



South Centre Tribute to H.E. Mr. Benjamin William Mkapa (1938-2020)



His Excellency Mr. Benjamin William Mkapa, former President of the United Republic of Tanzania (from November 1995 to December 2005) and former Chair of the Board of the South Centre (2006-2018), passed away on the 24th of July 2020 in Dar es Salaam. The South Centre pays homage to his indefatigable work to fight poverty and entrench civil rights. A true statesman & leader of the South, Mr. Mkapa leaves behind a stellar legacy.

Former President Mkapa obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree in English (with honors) at Makerere University College in Uganda in 1962, after which he went on to study at Columbia University in New York and earned a masters degree in International Affairs. He embarked upon a long career in journalism and he was appointed as Press Secretary to the first President of the United Republic of Tanzania, Mwalimu Julius Kambarage Nyerere (also Chair of the South Commission, the South Centre's predecessor). Mr. Mkapa was also the Founding Editor of the Tanzanian News Agency SHIHATA. Throughout his career, Mr. Mkapa was appointed to a number of high postings as a diplomat and served as Minister in a number of portfolios. He was High Commissioner to Nigeria and Canada and Ambassador to the United States of America. He served as Minister for Foreign Affairs, Minister for Information and Culture, Minister for Information and Broadcasting and Minister for Science, Technology and Higher Education. He was elected President in 1995 and was re-elected in 2000 for another 5-year term. Mr. Mkapa was a Co-Chair with former President Tarja Halonen of Finland of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization from 2003 to 2004. He was also a member of the Commission for Africa initiated by British Prime Minister Tony Blair. In 2005, he served as a Panelist in the Panel of Eminent Persons appointed by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) Secretary-General and in 2006 he served as a member of the High-level Panel on United Nations (UN) System-wide Coherence in areas of Development, Humanitarian Assistance and Environment, appointed by the United Nations Secretary-General. He also served as a Commissioner on a UN High Level Commission on the Legal Empowerment of the Poor (2006-2008) and a member of the

Board of Governors of the Dead Sea Scrolls Institute. He was also Co-Chair of the Investment Climate Facility for Africa and was also a member of the prestigious Madrid Club of Former Heads of State and Government and a member of the Board of Trustees of the African Wildlife Foundation (AWF). Mr. Mkapa held a number of honorary doctorate degrees, among others, from Soka University in Japan in 1998, Morehouse College, Atlanta, USA in 1999, and the Open University of Tanzania in September 2003.

Throughout his political career, Mr. Mkapa worked tirelessly to strengthen democracy in Tanzania, entrench civil rights and fight poverty, while increasing the country's exposure to international trade and investment. He was active in conflict prevention, management and resolution in the Great Lakes Region of Africa, and was an active player in regional economic co-operation within the East African Community (EAC) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), an organization he served as Chairperson for one year from August 2003. Mr. Mkapa was also engaged in a number of prominent global initiatives aimed at reducing abject poverty in Africa, equal economic opportunity for all mankind, and combating the HIV/AIDS pandemic. He was a Co-founder of the Benjamin William Mkapa HIV/AIDS Fellowship Programme, an initiative aimed at supporting delivery of Anti-Retroviral (ARV) drugs to the under-privileged sufferers of HIV/AIDS in remote rural areas.

Mr. Mkapa is remembered for his great love for the nation of Tanzania, his piety, hard work and performance in building the economy and as a determined peacemaker in the East African region, having led several regional peace mediation efforts in office and afterwards.

The South Centre extends its condolences to his family, the people and government of Tanzania. We will fondly remember him as a passionate, knowledgeable and dynamic Chair of the Board of the South Centre.