

Biography of Mr. Prasad Kariyawasam Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs



Prasad Kariyawasam, Secretary to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs assumed duties on 15 August 2017.

His last post before being appointed as Secretary to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was Ambassador for Sri Lanka to the United States of America (July 2014 to August 2017) with concurrent accreditation as High Commissioner for Sri Lanka to Trinidad & Tobago and Ambassador (designate) to Mexico. He was also the Permanent Observer of Sri Lanka to the Washington based Organization of American States (OAS).

Having joined the Sri Lanka Foreign Service in 1981, he has held diplomatic assignments in Geneva (1983-1987), Riyadh (1989-1992), Washington (1995-1998), New Delhi (1998-2001), Geneva (2001-2004), New York (2005-2008) and New Delhi (2009 – 2014).

From 2009-2014, he was the High Commissioner for Sri Lanka to India in Delhi and concurrently accredited as the Ambassador for Sri Lanka to Bhutan and Afghanistan.

From 1998 to 2001, he served as the Deputy High Commissioner for Sri Lanka in India, holding the rank of an Ambassador. In Geneva, from 2001 to 2004, he served as Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the United Nations, while also holding the positions of Consul General of Sri Lanka to Switzerland, Personal Representative of the Head of State of Sri Lanka to the G-15 and concurrently accredited Ambassador of Sri Lanka to the Holy See in the Vatican. In recognition as the envoy of Sri Lanka to Vatican, His Holiness Pope John Paul II bestowed the insignia of the “Grand-Cross of the order of Saint Gregory the Great” to Ambassador Kariyawasam. In New York, he served as Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the United Nations, and was concurrently accredited as the High Commissioner of Sri Lanka to Jamaica and The Bahamas, as well as Ambassador of Sri Lanka to Chile and Colombia.

At the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he had assignments in the Divisions of United Nations and Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), Political Affairs, Administration, Economic Affairs, and as the Special Assistant to the

Foreign Secretary. He also held the post of Director of the South Asia Division, and was the Official Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the capacity of Director of Publicity. Prior to his assignment to New York as Ambassador, he held the position of Director General of the Economic Affairs Division and served as an Additional Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Prior to his posting in New Delhi he was also an Additional Secretary in the Ministry in charge of Multilateral Affairs, South Asia and Administration.

Mr. Kariyawasam was the Alternate Representative of Sri Lanka at the 53rd, 54th and 55th Sessions of the United Nations (UN) Commission for Human Rights (CHR) held in Geneva, and led the observer delegation of Sri Lanka to the 57th and 58th Sessions of CHR and a Member of the delegation of Sri Lanka to the 59th Session of the CHR. At the 59th Session of the CHR in Geneva, Mr. Kariyawasam was elected as a Vice-Chairperson, and served in the Expanded Bureau of the 59th CHR. At the World Conference against Racism held in Durban in 2001, he was elected as the Vice-Chair of the main Committee.

In 2003, he was elected to the UN Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. At the first inaugural session of the Committee, he was selected as its Chairperson, the post of which he held until 2008. He has been re-elected thrice to this Committee and will now serve until 2021. Mr. Kariyawasam was also elected as the Chair of the 2004 sessions of the Chairpersons of Human Rights Treaty Bodies and Inter-Committee Meetings. He also served as the Chairperson of the United Nations Special Committee to Investigate Israel Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestine People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories from 2005 to 2008.

He was a member of the United Nations Panel of Experts on Small Arms, which produced a report on the subject to the UN General Assembly in 1997. He also served in the UN Group of Governmental Experts on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development, which reported to the 2004 UNGA. In July 2006, he presided over the UN Conference to Review Progress in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects held in New York. He served in the Advisory Board of the International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament in 2008/2009. He was a Vice-Chairperson of the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations for the year 2006, and was elected as a Vice President of the 62nd General Assembly of the United Nations for the years 2007/2008. Mr. Kariyawasam was elected as the President of the Council of the International Organization for Migration for the years 2001-2002 at its 50th anniversary session. In the year 2002, he participated at the annual session of the World Economic Forum held in Davos. He served as the Chair of the Assembly of the Global Development Network (GDN) based in New Delhi from 2012 – 2013.

Mr. Kariyawasam was born on 21st March 1954. He is married and has a daughter and a son.