

George Cunningham – Bio – September 2023

George Cunningham is a UK Liberal Democrat politician. He is **Chair of Liberal Democrats Abroad** Steering Committee, having been Chair of Lib Dems Overseas (2018-2021), and both Chair (2016) and Vice-Chair (2014-15, 2017) of Brussels and Europe Lib Dems. He is also **Chair of the party's subcommittee on China**. At the more international level, he is a Council Member at the **Alliance of Liberals and Democrats in Europe** (ALDE) and a member of the **Liberal International Fair Trade Working Group**. He stood as a Liberal Democrat **parliamentary candidate** in the 2015 UK General Election.



George Cunningham retired from the European External Action Service in July 2021 as its **Strategic Adviser on Asia-Pacific Affairs**. He was responsible for the EU's 2021 **Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific**. He was the **EU Alternate Senior Official for the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM)** and EU Governor of the **Asia-Europe Foundation**.

Previous to that, he was the **Deputy EU Ambassador to Afghanistan** (2016-18); **EEAS Deputy Head of Division for China, Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan and Mongolia** (2012-16); Chargé d'Affaires a.i. of the EU's Delegation to **New Zealand** (2007-12); and **Coordinator for EU-US bilateral trade relations** at the EC's Trade Directorate General (2005-07). He was also Head of Accession Process and Cooperation at the EC's Delegation to **Cyprus** (2003-05) and Head of Press/Public Affairs and Political Counsellor at the EC's Delegation to the **United Nations in New York** (2000-03) during the 9/11 attacks.

He has worked for thirty years for the EU across **all the main foreign policy files**, especially **foreign and security policy, trade and public diplomacy**.

Before joining the European Commission, George Cunningham served as a **United Nations official** in New York (1987-1990) and was also an advisor on European integration to the **Polish Council of Ministers** in Warsaw (1992). At the start of his busy and varied career, he served as an officer in the **British Army**, and worked in marketing for **British Petroleum** and **British Telecom**. He founded and ran a non-governmental organisation **PACE International Affairs**. He is a graduate from **Oxford University** (MA Oxon Modern History).

During his youth, he undertook a **major expedition in Africa**, with the backing of African Presidents, walking 9,000 kilometres on foot from Alexandria in Egypt to Cape Town in South Africa over a period of 27 months (1979-81).

His book - **Journey to Become a Diplomat** - was published in 2005 by the Foreign Policy Association of New York. Since retirement, George has been a speaker and organiser of **webinars on Afghanistan, China and the Indo-Pacific** and trained Gulf Cooperation Council Diplomats in Riyadh for the College of Europe. He has written on the Indo-Pacific for **Sasakawa USA**. In December 2022, he participated in a mission organised by SIGNAL to **Israel on creating a China strategy** and played a major part in **A Liberal Strategy for Europe's Relationship with China** being adopted by ALDE at its Congress in Stockholm in May 2023.

George is married with two grown-up children. He is a dual UK/Polish national.