

UN needs "experienced pair of hands", says Dhanapala

Vienna (APA) - Sri Lankan candidate for the UN Secretary General's post, Jayantha Dhanapala, said in an Austrian interview on Wednesday that the world organization needs "an experienced pair of hands."

Presidential advisor and former UN Undersecretary-General Dhanapala, aged 67, said he had shown in his past career that he had "the ability to set up a consensus."

Under his chairmanship of a 1995 conference, there had been the unexpected achievement of an unlimited extension of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

During a current tour of key countries including UN Security Council members, Dhanapala said that an advantage for him was coming from a small country "which attracts fewer controversies."

He saw the Secretary General as a top administrator, but also with "manager functions" and a "leadership role" in the agenda for worldwide security and peace, as well as the economy and society.

Dhanapala said he did not have a concrete plan for his mandate if he were elected.

As General Secretary, one needed a general feeling of what must be done. No-one could take the post with preconceived solutions. After all, the UN chief executive had to act on behalf of all 191 member-states at the same time.

Dhanapala, official candidate of his country, is among the front-runners for the succession to Kofi Annan, whose second and final five-year term runs out at the end of this year.

The candidate said he believed the vote would be held in October. By an unwritten law, the top UN post alternates between the continents, and this time it would be Asia's turn.

Dhanapala said he saw "a developing consensus" in the world community that the next Secretary General would in fact be an Asian.

As well as Dhanapala, two other Asian personalities have officially declared themselves candidates. They are South Korean Foreign and Trade Minister Ban Ki Moon - Ambassador to Vienna from 1998 to 2000 - and Thailand's Vice-Premier Surakiat Sathirathai.