



Department of
Economic and
Social Affairs



Profiles of speakers and panelists



H.E Luis Gallegos, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility of Ecuador, appointed by President Lenín Moreno Garcés. President of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Member of the BOT of UNITAR, appointed by the UN Secretary-General. In his long career as a Government diplomat began in 1966, Mr. Gallegos served his country at many important posts, including as Ecuador's Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary and Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York three times; Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Ecuador to the United Nations in Geneva; Ambassador to El Salvador, Australia and United States, and many other posts overseas and in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Mr. Gallegos has been honored to be elected to many presidencies and vice presidencies in the United Nations System. Among many others, he has been Vice-president of the Commission of Human Rights, Geneva 1998; Vice-president of the Assembly of the member States of WIPO, Geneva, 1997-99; Vice president of the 57th Session of the UN General Assembly; and the Chairman of the Ad-Hoc Committee of the General Assembly that negotiating the CRPD(2002-2005); President of the Conference of Disarmament, 2012.



Ms. Daniela Bas, of Italian nationality, is the Director of the Division for Inclusive Social Development at the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs since May 2011. Political scientist with a major in International Politics, she graduated Magna Cum

Laude with a dissertation on “The elimination of architectural barriers and the employment of people with physical disabilities”. She is also a certified journalist and multicultural/ life coach. Ms. Bas interest has always been peoplecentred in the various activities, associations, and professional roles she has held. In addition to her work at the United Nations from 1986 to 1995, she held managerial roles from 1996 until 2011 in the private sector in Italy and was, inter alia, adviser for the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and for the Presidency of the Council of Ministers on human rights and social affairs.



Ms. Maria Soledad Cisternas, Secretary-General’s Special Envoy of on Disability and Accessibility has been promoting the rights of persons with disabilities at regional and global levels. Prior to the current appointment, Ms. Cisternas was the Chairperson of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of the United Nations.

Ms. Phyllis Choo is Director of Planning at SG Enable, an agency in Singapore dedicated to enabling persons with disabilities. Phyllis oversees the development, implementation and evaluation of the organization’s corporate strategy and work plans and has participated in the development of key new products. Her work gives her an overview of the organisation’s programmes as well as insight into the disability sector in Singapore. From 2018-2020, she also took on the role of Director, Community Integration, a portfolio that focused on facilitating the participation of persons with disabilities in community life and changing perceptions towards disability.



H.E. Mme. Katalin Annamária Bogay, is the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Hungary to the United Nations. She was Hungary’s Ambassador and Permanent Delegate to the UNESCO (2009-2014) and the President of UNESCO’s General Conference (2011-2013), the State Secretary for International Affairs for Education and Culture (2006-2009),

and Founding Director of the Hungarian Cultural Centre in London (1999-2006). Prior to entering government, Ms. Bogyay had a distinguished career as an international television broadcaster, film producer and writer.



H.E Mr. Dee-Maxwell Saah Kemayah Sr. Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Liberia to the United Nations. In this capacity, Ambassador Kemayah represents Liberia in many important positions in the UN, including but not limited to: Chairman of the United Nations Special Political and Decolonization (4th Committee) for the 73rd session of the General Assembly; Vice President of the Conference of States Parties to the CRPD; and Chairman of the African Group. Prior to this, he served as Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Chairman of the Liberia Coordinating Mechanism (LCM, 2015-2017)--the Coordinating Body that governs all Global Fund programs and activities in Liberia; especially; in relation to HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and was also on several Boards in Liberia, including the National Commission on Higher Education, National AIDS Commission, the Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services (LISGIS) and as the President of the Liberian Business Association (LIBA, (2011-2017).



Ms. Maria Gomes Do Valle Ribeiro, UN Resident Coordinator in Zimbabwe. Prior to this, she served as United Nations Deputy Special Representative for the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (2017-2019), Deputy Special Representative in Guinea-Bissau, and was the Resident Coordinator and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Resident Representative in Angola and Mauritania. She also held various senior positions with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).



Ms. Charlotte McClain-Nhlapo, Global Disability Advisor, World Bank Group. Before joining the World Bank, she served as USAID’s coordinator for disability and inclusive development, appointed by U.S. President Barak Obama in 2011 to lead the government’s efforts in disability inclusive development. Earlier in her career, she was appointed by President Nelson Mandela to the South African Human Rights Commission. From 1996 to 1998, she also served as a project officer on child protection for UNICEF.



Mr. Vladimir Cuk, Executive Director of International Disability Alliance (IDA), responsible for managing the IDA Secretariat, IDA advocacy towards the UN System as well as for cochairing the Global Action on Disability (GLAD) – the donor coordination mechanism which promotes disability inclusive development. He has an extensive experience in managing multi-stakeholder partnerships and networks among other things, with 19 years of a progressive and diverse career and experience in implementing the rights of persons with disabilities and international development as well as personal experience of disability.



Ms. Marcie Roth has been the Executive Director and CEO of World Disability Institute since September 2019. From 2009 to 2017, she served as Senior Advisor to the Administrator

of the US Federal Emergency Management Agency- FEMA, directing the Office of Disability Integration and Coordination, and subsequently launching the Partnership for Inclusive Disaster Strategies, and in that capacity she led national and global transformation towards disability inclusive emergency management and disaster risk reduction.



Mr. Axel Leblois, President and Executive Director of The Global Initiative for Inclusive ICTs (G3ICT). G3ict was established formed in 2006 one week prior to the adoption by the United Nations General Assembly of the CRPD with the support of the Global Alliance for ICT and Development (UN GAID) and UNDESA. Seventy-five participants from disability advocacy organizations, the ICT industry and the public sector help shape its mission and objectives, namely “ promoting the rights of persons with disabilities in digital age”, which has not changed since its inception.



Mr. Kartik Sawhney, is the Co-Founder at I-Stem and UN SDG Young Leader (2018). Mr. Sawhney, a Delhi-based AI scientist with visual impairment, is a disability advocate and technologist who has not let his disability prove an impediment in the pursuit of his personal and professional goals and has done substantial work in empowering other people with disabilities to be successful tech professionals. Mr. Sawhney, after graduation from Stanford University, co-founded Project Stem Access (now I-Stem) that provides technical training, mentorship and hands-on opportunities to blind math and science students across the country. In recognition of his leadership potential and work, Kartik received the Queen’s Young Leaders Award 2016.