I am especially honoured to introduce today’s lecturer, Kofi Annan, the former Secretary General of the United Nations, Nobel Laureate, and global peacemaker.

I believe that in today’s world, few individuals have had as brilliant a diplomatic career as him. He is a remarkable diplomat who is not only able to conceive the terms for negotiated solutions to the crises he’s faced, but also very often he is able to convince the protagonists at all political levels to implement his advice. His success is due not only to the finesse of his analysis but also from the highly personal way by which he knows how to touch the hearts and minds. To clarify my point, I would say, by his thinking and the manner in which he analyses problems, by his ability to identify the right balance between each other’s positions and marginalize the false arguments and unacceptable extremes, he has brought to many countries a new philosophy of diplomacy.... (Google translation)

As you know, Kofi Annan retired from his official post six years ago. But he has in no way retired from his role as an active global statesman -- tirelessly working to foster peaceful dialogue around the world....

In welcoming Kofi Annan this evening, I want to emphasise what his personal example has meant to all of us. He has truly been an inspiration, demonstrating the power of patience and persistence, of a willingness always to listen and a refusal to give up hope....

As Kofi Annan has taught us, pluralism requires constant dialogue, a readiness to compromise, and an understanding that pluralism is
not an end in itself, but a continuous process."

His Highness the Aga Khan's 2013 Remarks introducing Kofi Annan, The Global Centre for Pluralism's Second Annual Lecturer (Ottawa, Canada)
http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/10508/

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Jean-Jacques Lafaye: Which personalities, past and present, do you see as providing moral benchmarks?

Aga Khan: I wouldn't use the word 'moral', which is delicate. I would sooner say 'humanistic.' Who are the men and women who have displayed admirable humanism? In the course of my life I have met all sorts of people. Political leaders, artists, philosophers. Among those who have made an impression on me I can happily include Pierre-Elliott Trudeau, Kofi Annan, Felix Houphouet-Boigny, Jomo Kenyatta, who was the first President of Kenya, Derek Bok, who was President of Harvard for a record 20 years, and the cellist Yo-Yo Ma, who was appointed a Messenger of Peace by the United Nations. All these men possessed or continue to possess one extraordinary quality -- the ability to step away from their own value system and put themselves in the place of the people they are dealing with. They knew how to place themselves in another person's shoes in order better to understand and help that person. It is an ability that I deeply admire, an irreplaceable talent that is unfortunately all too rare.

His Highness the Aga Khan's 2010 Politique Internationale Interview with Jean-Jacques Lafaye, 'The Power of Wisdom' (Paris, France)
http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/9473/

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Peter Mansbridge: Who's showing leadership in this world right now in terms of the major global issues? Who do you look to as a leader, whether it's a political leader or not? Who's showing leadership?
Aga Khan: I think there are a number of people in the UN system who've shown leadership -- who have shown balanced judgement on these issues. Because when all is said and done, it's the balance of the judgement that counts and it's understanding the issues. And I think, amongst others, Kofi Annan has been remarkable in his understanding of the issues. He's also had a team of people around him who are very good.

His Highness the Aga Khan's 2006 CBC Interview (3rd) with Peter Mansbridge (Ottawa, Canada)
http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/7959/

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