



United Nations

Department of
Economic and
Social Affairs

Speaker Biographies

2019 International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD)

Spotlight Event: Sport for all for Development and Peace

United Nations Secretariat, New York

3 December 2019, GA Building, Conference Room 4, 10:00am – 1:00pm



International
Day of
**Persons with
Disabilities**
3 DECEMBER

H.E. Mr. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande



Tijjani Muhammad-Bande has had an outstanding career as a scholar and diplomat. He received a BSc (Political Science) from Ahmadu Bello University, Nigeria (1979); an MA (Political Science) from Boston University, United States of America (1981); and a PhD (Political Science) from University of Toronto, Canada (1987).

He started his academic career at Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Nigeria, rising from Graduate Assistant in 1980 to full Professor in 1998, and ultimately to Vice-Chancellor, in 2004, a position he held for five years. During his tenure as Vice Chancellor, the University, with about 20,000 full-time students in various faculties, ranked first in the accreditation of academic programmes in Nigerian universities (2007).

Between 2000 and 2004, Professor Muhammad-Bande served as Director-General of Le Centre Africain de Formation et de Recherche Administratives pour le Développement (CAFRAD), in Tangiers, Morocco. Established by African governments in 1964, CAFRAD is the continent's premier intergovernmental Centre for governance reform. Under his stewardship, the Centre improved much-needed training for senior African public servants, conducted specialized research on African governance issues, and worked with a variety of partners, in particular the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations.

From 2010 to 2016, he held the position of Director-General of the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies, Nigeria's most reputable policy institution for training leaders from the public and private sectors, including high echelon officials of Nigeria's Armed Forces. In that capacity, he inspired a marked improvement in the quality of the Institute's programming and activities. One of his signature initiatives in that regard was the establishment of the Political Parties Policy and Leadership Development Centre, the first of its kind in Africa.

As Nigeria's Permanent Representative to the United Nations (2018-2019), Professor Mohammad-Bande worked with colleagues from all regions of the world to achieve common objectives. He served as Vice-President of the 71st session of the General Assembly and was active in several forums, including as Chair of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (C34), Member of the Advisory Board of the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre, and Chair of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Group.

Professor Muhammad-Bande was an assessor for the National Merit Award (Nigeria) and for professorial positions in universities. He has won merit awards and honours from institutions and governments, including the Government of the United States of America and the Government of China. Most notably, he was named Officer of the Order of the Federal Republic (OFR), one of Nigeria's highest national honours.

He is married with four children, and his hobbies include swimming, soccer, field hockey, farming and music.



Ms. Ana Maria Menéndez



Ms. Ana María Menéndez (Spain) is the Senior Adviser to the Secretary-General on Policy. Prior to joining the United Nations in July 2017, Ms. Menéndez was the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Spain to the United Nations Office and Other International Organizations in Geneva. Prior to this position, she was Minister Counsellor and Deputy Head of Mission at the Embassy of Spain in Tunisia (2009-2012).

Ms. Menéndez started her career with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1985 and has served in various capacities, including as Deputy Director General for United Nations Technical Organizations at the Spanish Foreign Ministry in Madrid (2008-2009), Minister Counsellor and Deputy Head of Mission at the Embassy of Spain in Ireland (2006-2007), Special Adviser on Latin American and Trans-Atlantic Relations to the Secretary of State for the European Union (2005-2006), Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative at the Permanent Mission of Spain to the United Nations in New York (2002-2004) and Counsellor at the Permanent Mission of Spain to the United Nations (1998-2002). Ms. Menéndez holds a Law Degree from the Complutense University, Madrid. She has one son.



Ms. Venus Llagan



VENUS ILAGAN, from the Philippines, is the immediate past Secretary General of Rehabilitation International (October 2008-May 2019) - the first person with a disability from a developing country to serve in that capacity in the organization's ninety-seven-year history. She was the first woman World Chairperson of Disabled People's International. Prior to joining RI, Venus was the project manager of a national rehabilitation program which provided services to over 14,000 children with disabilities in the Philippines. She had the distinction of having been a member of the Editorial Committee for the first ever World Report on Disability – a joint initiative of the World Health Organization and the World Bank. It established that there were one billion persons with disabilities in the world in 2011 when the report was launched which was instrumental in having over a hundred countries sign and ratify the disability convention within a very short period of time. Venus participated very actively in the elaboration of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities now ratified by 177 countries. Venus is a passionate global advocate for gender equality specifically in the context of Women with Disabilities.



H.E. Amb. Luis Gallegos



Ambassador Luis Gallegos was born in Quito, Ecuador on December 13, 1946. He obtained a Law Degree and also a Juris Doctor Degree at the Central University of Ecuador in 1975. In 1983, as a Humphrey Fellow Scholar, he earned a Master of Arts Degree from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy-Harvard University. He is married to Fabiola Jaramillo and has two children: Maria Cristina and Jorge Luis.

His career as a Government diplomat began in 1966 when he joined the Ecuadorian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He has been Director of the Planning Department, Sovereignty Department, Technical Cooperation and External Debt Department, Public Information and Press, Eastern Europe, Modernization and International Projects, National Coordinator of Summits, Undersecretary for Political Affairs and Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs in several occasions.

Among other foreign service posts he has been Third Secretary at the Embassy of Ecuador in Madrid, Spain; Consul General of Ecuador in Chicago; Deputy Permanent Representative of Ecuador to the OAS in Washington; Counselor at the Embassy of Ecuador in Washington; Minister, Chief of Mission of the Embassy of Ecuador in Bulgaria; Ambassador of Ecuador in El Salvador; Permanent Representative of Ecuador to the United Nations in Geneva (twice); Permanent Representative of Ecuador to the United Nations in New York (twice); Ambassador of Ecuador to Australia, Ambassador of Ecuador to the United States.

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; Representative of GRULAC to the Diplomatic Committee; President of the II Main Commission of the Diplomatic Conference for the Adoption of a New Act Of Adjustment of Netherlands, WIPO, Geneva 1999; Vice-president of the Programmatic Forum of the IDNDR, Geneva 1999;

Vice-President of the Meeting of G-77, Morocco, 1999. He has also been Vice president of the 57th Session of the UN General Assembly; Facilitator for the “Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly”, 2002; Facilitator for the “Strengthening of the United Nations”, 2002; Vice-president of the Executive Board of UNICEF, 2003; and Vice-president of the Open-Ended Working Group on Security Council Reform, 2004. He has been President of the Political Committee of the Non Aligned Movement on three occasions. He was the Chairman of the Ad-Hoc Committee on a Comprehensive and Integral International Convention to Promote and Protect the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities 2002-05. He was President of the Conference of Disarmament, 2012. In 2012 he was Coordinator for GRULAC in Geneva for Human Rights, Vice President and Rapport of the Human Rights Council, Focal Point for Disability. He was Co-Chair of the Working Group Tasked by the CD to solve the Immobility of the CD during more than a decade. He has been honored to be elected to many presidencies and vice presidencies in the United Nations System.

He has been, in a personal capacity, an expert member of the UN Committee against Torture and other Cruel and Inhuman Treatments from 2006 to 2011, when he resigned to take up the post of Permanent Representative in Geneva.

Doctor Gallegos has been a professor at the School of International Relations of the Central University of Quito, at the Military Academies of the Army and Air Force, and has given numerous conferences in Ecuador and abroad. He holds an adjunct professorship at the Institute for Disability and Public Policy of American University in Washington, D.C. He gives conferences both nationally and internationally.

Among the state decorations that he has been honored with are: Bulgaria, 1989; France, 1990, Brazil, 1991; El Salvador, 1997; Guatemala, 1999; Spain, 2001; Guatemala, 2002; Brazil, 2002; Peru, 2002; He has received the “National Order of Merit” of Ecuador in 2002 and the “Honorato Vasquez

Order” in 2007. In 2011 he was given the highest Ecuadorian decoration as recognition of his work for his country.

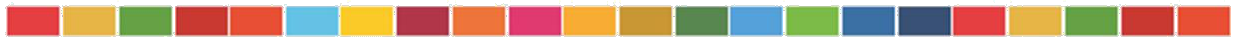
The Congress of Ecuador has honored him twice, in 1999 for his work in Human Rights and for his leadership in the promotion and protection of Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities. He has also received Proclamations from the City Council of New York, Atlanta, Pittsburg and Washington DC. He has also received recognitions from the State legislatures of New York and Georgia. He has received in 2011 awards from all the Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Trade of Ecuador, from the Ecuadorian-American Chamber of Commerce and from the Federation of Exporters of Ecuador.

For his work in human rights he is a recipient of the following Awards: “Justice for All Disabilities Rights Award. The “Burton Blatt Leadership Award”, the “Christian Blind Mission Award”, the “Access Living Award”, the National Spinal Cord Injury Association “Hall of Fame Award”. Special Recognition for Outstanding Service to the Humanitarian Cause of Human Rights and Handicapped Persons by The Greater Washington Hispanic Chamber of Commerce for the international work he has done on behalf of the disabled community. He is the first foreign Ambassador to receive a Proclamation from the Mayor’s Office. He received the “UNITAR Global Partnership Award 2012. The Harvard Law School, Project on Disability, has honored him with the Award for “Creative Contributions to Human Betterment” in 2015. The Council of the Municipality of Quito honored him on the 6th of December of 2016 with the “Grand Collar of Sebastian de Benalcázar” for his outstanding diplomatic service to Ecuador and the international community.

He is the Chairman of the Board of Trustees the Global UN Partnership for Inclusive Information and Communication Technologies (G3ICT), Honorary Chairman of the Global Universal Design Commission and Chairman of the Advisory Committee of the Institute of Public Policy and Disability of American University. He is also a member of the International Board of

Special Olympics; member of the Board of WATERLEX an NGO and a member of the Advisory Group of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. He is Senior Advisor of the Disability Project of the Harvard Law School; Special Advisor to the Nippon Foundation and Associate Consultant of CORPEI (Corporation of Export Promotion and Investments. He was a Fellow of UNITAR, the United Nations Institute of Training and Research from 2014-2018.

He was Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary and Permanent Representative of Ecuador three times. At present, he is Member of the BOT of UNITAR, appointed by the UN Secretary-General as of 1 July 2019 and the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of Ecuador to the United Nations in New York.



H.E. Amb. Craig J. Hawke

Mr. Hawke was appointed Permanent Representative of New Zealand to the United Nations in New York in August 2017. Prior to this, he was Principal Adviser, Small Island Developing States (SIDS), at the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in New York.

Mr. Hawke has held several senior Government positions in Wellington, including Acting Chief Executive Officer at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) from November 2014 to February 2015; Deputy Secretary for International Development and Head of the New Zealand Aid Programme (2013-2014); Chief Operating Officer of MFAT's International Development Group (2012-2013); and Director of Multilateral, Humanitarian and Partnerships Division (2009 to 2012).

Between 2003 and 2008, he was Director of the Pacific Group of the New Zealand Agency for International Development (NZAID), and Deputy Director of the Asia, Africa and Latin America Section (2001-2003). He has

served as New Zealand's representative on the Tokelau International Trust Fund.

Mr. Hawke's diplomatic career includes assignments in Australia, Republic of Korea, Samoa and New York. He worked in New Zealand's Parliament as Private Secretary to the Minister for International Trade (1996-1998); He is the holder of a bachelor's degree in social sciences and a master's in social sciences in economics from Waikato University, New Zealand.

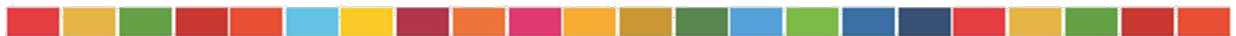


H.E. Amb. Joanna Wronecka



Permanent Representative of Poland to the United Nations. Prior to her latest appointment, Ms. Wronecka was Undersecretary of State for Development Cooperation in Poland's Ministry of Foreign Affairs beginning in 2015, responsible for Africa, the Middle East and Human Rights. From 2011 to 2015, she was Ambassador and Head of the European Union delegation to Jordan. She was Ambassador to Morocco from 2005 to 2010. Between 2003 and 2005, Ms. Wronecka served as Director and Ambassador in the Secretariat of the Foreign Ministry, having been Ambassador to Egypt from 1999 to 2003. She was previously Director of the Foreign Ministry's Africa and Middle East Department, from 1998 to 1999. From 1994 to 1998, she held a number of positions in the United Nations System Department within the Ministry, which she joined after having held different positions in academia.

Ms. Wronecka earned a doctorate in humanities from the University of Warsaw's Institute of Oriental Studies, and holds a master's degree in Arabic studies.



H.E. Amb. Alya Ahamed Saif A. Al-Thani



Ambassador Al-Thani was appointed Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar to the UN in October 2013. An international thought leader on

human rights, social justice and development issues, Ambassador Al-Thani has authored and facilitated numerous groundbreaking General Assembly Resolutions dealing with issues such as the right to education in emergencies, autism, and improving the effectiveness and coordination of military and civil defense assets for natural disaster response, among others. Since assuming her functions, she has played a key leadership role in numerous initiatives such as Chairperson of the Fiftieth Session of the Commission on Population and Development and Co-facilitator on the preparations for the high-level meeting to appraise the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

Between 2011 and 2013, Ambassador Al-Thani was Qatar's Permanent Representative to the United Nations in Geneva, to the World Trade Organization (WTO) and General Consul of the State of Qatar to the Swiss Federation. During the same period, she represented Qatar in the UN Human Rights Council, the Executive Council of the World Health Organization (WHO), and the Executive Council of the International Labour Organization (ILO). She also held the prestigious post of President of the Social Forum of the Human Rights Council.

Prior to this, from 2007 to 2011, she held several posts the Permanent Mission of the State of Qatar in New York, including as Deputy Permanent Representative. Earlier in her career, Ambassador Al-Thani held a number of positions in Qatar, including as Director of the Department on the Rights of the Child in Qatar's Supreme Council for Family Affairs.

Ambassador Al-Thani sits on the boards of several international human rights and development organizations. She is the recipient of prestigious awards, including being selected as a Young Global Leader by the World Economic Forum Committee to improving the State of the World in 2013.

She holds a M.A. in International Studies and Diplomacy from the University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies and a Bachelor of Science in Economics from Qatar University.

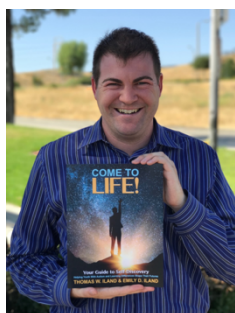


H.E. Amb. Mitch Fifield

The Honourable Mitch Fifield is Australia's Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations taking up his posting in New York in October 2019.

Mr Fifield is a former Australian Senator and Cabinet Minister. During fifteen years in the Australian Parliament Mr Fifield's appointments included Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate (2017-2018); Manager of Government Business in the Senate (2013-2019); Minister for Communications (2015-2019); Minister for the Arts (2015-2019); Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Digital Government (2013-2014); and Minister responsible for disabilities and aged care (2013-2015). Prior to entering Parliament Mr Fifield served as a Senior Adviser to the Treasurer of Australia (1996-2003) and as a reservist in the Australian Army Psychology Corps.

Mr Fifield holds a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Sydney. He was born in 1967, has two children and is married to Mari.



Mr. Thomas Iland

Thomas Iland (pronounced like "island") was diagnosed with autism at 13 years old. Since accepting his diagnosis, Thomas has been recognized as an author, speaker and emerging thought leader. Thomas left his career as a certified public accountant in 2015 to become a keynote speaker, diversity & inclusion consultant, and certified human potential coach. His mission is to educate and motivate people to reach their full and true potential.

He is the author of the award-winning, best-selling book, "Come to Life! Your Guide to Self-Discovery" and, earlier this year, became one of only 87 Toastmasters International Accredited Speakers in the world!

Thomas previously spoke here at the United Nations on World Autism Awareness Day in April to share his knowledge and firsthand experience about assistive technology and successful law enforcement interactions for people on the autism spectrum.

You can also see him on the TEDx stage in his talk titled, “How To Come To Life.” Thomas currently lives here in Santa Clarita, California, with his dog, Bridget, and, having run two marathons, is currently training to run his first half-Ironman triathlon.



H.E. Amb. Walton Alfonso Webson



H.E Dr Walton a Webson, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of Antigua and Barbuda to the United Nations.

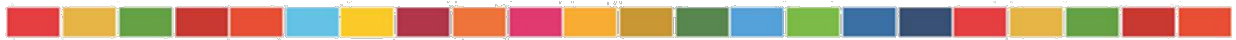
H.E. Dr. Walton Webson holds a Bachelor of Science degree, a Master of Science in Management of Non-Profit Organizations, a post graduate diploma in Organizational Development from the New School for Social Research, and a PhD in management from Case Western Reserve University. He worked for several international nongovernment organizations including: Sight Savers International of the (UK), The Caribbean Council for the Blind, (Antigua and Barbuda), Helen Keller International of New York and Perkins International where he worked from 1992 to 2014 and was the organization's Director from 2011. Dr. Webson is an Antiguan diplomat. He has served as the Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York of Antigua and Barbuda since 2014.

Since at the United Nations, Ambassador Webson served as President of UNICEF, 2017 and was Vice President of the same Board in 2016.

Ambassador Webson chaired the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples also known as the Special

Committee on decolonization or C-24 in 2018. He was appointed by the President 72nd session of the UN General Assembly as one of the co-facilitators for the high-level meeting on tuberculosis which took place in September 2018; and was appointed by the President of the UN General Assembly in 2019 to be a co-facilitator on the Steering Committee on Accessibility. Ambassador Webson is currently the Vice Chair of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and has had the honor to lead the CARICOM Caucus at two General Assemblies over the four years at the UN.

Ambassador Webson's relatively short stint at the UN has seen him as a champion on disabilities issues and a leading voice on issues of Small States. Ambassador Webson is married with three children.



Mr. Gopal Mitra

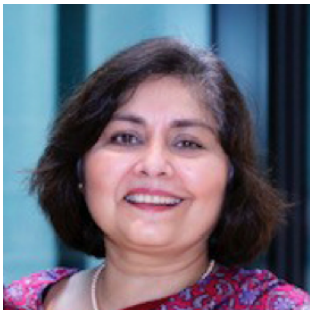
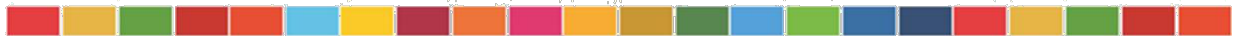


Mr. Gopal Mitra (India) is a Senior Social Affairs Officer in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General. Mr. Mitra works on the coordinated implementation of the SG's UN Disability Inclusion Strategy. He leads the Disability Team which has been established under the Senior Adviser on Policy of the Secretary-General, to work with UN Entities for effective implementation of the Strategy across the UN Pillars, in both programmes and operations.

Prior to working in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General at the UN Headquarters in New York, he led UNICEF's work in the areas of disability inclusive humanitarian action, accessibility and assistive technology. He has supported UNICEF Country Offices in different Regions to mainstream disability inclusion. He co-chaired the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Task Team which developed the IASC Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action.

He has held various posts at the international NGO Leonard Cheshire Disability (LCD) where, among other things, he set up a global initiative involving young people with disabilities across 21 countries of Africa, Asia and the Caribbean, and provided technical support to inclusive education programs in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

He was an officer in the Indian Army for 10 years where he was involved in crisis and post disaster response. Following an injury from an explosion, he became blind. Mr. Mitra holds an MA in Social Work, specializing in Social Work Administration, from the Tata Institute of Social Sciences in India, as well as an MSc in Development Management from the London School of Economics (LSE) in the UK.



Ms. Aparna Mehrotra

Ms. Aparna Mehrotra has been working with the United Nations since 1983 in several capacities. She served in the United Nations Development Programme in Argentina, Angola and Indonesia, and with the United Nations Capital Development Fund overseeing the development programme on least developed countries including Bolivia, Nicaragua and Bangladesh. As Deputy Chief of the Regional Programme Division in the Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean she also served as the focal point for gender, led the UNDP Latin America contingent to the World Women's Conference in Beijing, undertook peace-keeping assignments in Nicaragua and Mexico and chaired the Disciplinary Committee of several agencies of the UN system for five years adjudicating cases of misconduct. In 1997 she co-founded the Women's Human Rights Campaign in Latin America focusing on national campaigns in 13 countries to eliminate violence against women and in 2003 led the development of the Directive against sexual harassment for the UN Military and Police contingents. Between 2001 and 2016 she served as the Focal Point for Women in the UN system monitoring and reporting on issues of relevance to the status of women and their

representation. She also co-founded, coordinated and led for the development and implementation of the UN System Wide Action Plan for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, the only unified accountability framework for gender equality and the empowerment of women for the UN system globally. She has undergraduate and graduate degrees from Stanford University, a law degree and speaks multiple languages. She is currently Director, Division for Coordination of the UN System on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women at UN Women



Dr. Takashi Izutsu

Takashi Izutsu, Ph.D. is Project Associate Professor at the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, The University of Tokyo. After serving as Technical Official at the National Institute of Neurology and Psychiatry in Japan, Takashi had led the United Nations efforts to prioritize mental health and psychosocial well-being as well as rights of persons with mental health conditions or psychosocial disabilities in global and national policies and programmes including the 2030 Agenda and SDGs as the Mental Health and Disability Focal Point in UNFPA and the Chief, Mental Health and Psychosocial Well-being at the United Nations. He had also worked for the World Bank Group as Coordinator/Senior Knowledge Management Officer and led capacity building efforts on inclusion of marginalized populations and mainstreaming culture and arts, as well as mental health and psychosocial well-being in peace and security, development, and human rights. Takashi served as Chair, United Nations 3rd World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction: DESA Public Forum: Taking Action toward a Disability-inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction, Rapporteur for the Global Ministerial Mental Health Summit, Co-chair of the United Nations Flagship Report on Disability and Development Rights of Persons with Mental Health Conditions and Psychosocial Disability Task Team, among others.



Ms. Tiziana Oliva



Tiziana oversees Leonard Cheshire's global influencing, programmatic and impact work. She holds an MA in human rights and has enjoyed a successful career in international development working in different parts of the world, including Africa, Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe. She has extensive expertise in disability rights and inclusion, specifically within education and employment; she also is very passionate about youth leadership development for rights promotion and advocacy.

She has been with Leonard Cheshire Disability from 2013, which she joined from the VSO's executive team, where in her position as director she had responsibility for operations in over 20 countries and several regional hubs. She has also worked in senior leadership roles in Merlin and CARE International, including field work on humanitarian interventions as well as long term recovery and development programmes.

