

AUSTRALIAN LAW JOURNAL

OBITUARY

INTERNATIONAL: JUDGE C.G. WEERAMANTRY AM

The Hon. Michael Kirby AC CMG

AUSTRALIAN LAW JOURNAL  
OBITUARY

INTERNATIONAL

Judge C.G. Weeramantry AM

The former Vice President of the International Court of Justice at The Hague, Judge Christopher Weeramantry, died in Colombo, Sri Lanka, on 5 January 2017. He was 90 years of age. He had strong associations with Australia which appointed him in 2003 to be an honorary Member of the Order of Australia (see (2004) 78 ALJ 90).

Christopher Weeramantry was born in 1926 in Colombo where he was admitted to the Bar in 1948. He became a judge of the Supreme Court of Ceylon (1967-72). However, he relinquished this position for appointment to the Sir Hayden Starke Chair of Law at Monash University in 1972. He held that post until 1991 when he was elected a Judge of the International Court of Justice (1992-2000). During this service (1997-2000) he became Vice President of the Court. Amongst many important decisions delivered on the ICJ, his dissenting opinion on the illegality of the use and threatened use of nuclear weapons is probably the best known. The ICJ, *Advisory Opinion, Nuclear Weapons* (8 July 1996-ICJ general list no. 93). A note on his appointment to the ICJ was published in this journal: (1991) 65 ALJ 180.

Judge Weeramantry was a prolific writer, with a huge list of publications. These focused initially on substantive law (*The Law of Contracts*, 1965). However, with his academic appointment he shifted to emerging topics

such as science and technology and law; human rights; environmental law; religion and law; international comparative law; and trends in international law. In recent years, he published extensive biographical works on his long and remarkable career.

One of the most important projects in which he became involved in the 1990s was the Judicial Integrity Group (JIG). This international body of chief justices and judges, which he chaired (2000-2017), was originally initiated by Transparency International. It later became closely engaged with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Vienna in connection with its response to global corruption. The JIG formulated the *Bangalore Principles on Judicial Conduct* (UNODC, 2007). These principles were endorsed by UN bodies including the United Nations Social and Economic Council, 2006. They have proved influential on national judicial codes; legislation and judicial decisions. Judge Weeramantry was, until his death, the chair of the JIG. This obituarist was rapporteur and friend.

He was a hugely energetic, prolific and a charming man, judge and legal scholar. The Weeramantry International Centre for Peace Education and Research has been established in Sri Lanka to continue his work. A number of members of his family have made their homes in Australia where he leaves many friends and admirers.

Michael Kirby