: 10.00 am – programme available on request

ACCESS TO THE CEREMONY :contact IPS at: (+20) 03-483-9999. or email: mohamed.moustafa@bibalex.org or rania.emara@bibalex.org

Media Interviews available on request.

Jayantha Dhanapala

Like Sean MacBride (see below), Amb. Dhanapala is a remarkable figure on the world stage. His diplomatic career has been a distinguished one. After his studies, he rose high in the ranks of the Foreign Affairs Ministry, so that by 1995 he was Sri Lankan Ambassador to the USA. He had by then already seen postings in London, Beijing, and New Delhi. He was also Ambassador at the UN Office in Geneva, and became Director of UNIDIR, the UN's Disarmament Research Institute.

Dhanapala has made disarmament his special field of expertise, and he had the honour of presiding over the historic 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference – and managed to find an ingenious solution acceptable to all when most observers felt the Conference was deadlocked. He was UN Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs from 1998 to 2003, and the development of the Department under his leadership has been much applauded. His profound dedication to the cause of disarmament is widely appreciated, as is his genuine support for civil society efforts.

Amb. Dhanapala has not neglected the challenging situation in his own country, and during a difficult period was the Special Adviser to the Prime Minister, charged with handling the delicate negotiations with the Tamil Tigers. In 2006 he was Sri Lanka's candidate for the position of UN Secretary-General. Dhanapala remains actively involved in several international bodies and is a member of various expert bodies, for example the recent **Blix Commission on Weapons of Mass Destruction** and in 1996 the **Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons**. He has also just been elected President of the Pugwash conferences on Science and World Affairs.

Personal website: www.jayanthadhanapala.com

About the Prize

Every year the IPB awards a special prize to a person or organisation that has done outstanding work for peace, disarmament and/or human rights. These were the principal concerns of Sean MacBride, the distinguished Irish statesman who was Chairman of IPB from 1968-74 and President from 1974-1985. MacBride began his career as a fighter against British colonial rule, studied law and rose to high office in the independent Irish Republic. He was a winner of the Lenin Peace Prize, and also the Nobel Peace Prize (1974) – awarded for his wide-ranging work, which included roles such as co-founder of Amnesty International, Secretary-General of the International Commission of Jurists, and UN Commissioner for Namibia. While at IPB he launched the *Bradford Proposals on World Disarmament*, which laid the ground for the first UN Special Session on Disarmament, held in 1978. He also launched the *MacBride Appeal against Nuclear Weapons*, which gathered the names of over 11,000 international lawyers from all parts of the world, many of them at the very highest level. This effort paved the way for the *World Court Project* on nuclear weapons, in which IPB played a major role. This resulted in the historic 1996 Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on the Use and Threat of Nuclear Weapons. MacBride died in 1988, but the Prize was not established until 1992, IPB's centenary year.

The award is decided by the IPB Steering Committee. IPB members are welcome to make suggestions and provide background documentation on potential candidates. The Prize is a non-monetary one, consisting of a medal cast by a well-known Irish craftsman.

About the IPB

The International Peace Bureau is dedicated to the vision of a World Without War. We are a Nobel Peace Laureate (1910) and over the years 13 of our officers have been recipients of the Nobel Peace Prize. Our 280 member organisations in 70 countries, and individual members, form a global network bringing together expertise and campaigning experience in a common cause. Our current main programme centres on *Sustainable Disarmament for Sustainable Development*. We welcome your participation.

MacBride Prize Winners, 1992-2006

2006

Mayors for Peace

Awarded in Helsinki to **Tadatoshi Akiba**, Mayor of Hiroshima; and in Nagasaki to **Ichiro Itoh**, Mayor Nagasaki (who was subsequently murdered).

2005

No award made

2004

Leaders of the Geneva Initiative on the Middle East.

2003

Nihon Hidankyo, the Japanese hibakusha or survivors of the A bomb attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. They have devoted the rest of their lives to the elimination of nuclear weapons.

2002

Barbara Lee, only member of US Congress to vote against the war on Afghanistan.

2001

Rosalie Bertell, Canada-based public health advocate, scientist, author – who has put her professional skills at the service of victims of nuclear and other disasters.

2000

Praful Bidwai and Achin Vanaik, Indian journalists who have been at the forefront of the international campaign against the nuclearisation of South Asia. The IPB salutes their persistence, commitment and scholarly attention to detail which have earned their work wide acclaim.

1999

Barbara Gladysch, Mothers for Peace, Germany, as a tribute to her outstanding and long-lasting commitment, both to disarmament and to practical solidarity with victims of war and disaster.

1998

John Hume, a member of the European Parliament for consistently advocating non-violent solutions in Northern Ireland. Subsequently awarded Nobel Peace Prize.

1997

The **Seeds of Hope** group, UK for disarming a Hawk aircraft bound for Indonesia.

1996

Selim Beslagic, Mayor of Tuzla, Bosnia, a key proponent of a multi-ethnic solution to the Bosnian crisis.

1995

The **Committee of Soldiers' Mothers of Russia**, foremost among Russian citizens' groups opposing the war in Chechnya.

1994

Mordechai Vanunu, Israel, a former nuclear technician, sentenced to 18 years solitary confinement for revealing details of Israel's nuclear arsenal.

1993

Hilda Lini, Vanuatu, a former health minister who played a key role in the WHO's decision to approve a request to the World Court on the legal status of nuclear weapons.

1992

Michael D Higgins, Ireland, a human rights lawyer, member of Parliament, Labour Party President and Spokesperson for Foreign Affairs and a former Minister for Arts, Culture & the Gaeltacht.