Prof Bulmer-Thomas has been Director of the Royal Institute of International Affairs since April 2001.

Prof Bulmer Thomas, 55, is Emeritus Professor of Economics at the University of London and an Honorary Research Fellow with the University's Institute of Latin American Studies, where he was Director from 1992 to 1998. He is also a Director (non-executive) of the Schroders Emerging Countries Fund and Deutsche Latin America Companies Trust plc.

After studying at Oxford, where he gained a 1st class undergraduate degree and a doctorate, he began his career as a Research Fellow in Economics at Strathclyde University. Prof Bulmer-Thomas joined the University of London as Lecturer in Economics at Queen Mary College in 1978, becoming Professor of Economics in 1990.

An expert in Latin American affairs, he moved to the Institute of Latin American Studies in 1992, serving as its Director for six years. During this time, the Institute - part of the University's School of Advanced Study - grew successfully to its present position as one of Europe's leading area studies institutes, securing the highest rank in the Research Assessment Exercise. Prof Bulmer-Thomas has worked as a consultant for the European Commission, the US Agency for International Development and the Inter-American Development Bank, among others. He has also advised a number of multi-national corporations.

Prof Bulmer-Thomas was awarded the OBE in 1998 and holds honours from Brazil and Colombia. Married, with three children, he lives in Greenwich, south east London.