

## **PROFILE OF MRS. MARY CHINERY-HESSE**

Mrs. Mary Chinery-Hesse, née Blay, has had distinguished careers in Ghana's Civil Service and at the United Nations. In the UN and in numerous other Organizations, she continues to be an important voice on economic development issues, an ardent defender of human rights, particularly women's rights, as well as an active advocate for African imperatives, conflict resolution and mediation.

She holds an Honours Degree from the University of Ghana in Sociology and Economics and was awarded an Honorary Doctor of Laws (*honoris causa*) by her Alma Mater, the University of Ghana, in 1991, the first female product of the University of Ghana to be so honoured. She undertook her Post-Graduate Programmes in Development Economics at the University of Dublin and at the World Bank Institute in Washington D.C. where she was inscribed as a Fellow of the Institute. She is an Old Girl of Wesley Girls' High School and Mfantsipim School.

Mary Chinery-Hesse's first post at the United Nations was that of Resident Coordinator of the UN Systems and Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Programme, serving in New York, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, the Seychelles and Uganda. She was the first ever African woman to be appointed to that position.

She was then appointed as the first ever woman Deputy Director-General of the International Labour Organization (ILO), after seventy years of the founding of that UN Agency, a position with the rank of Under Secretary-General of the UN. Again this gave her the distinction of being the first African woman to attain a position of Under Secretary-General in the history of the United Nations.

She also served as Chairperson of the UN's Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions for several years, and was as well the Chairperson of the Commonwealth Expert Group of Eminent Persons on Structural Adjustment and Women, which produced the landmark Report, "Engendering Adjustment".

Mary Chinery-Hesse, on retirement from the United Nations, was appointed to the Office of the Chief Advisor to the President of the Republic of Ghana in the Cabinet of former President John Agyekum Kufuor. She also was Vice-Chairperson of the National Development Planning Commission, and a Member of the Board of the Centre for Policy Analysis.

She was a Member of the Council of the University of Ghana from 2006-2009.

She currently serves on the Board of the foremost African Think Tank, the Centre for Conflict Resolution in Cape Town, South Africa.

In her younger days, Mary Chinery-Hesse was Senior Principal Secretary (Chief Director) of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning in Ghana and a Member of the National Council for Higher Education in the 1970's.

Among her myriad high-level posts was Membership on the Council of African Advisors of the World Bank and on the Eminent Persons' Advisory Panel of the Organisation of African Unity which crafted the strategy to convert the OAU to the African Union. Her activities took her to the Chairmanship of a High-Level Panel to Review Progress in Implementing the Programme for Least Developed Countries.

Other significant appointments have included Membership of the Zedillo Commission of Eminent Persons on Financing for Development, and the UN Blue Ribbon Panel of sixteen wise world leaders on Threats, Challenges and Change, tasked to rewrite the global security architecture and reform of the United Nations, especially the Security Council.

She as well was a Member on the Board of the prestigious Global Humanitarian Forum in Geneva, Switzerland, with several Nobel Peace Prize Laureates.

For many years, she was a Member of the Board of Trustees of the Voluntary Fund for Technical Cooperation of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva, Switzerland, which she chaired.

Her advice continues to be actively sought and valued by many Governments and International Organisations on a variety of themes. She is, as a result, very busy in retirement.

She is the Chair of the Goodwill Ambassadors of the Kofi Annan International Peace Keeping Training Centre, and she is the Chair of the Board of the Centre for Regional Integration in Africa.

She serves, among others as Friend on the African Union Panel of the Wise and on the Pan-African Network of the Wise (Panwise), integral components of the African Peace and Security Architecture.

Mary Chinery-Hesse, who is the current Chair of Zenith Bank, Ghana, has received several prestigious awards and decorations, both nationally and internationally. This includes the highest National Award, the Order of the Star of Ghana.

She is a Laureate of the prestigious Gusi Peace Prize for International Diplomacy and Humanitarianism, referred to as the Asian equivalent of the Nobel Peace Prize. She is the first African woman to receive this distinction.