

Robert John Walter (born 30 May 1948) is an English Conservative Party politician. He was the Member of Parliament (MP) for North Dorset from 1997 until he stood down at the 2015 general election.

He has been president of the European Security and Defence Association since 2011. He was president of the Berlin Security Conference in 2012, 2013 and 2014 and remains a member of the BSC Steering Board.

Early life

Bob Walter was born in 1948 and educated at Colston's School, Bristol, Warminster School and Aston University, from which he gained a BSc in 1971.

Bob's political career began as Chairman of the Aston University Conservative Association between 1967 and 1969 and Chairman of Westbury Constituency Young Conservatives from 1973 until 1976. He was Parliamentary Candidate for Bedwelty in 1979.

Prior to his election in 1997, Bob served as Chairman of the Conservative Foreign Affairs Forum (1986–88) and Chairman of the Conservative Group for Europe (1992–95). He has been a member of the National Union of Conservative and Unionist Associations Executive Committee (1992–95) and has served as a member of the Carlton Club Political Committee.

Before entering Parliament in 1997, Bob was an international banker and sheep farmer in Devon. He is a former member of the London Stock Exchange and was a Director of Aubrey G Lanston & Co Inc. He is a visiting lecturer in East-West Trade at the University of Westminster.

Parliamentary career

In December 2002, he faced a no-confidence vote, which was overwhelmingly defeated, from a group of Euro-sceptics in his local party over his European views

In November 2010 Bob was appointed by the Prime Minister, the Rt Hon David Cameron MP, to head the United Kingdom delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe Bob was first appointed as an ordinary member of the assembly in 2002 and has previously chaired its committee dealing with media issues and freedom of the press. He also served for two years as senior vice-chairman of its Economic Affairs and Development Committee. He was elected Vice-President of the Parliamentary Assembly and Chairman of the European Democrat Group, the third largest political group in the Assembly.

Bob served as Chair of the British Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), 2010–13. He was elected to the Executive Committee of the IPU in 2014, and was subsequently nominated by that committee as a Vice-President of the IPU.

At Westminster, Bob has served as a member of the Health Select Committee (1997–99), International Development Committee (2001–03) and the Treasury Committee (2003–05). He was a member of the Conservative 1922 Committee from 2002 to 2005, and had previously served as Vice-Chairman of the Backbench Agriculture Committee (1997–99) and Secretary of the European Affairs Committee (1997–2001). From June 1999 to September 2001, he was Conservative Frontbench Spokesman for Constitutional Affairs and for Wales.

In February 2000, he introduced the Sex Discrimination (Amendment) Bill, which failed to make progress. In 2004 he introduced the Restricted Byways Bill, the provisions of which have now been adopted by the Government. His latest Bill introduced in 2006, the House of Commons (Participation) Bill proposed to limit the consideration of English business in the House to English MPs.

Since 1997, he has been a member of the British Irish Parliamentary Assembly (formerly British Irish Inter-Parliamentary Body), and now serves as Vice-Chairman of the Assembly and chairman of its European Affairs Committee.

In 2008 Bob Walter was elected President of the European Security and Defence Assembly, formerly the Assembly of the Western European Union (WEU). He held that post until the WEU was wound up and the legal basis for the Assembly, the "modified" Brussels Treaty ended in June 2011.

Bob Walter was blacklisted by Russia, one of 89 European individuals, after he condemned the Russian invasion of Crimea and the annexation of Crimea. He also takes a strong interest in the Balkans, Turkey, Armenia and Azerbaijan. He has publicly defended some of these country's democratic progress,^[4] and has criticised the Azerbaijani government for its human rights record.^[5]

He is a leading member of several All-Party Parliamentary Groups including Vice-Chairman of the Human Rights Group and the Prison Health Group. Bob is Treasurer of the British Japan, British Caribbean and the Parliamentary Rugby Union groups. He is also Vice-Commodore of the House of Commons Yacht Club.

Personal life

He was Chairman of the Governors of Tachbrook School from 1980 to 1999. He was made a Freeman of the City of London in 1993 and a Liveryman of the Worshipful Company of Needle-makers in 1983.

In July 2011 he was awarded an honorary doctorate, D.Litt, by Aston University.

He married Sally Middleton in 1970 in Warminster, being married for 25 years until her death in 1995. He has three children: Elizabeth, Charles, and Alexander. In 2011 he married Feride Alp.

In December 2014 it was announced he would not be seeking re-election in May 2015. In May 2015 he was granted Turkish citizenship, thus affording him dual nationality.