

OLARA OTUNNU

*Candidate for
Secretary-General of the United Nations*

A LIFE DEVOTED TO THE SERVICE OF HUMANITY

A stellar track record of building consensus and proposing innovative solutions in situations of crisis and deadlock.

The Work Ahead

Ambassador Olara Otunnu enters the 2026 selection with a simple proposition: ***the United Nations can recover greater trust and effectiveness when leadership combines honest diagnosis, patient diplomacy, disciplined reform, and respect for every Member State.*** His work across the Security Council, General Assembly, and Secretariat, and in communities rebuilding after war demonstrates how he approaches that task.

Across more than four decades of service, his method has remained consistent: listen carefully, identify the real obstacle, find a practical opening, build acceptance across divisions, and convert agreement into arrangements that last. As the first United Nations Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict from 1997 to 2005, he placed the protection of children affected by war before the Security Council. He initially designed the monitoring and reporting mechanism that, following consultation with partners, the Security Council established under resolution 1612 (2005). The mechanism remains operational. As President of the Security Council in December 1981, he devised the informal straw-ballot procedure now known as *the Otunnu Formula*. In October 1983, as Chair of the General Assembly Credentials Committee, he helped broker a formula that resolved the credentials impasse arising from the Grenada crisis. He has led the International Peace Academy (now the International Peace Institute), served in the United Nations human rights system, and today leads community peacebuilding in post-war northern Uganda.

☞ ***I believe in the United Nations because I have seen what it can accomplish, and I have seen the human cost when it falls short. That experience gives me hope and a clear sense of the work ahead.*** ☞☞

Key messages:

- A record that demonstrates a consistent method and readiness for the work ahead.
- Experience in service of the future.
- Diplomacy that opens practical paths across divisions.
- Global decisions should produce results people can feel and arrangements that last.
- A Secretary-General for every Member State.
- Renewing trustworthiness through consistent Charter action.



Ambassador
**OLARA
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Priorities for 2027 to 2031

- **Hope grounded in reality.** Speak honestly about war, geopolitical rivalry, financial strain, climate disruption, displacement, and technological change, while retaining confidence in collective action.
- **Diplomacy that opens practical paths.** Use the good offices of the Secretary-General early, remain engaged when positions harden, and help parties find workable routes toward settlement.
- **Reform measured by results.** Assign responsibility, define the intended result, fund mandates honestly, review performance, publish evidence, and correct failure.
- **Protection and human dignity.** Defend civilians, women, children, and communities exposed to conflict through consistent application of the Charter.
- **Progress people can feel.** Connect development finance, climate action, health, science, and technology with national plans and community outcomes.
- **One Charter, every Member State.** Serve the whole membership with independence, humility, consistency, and equal respect.

At a Glance

Nominated by: The Republic of Uganda, July 24, 2026

Nationality: Ugandan

Education: Oxford University (BA, Jurisprudence); Harvard Law School (LLM)

Languages: Luo, English and French

Selected roles: First UN Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict (1997 to 2005); President of the UN Security Council (December 1981); Permanent Representative of Uganda to the UN (1980 to 1985); President of the International Peace Academy, now the International Peace Institute (1990 to 1998); Chairman of the UN Commission on Human Rights; Minister of Foreign Affairs of Uganda (1985 to 1986)

Signature contributions: Designed the monitoring and reporting mechanism that, following consultation with partners, the Security Council established under resolution 1612 (2005), still in force; and devised the informal straw-ballot procedure (the Otunnu Formula) used in the Security Council selection process for every Secretary-General since 1981

Honors: Sydney Peace Prize (2005); German Africa Prize (2002)