

Marking Sir Brian Urquhart's 100th birthday, UN honours life-long servant of 'we the peoples'

[Secretary-General António Guterres](#) is wishing [Sir Brian Urquhart](#), the legendary long-time United Nations official, a very happy 100th birthday, joining legions of admirers worldwide in praising Sir Brian's ever-principled and groundbreaking work for the UN and beyond.

"Sir Brian's imprint on the United Nations has been as profound as that of anyone in the Organization's history," said Mr. Guterres in a birthday message, adding that as one of the Organization's earliest employees, "he set the standard for the international civil service: principled, dedicated, impartial."

Sir Brian, a British national, was present at the [birth of the UN in 1945](#) and was witness to many of the Organization's – and the world's – most historic 20th Century moments. Throughout his four decades of service to the UN, starting as one of its very first staff members and ending as an Under-Secretary-General for Special Political Affairs, he also helped shape history himself.

"As an aide to Secretary-General [Dag Hammarskjöld](#), he helped to define the UN's scope of action in addressing armed conflict and other global challenges," Mr. Guterres said, adding that as a close associate of [Ralph Bunche](#), an illustrious figure in his own right, "Sir Brian helped to establish and then propel international peacekeeping into wide-ranging use as a [flagship UN activity](#)."

Mr. Guterres said Sir Brian's commitment to peace was forged in part during the Second World War, where he was among the Allied soldiers present shortly after the liberation of the Bergen-Belsen death camp.

"Across the decades, in service to several of my predecessors, he was at the centre of formative global events, from the Congo to the Middle East," said the Secretary-General.

He noted that Sir Brian also wrote extensively about international affairs, definitive biographies of Hammarskjöld and Bunche, as well as highly engaging and insightful [sketches of major figures](#) with whom he dealt over the years, prepared for the [UN News](#) site.

"With warmth, generosity and encouragement, Sir Brian has been an inspirational figure for UN staff and countless young people as they pursued their careers," stated Mr. Guterres, adding that Sir Brian's, *A Life in Peace and War*, should be required reading for all who work for the United Nations and for all who wish to understand the Organization's work.

“Writing in it about the earliest days of his career, Sir Brian noted that ‘We were all optimists... who believed in the possibility of organizing a peaceful and just world,’ said the Secretary-General, adding that Sir Brian maintained that optimism across his life, shaping the United Nations and history itself.

“As we mark this milestone, we are grateful for his brilliant and incomparable contributions as a stalwart servant of ‘[we the peoples](#)’,” concluded Mr. Guterres.

► [See also Character Sketches by Brian Urquhart](#)