

Regional Director & Representative

UNEP/ROAP



1975 – 1982

Prof. C. Suriyakumaran, Sri Lankan

Prof. C. Suriyakumaran was Deputy Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and The Far East, ECAFE (now ESCAP). UNEP's Director for Education, Training and Technical Assistance, and later Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific.

He was directly associated in the creation of a number of international institutions and programmes, among them the Asian Development Bank in 1965, the Bangkok Trade Agreement, the Asian Clearing Union, the Asian Coconut Community; and was responsible for setting up of the Sub-Regional Co-operative Environment Programme in ASEAN, the South Pacific and finally SACEP, the first Inter-Governmental Community to come up in South Asia.

He was Knighted by the King of Thailand, host country of the United Nations in Asia, for outstanding services during his UN career.

In 1995 he was Awarded the United Nations-Sasakawa World Environment Prize (considered equivalent to the Nobel Prize in the Subject).

At the 50th Anniversary of the United Nations in 1995, a Felicitation Volume of professional writings, from Authors Worldwide was produced to honour his varied contributions. ('Venerated by Agencies and Governments', 'Example for International Civil Servants', 'Multi-faceted and priceless', were some of the many commentaries on him).

He has lectured widely, at LSE, Harvard/MIT, Berkeley, E-W-C and elsewhere, on development, international co-operation, environment, governance and religion and has written extensively on these subjects.

He has declined Political and Public Honours since retiring in Sri Lanka, devoting himself to major Public Issues and Advice on them.

He was Chairman, Centre for Regional Development Studies (CRDS) in Colombo and Visiting Professor at the London School of Economics).



1982-1983

Dr. Reynaldo Lesaca

He was Senior Regional Adviser for the United Nations Environment Program Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, eventually becoming Deputy Regional Director, and then Director and Regional Representative. After this stint, he was a consultant to the National Home Mortgage and Finance Corporation where he developed mathematical and computer programs for calculating monthly amortizations.

Prior to that he was appointed as the senior delegate of the Philippine delegation for the first United Nations conference on Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972. Actually he was a one-man delegation. And yet he was able to have the Philippines elected as Chair of the committee on Human Settlements and Environmental Pollution Control. It was a significant feat which even earned him a commendation from the Senate floor.

And still he kept studying. He earned his fourth Masters degree at the National Defense College of the Philippines, effectively making him a Lt. Colonel for the Army Reserve, and graduating with a group thesis entitled "Implications of Establishing Diplomatic Relations with the USSR and the PRC (People's Republic of China)," a work which actually became one of the bases for the country's eventually establishing ties with these two countries in the late 70s.

And because he was both a scientist and an environmentalist, he became a member of the Board of Trustees of the Haribon Foundation for the Conservation of National Resources.

He has received countless awards, including the Adriatico Centenary Award for Science and Technology, the Certificate of Merit Award for Career Government Civil Engineers, the 1984 award for Outstanding Sanitary Engineer by the Philippine Regulatory Commission, and the 1989 Achievement Award of the National Research Council of the Philippines. In 1969, he received a Presidential Citation for outstanding services to the nation.

By all indications, Dr. Reynaldo Lesaca grew up a gifted child... long before people knew or fully comprehended what a gifted child was. He was brilliant with his math subjects, and he finished his secondary school in just three years.

This was made even more impressive by the fact that, because his family was not well off, he would study late into the night, in the late '20s and the 1930s, via an improvised light made from a piece of string on a bottle cap, floating on coconut oil in a saucer.

He became the youngest student to enter the UP College of Engineering, at the age of 15. And because he maintained a grade point average of 1.50 and up for his three years of engineering studies, he was granted the Hilarion Esquivel Memorial Scholarship

Grant for his fourth year.

He finished his engineering course, giving the valedictory speech and graduating with cum laude honors. He placed third in the Civil Engineering Board exams. He then became the Dean of the U.P. Institute of Hygiene, which would eventually become the College of Public Health. This marked the beginning of a long career with the University, thus earning him the family title of "Papa UP."

Soon, he was granted a scholarship by the Rockefeller Foundation, bringing him to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Here, he finished his Masters degree in Sanitary Engineering.



1983-1991
1992-1993

Dr. Nay Htun, Myanmar

Nay Htun is Professor and Executive Director for Asia Pacific at the University for Peace, New York Office. UPEACE was established by a United Nations General Assembly Decision in 1980 as an international post-graduate institution, with the main campus in Costa Rica. Dr. Nay Htun's current areas of focus are on causes of environmental and natural resource conflicts; traditional methods for conflict prevention and resolution; and reconciliation and healing. Dr. Nay Htun was formerly UN Assistant Secretary General with United Nations Development Programme (in charge of the Asia Pacific Bureau) and United Nations Environment Programme (in charge of Asia Pacific; established the Industry and Environment Office, Paris; also served as Deputy Executive Director). In 1992-1994, he was seconded to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development Secretariat, Geneva, where he served as Director of Programmes and helped prepare Agenda 21 and organize the Earth Summit at Rio. He serves on the Board of a number of not-for-profit research organizations, including the Chulabhorn Research Institute, Bangkok; and the International Research Institute for Climate Prediction, Columbia University, New York. He is a Fellow and Visiting Professor at Imperial College of Science, Technology and Medicine, London University, where he graduated with a Ph.D. degree in Chemical Engineering in 1966 and is also Honorary Professor and Fellow of a number of Universities in the United States and Asia Pacific.



1991-1992

Mr. Goh Kiam Seng, Malaysian

In 1977, Ir Goh Kiam Seng, at that time Director General of Department of Environment (DOE), Malaysia attended a Conference in Geneva about EIA and afterwards set up an ad-hoc panel to discuss the process and formatting a Guide to EIA in Malaysia.



1993-1994

Dr. Richard A. Meganck, American

Dr. Meganck is a part-time Professor of International Water Policy at Oregon State University and a senior advisor to the development of the UNESCO Category II center in Frutal, Brazil. He retired from the United Nations in 2009 after a career in international development spanning some 34 years. His most recent position was that of Rector of the UNESCO-IHE Institute for Water Education located in The Netherlands. Prior to joining UNESCO, he served in a number of senior posts in both the Organization of American States and the United Nations Environment Program.

He began his professional career as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Colombia, followed by 4 years as an assistant professor in the College of Forestry at Oregon State University. Dr. Meganck and his family have lived in eight nations in the Americas, Asia and Europe and he has undertaken more than 350 technical and administrative missions to 111 countries throughout the world. Dr. Meganck has published more than 80 journal articles and five books. He holds BSc and MSc degrees from Michigan State University in Watershed Management and Resource Development Policy and a PhD from Oregon State University in Natural Resource Management.



1994-1998

Dr. Suvit Yodmani, Thai

Dr. Suvit is a former Government Spokesman, Minister of Tourism and Sports, a United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) Regional Director and Representative, and a Director General of the Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre.

Dr Suvit Yodmani, Executive Director of ADPC was awarded an outstanding individual for his commitment and support. The award is designed in accordance with the United Nations' initiative to identify 4 of April 2006 as International Day of Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action.



1999-2003

Mr. Nirmal Andrews, India

- Joint Secretary, Union Public Service Commission, UPSC
- Joint Secretary, Govt. of India, Ministry of Environment & Forests, Industries
- Chief of Capacity Building, Division of Environmental Policy Implementation (DEPI), United Nations Environment Programme, (UNEP)
- Regional Director and Representative, Regional office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP), United Nations Environment Programme, (UNEP)
- Resident Commissioner, Govt. of M.P. at New Delhi
- Secretary to govt. of M.P., Animal Husbandry, Dairy development, fisheries Also as

- Chairman, Empowered Committee for Projects Assessment and Appraisal, Infrastructure and Miscellaneous Projects, Ministry of Environment and Forests, Govt of India
- Appointed Member of Governing Body, Supreme Council and Treasurer of St. Stephens College in 2008



2003-2008

Mr. Surendra Shrestha, Nepal

Former Vice President for Development at the Asian Institute of Technology. He brought with him over twenty-five years of experience and expertise mobilizing political and financial support and leading multi-disciplinary teams in the areas of capacity development, planning, assessment, policy development and multilateral agreements at the regional and global level. Shrestha joined UNEP in 1993 and he has been involved with UN in the following senior positions: Director of United Nations Environment Programme's International Environmental Technology Centre (UNEP IETC); Special Advisor and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Focal Point in New York; Director at the Strategic Resource Mobilization and Special Initiatives in Nairobi; and Regional Director and Representative for Asia and the Pacific in Bangkok. Prior to joining UNEP, he previously held senior positions at the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) and the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD). A Nepali national, Surendra Shrestha holds a degree in Development Economics and Computer Science at the Keele University, United Kingdom and completed his postgraduate studies at AIT. He provided intellectual leadership for the establishment of the global secretariat for Atmospheric Brown Cloud and Black Carbon consisting of over 35 institutions and 250 scientists; the UNEP Eco Peace Leadership Centre in Seoul in 2006; the Asia Pacific Sub-regional Environment Policy Dialogue (SEPD) in 2003; the UNEPTongji Institute of Environment for Sustainable Development in 2002; the Regional Resource Centre for Asia and the Pacific (RRC.AP); UNEP presence in Central Asia. Surendra Shrestha has served in the following elected positions at AIT: Student Union President; AITAA-Nepal Chapter President; AITAA-Mother Chapter President; and in this capacity served in the AIT Board of Trustees for six years.



2008-2013

Dr. Young-Woo Park, South Korean

Dr. Young-Woo Park, a national of the Republic of Korea, joined UNEP as the Regional Director of the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific in October 2008. Dr. Park brings with him his long and vast experience working in environmental management and international cooperation both with governments and the private sector. Before joining UNEP's Asia Pacific office, Dr. Park was the President of the Business Institute of Sustainable Development of the Korean Chamber of Commerce and Industry where he actively promoted sustainable development concepts and practices to businesses in South Korea. He was Director General of International Cooperation in the Ministry of Environment of Korea. During his time there, Dr. Park played an active role in global environmental issues such as climate change and led the Korean delegation during bilateral and multilateral negotiations. Dr. Park was also a member of a number of environmental committees related to environment including the Presidential Commission on Sustainable Development, the Green Citizens Committee of Seoul City and the Nuclear Power Evaluation Committee. In addition, he headed the Department of Cleaner Production Technology Development and Dissemination at the Korean National Cleaner Production Center and the Industrial Environment Department at Hyundai Institute of Eco-Management. Dr. Park has PhD in Natural Resource and Environmental Economics from Iowa State University and a Master's Degree in Economics from Southern Illinois University.



2013-2016

Mr. Kaveh Zahedi, Iranian

Kaveh Zahedi is the Deputy Executive Secretary for Sustainable Development of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). He oversees ESCAP's work on social development, environment, energy, disaster risk reduction and information communications and technology. He also oversees ESCAP's overall work with ASEAN and Northeast Asia.

Prior to this, Mr. Zahedi was Regional Director and Representative for Asia and the Pacific of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). He managed UNEP's technical and policy support programmes and represented the organization in the region. Mr. Zahedi has also served as Deputy Director of UNEP's Division of Technology, Industry and Economics, overseeing work on green economy, resource efficiency and climate change. He also set up and headed the Climate and Clean Air Coalition for reducing short lived climate pollutants. Before UNEP, Mr. Zahedi worked at an NGO as project manager for micro credit and development projects.

Over two decades Mr. Zahedi has worked in United Nations offices

in Kenya, Mexico, UK, France and Thailand. He holds a Master's degree from the Fletcher School, Tufts University, USA, and a BSc first class degree in Economics & Geography, from the Fletcher School, Tufts University, USA, and a BSc first class degree in Economics & Geography, from University College London.



2017-present

Dr. Dechen Tsering, Bhutanese

Dechen was appointed as the regional director of UN Environment in Asia and the Pacific in March 2017. As the regional arm of UN Environment, headquartered in Nairobi, Kenya, the Asia-Pacific office works with governments, local authorities and the private sector to develop and put into place cleaner and safer policies and strategies that encourage the efficient use of natural resources and reduce risks for humans and the environment.

She has held management and leadership positions with the United Nations and has over 25 years of experience in national government and intergovernmental organizations. She has been actively involved in intergovernmental negotiations as a key negotiator for least-developed countries and contributed to the establishment of the Least Developed Countries Fund and the Least Developed Countries Expert Group. She also has experience in the management of complex development projects.

She comes to UN Environment from the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change secretariat, where she served as director of the Finance, Technology and Capacity-building Programme. In that position, she supported international co-operation on mobilization of finance, technology development and transfer, and capacity building to enable countries to take enhanced action on climate change. Prior to that position, she was the deputy regional director of UN Environment in Asia and the Pacific.

Dechen holds a PhD in forest economics and policy from the Federal Institute of Technology, Zurich. She also has a master's degree from Georgetown University and undergraduate degrees from the University of California, Berkeley.