FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Otunnu Campaign Releases a Profile of the Candidate

NEW YORK, November 4, 2026 — "Consensus Builder & Innovative Leader" traces more than four decades of breaking deadlock and innovative leadership at the UN and outside.

CANDIDATE FOR UNITED NATIONS SECRETARY-GENERAL, 2026

Ambassador Olara Otunnu

Consensus Builder & Innovative Leader

Olara Otunnu is an eminent international statesman with a consistent track record of forging consensus and proposing innovative solutions. His record offers a concrete measure of the leadership required at a time of financial crisis, the push for reform and the demands for ending major conflicts.

THE CASE FOR INNOVATIVE LEADERSHIP

The United Nations (UN) does not lack proposals for reform. Its greater challenge is mustering the resolve to carry them through and sustain them. Financial pressure can force retrenchment; it cannot, by itself, forge lasting agreement about what the Organization should do or how it should operate.

Reform is what a capable executive does. Innovative ideas and solutions are rarer.

Otunnu has repeatedly found innovative solutions to diplomatic deadlock, secured acceptance of new institutional arrangements and helped establish mechanisms that outlasted his tenure. The following record gives substance to the case for an innovative reformer.

PROFILE OF A CONSENSUS BUILDER AND INNOVATIVE LEADER

01

1981

SECURITY COUNCIL

The Otunnu Formula

When the Security Council deadlocked over the succession to Kurt Waldheim, Otunnu, then Council President, devised straw-balloting, which has been used ever since in the selection of the Secretary-General. A candidate in the present selection thus instituted a procedure which continues to inform the Council's search for Secretary-General. It was not merely a way to informally gauge support or opposition for a candidate, but a way to break a deadlock.

02

1983

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The Grenada Formula

Following the intervention in Grenada, the proceedings of the UN General Assembly came to a standstill over the country's representation. As Chair of its Credentials Committee, Otunnu negotiated an innovative solution that allowed the Assembly to proceed without requiring opposing governments to abandon their political positions. He found a workable solution where confrontation had produced stalemate.

03

1999–2005

SECRETARIAT

Protecting Children in Situations of Conflict

As the inaugural Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Otunnu proposed incorporating the protection of children exposed to war into the Council's substantive peace-and-security agenda; Security Council Resolution 1261 (1999) marked a significant institutional acceptance of that proposal. He then created the arrangements that became the monitoring and reporting mechanism for grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict. Resolution 1612 (2005) established that mechanism and a Security Council working group, creating a continuing process for gathering evidence, reviewing violations and pursuing accountability. More than two decades later, that architecture remains in use. During his tenure, Otunnu visited many war-torn countries, bearing witness and recommending appropriate interventions.

04

2023

NORTHERN UGANDA

Rocco Paco

With then Chief Justice of Uganda Alfonse Chigamoy Owiny-Dollo, Otunnu co-founded and leads *Rocco Paco*, a community-based non-political and nonpartisan movement to rebuild Northern Uganda, following more than two decades of war and life in displacement camps. *Rocco Paco* is mobilizing the community to rebuild and restore a war-broken society from the ground up.

These examples span the Security Council, the General Assembly, the Secretariat and communities on the ground. What unites them is the invention of mechanisms that enabled governments and institutions to accomplish what they had previously been unable to do.

PEACE AND SECURITY

Ending Major Wars

Tragically, major wars continue to ravage communities around the world. Ending these deadly conflicts would be an immediate and absolute priority for Otunnu. The ultimate decisions continue to rest with the protagonists and the major powers, but as Secretary-General, Otunnu would fully and impartially engage in mediation efforts, listening patiently to all parties, probing opportunities to be helpful and coming up with innovative ideas to break deadlock. The world needs a UN Secretary-General who is actively engaged in preventing and ending conflicts.

BRINGING THE UN HOME

From Global to the Community

In the last five years, Otunnu has been deeply engaged in Northern Uganda, where humanitarian assistance, recovery and peacebuilding are stark realities. He knows the UN from the negotiating table and from the communities where its decisions are felt.

WHAT THE OFFICE REQUIRES

Making Reform Endure

A rigorous reform agenda requires us to refocus on the fundamentals of the UN Charter, going back to basics in the three core mandates (pillars) enunciated in the Charter: Peace and Security, Human Rights, and Sustainable Development. The purpose of reform must be to regenerate greater legitimacy and effectiveness, in order to yield tangible impact on the ground.

Mandates and budgets remain the responsibility of Member States. The Secretary-General cannot compel sovereign governments into agreement or impose an institutional settlement. The position of Secretary-General calls for consensus-building, imagination and innovation to find a path forward, diplomatic skill to persuade, and resolve and tenacity to implement agreed changes. These have been the hallmarks of Otunnu's leadership in various positions.

I.

Consensus Building

Forging a common position

II.

Innovative Leadership

Proposing creative solutions

III.

Resolve & Tenacity

Determination to follow through on agreed reforms

Otunnu combines intellectual rigour and institutional imagination, with a gentle manner and steely resolve to achieve lasting institutional change.

> In choosing the next Secretary-General, the Council has the opportunity to select a leader who can build consensus, propose innovative solutions and muster the resolve to deliver a United Nations of service and impact.
>
> AMBASSADOR OLARA OTUNNU · CANDIDATE FOR UN SECRETARY-GENERAL, 2026

About Olara Otunnu

Education

- Gulu High School
- King's College Budo (Queen's Scholarship)
- Makerere University (As Guild President, Otunnu led resistance to the Idi Amin regime)
- Oxford University (Overseas Scholar)
- Harvard Law School (Fulbright Scholar)

Major Awards

- Sydney Peace Prize
- German Africa Prize
- Global Award for Outstanding Contribution to Human Rights (India)
- Harvard Law School Alumni Association Award

Membership of Boards

Otunnu has served on the Boards of several major institutions, including: Aspen Institute; Carnegie Corporation of New York; International Crisis Group; Carnegie Endowment for International Peace; Jury, Hilton Humanitarian Prize; Jury, John P. McNulty Prize; Hampshire College; International Selection Commission, Philadelphia Liberty Medal; Council of African Advisers, World Bank; and Club of Rome.

Positions and Roles

- President, UN Security Council
- Chair, UN General Assembly Credentials Committee
- UN Under-Secretary-General and Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict
- Uganda's Permanent Representative to the UN
- Chair, UN Commission on Human Rights
- Uganda's Minister of Foreign Affairs
- President, Uganda People's Congress
- President, International Peace Academy (now IPI)
- Co-Founder and Co-Chair, *Rocco Paco*
- Associate, Chadbourne & Parke law firm, New York
- Taught at Albany Law School; taught at the American University in Paris

Website: olaraotunnu.info · X: @Olara_Otunnu · LinkedIn: Olara Otunnu

Media Contacts

Enoch Tusubira
(516) 830-8993
retreau@gmail.com

Dennis Kalikola
(646) 498-9578
dennis.kalikola@gmail.com