

Radhika Coomaraswamy

Under-Secretary-General, Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict

Radhika Coomaraswamy was appointed by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan as Under-Secretary-General, Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict in April 2006. She was reappointed by the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in February 2007. In this capacity, she serves as a moral voice and independent advocate to build awareness and give prominence to the rights and protection of boys and girls affected by armed conflict.

Ms. Coomaraswamy, a lawyer by training and formerly the Chairperson of the Sri Lanka Human Rights Commission, is an internationally known human rights advocate who has done outstanding work as Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women (1994-2003). In her reports to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, she has written on violence in the family, violence in the community, violence against women during armed conflict and the problem of international trafficking. A strong advocate on women's rights, she has intervened on behalf of countless women throughout the world seeking clarification from Governments in cases involving violence against women.

Ms. Coomaraswamy was appointed Chairperson of the Sri Lanka Human Rights Commission in May 2003. She was also a director of the International Centre for Ethnic Studies in Sri Lanka, leading research projects in the field of ethnicity, women and human rights. She has served as a member of the Global Faculty of the New York University School of Law. She has published widely, including two books on constitutional law and numerous articles on ethnic studies and the status of women.

Ms. Coomaraswamy has won many awards. These include: The International Law Award of the American Bar association, the Human Rights Award of the International Human Rights Law Group, the Bruno Kreisky Award of 2000, the Leo Ettinger Human Rights Prize of the University of Oslo, Cesar Romero Award of the University of Dayton, the William J. Butler Award from the University of Cincinnati, and the Robert S. Litvack Award from McGill University. In November 2005, in recognition of her service to the country and the world, the President of Sri Lanka conferred on her the title of "Deshamanya".

Ms. Coomaraswamy is a graduate of the United Nations International School in New York. She received her B.A. from Yale University, her J.D. from Columbia University, an LLM from Harvard University and honorary PhDs from Amherst College, the University of Edinburgh and the University of Essex.