

Biographies

Mr. Thomas Gass serves as the United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA). From 2009 to 2013, Thomas Gass served as Head of the Mission of Switzerland to Nepal (Ambassador and Country Director of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation), where he established the Embassy of Switzerland in Nepal, and ensured the delivery of a development cooperation programme of up to 33 million dollars a year. He also chaired the Donors of the Nepal Peace Trust Fund, the main instrument for international support to Nepal's peace process. Mr. Gass holds a PhD in natural sciences and an MSc in engineering diploma in agricultural sciences, both from the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich. He prepared his Baccalaureate in Mathematics and Physics at the Externat Notre Dame, France.

H.E. Mr. Sherif Issa is the Deputy Assistant Foreign Minister of Egypt for Nile Basin and International Rivers' Affairs. Ambassador Issa is a career Diplomat. He worked before as Consul General of Egypt in Geneva. He worked for the Embassies of Egypt in Madrid, Muscat, Asmara and Warsaw. He also worked at the HQs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Egypt in the Minister's Cabinet, the Legal Affairs Division and the Department on International Conferences. He is the Representative of Egypt in all international forums related to Water Issues. Ambassador Issa has a Bachelor Degree in Law from Cairo University, a Diploma of International Law from The Hague, and a Diploma in Law of the Sea from Rhodes Academy.

Mr Luis Garrote is Professor of Hydraulic Engineering at the Technical University of Madrid. He received formal training at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, USA. His academic and scientific contributions to planning and management of hydrological systems include development of hydrological models, drought and flood risk management, water resources systems and intelligent decision support tools. He has participated several EU projects, amongst them: MEDROPLAN (Mediterranean drought preparedness planning, MEDA-Water), CIRCE (Climate change and impact research: the Mediterranean environment, FP6) and DEWFORA (Improved drought early warning and forecasting to strengthen preparedness and adaptation to droughts in Africa, FP7).

Ms Mucavi has been Director of the FAO Liaison Office to the United Nations in New York since August 2015. Ms Mucavi is a career diplomat having served in different functions in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Mozambique between 1989 and 2015, including in the Division for International Organizations and Conferences; as Counsellor in charge of Nordic countries; Deputy Director of State Protocol; and as Chief of Cabinet of the Minister. She has also served at the Embassy of Mozambique in Ethiopia. Between 2007 and 2015 she was Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Mozambique to Italy, Greece and Malta, and Permanent Representative to FAO, WFP and IFAD.

Ms. Josefina Maestu is the Director of the United Nations Office to support the International Decade for Action "Water for Life" 2005-2015. Prior to this position, she served as senior advisor in the cabinet of the Minister of Environment, in Spain. Ms. Maestu coordinated then the preparation of the economic analysis of River Basin Management Plans of the Water Framework Directive. She has been for 5 years the Director of ECOTEC Research Consultancy in Spain doing the economic, institutional and environmental evaluation of European funded programmes. She has been a Lecturer on Economic Management of Natural Resources for 12 years at the University of Alcalá de Henares and an instructor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. In the past she also held the position of Secretary-General of the Mediterranean Water Network, and she has been technical adviser to the European Commission and UN system organizations including the World Bank.

Dr Wael Khairy – Deputy President of Nile Water Sector, Egyptian Ministry of Water and Irrigation

Mr. Ney Maranhão is the Director of the National Water Agency of Brazil. Mr. Maranhão has over 30 years' experience with engineering projects and his previous positions include Head of the Civil Engineering Department at the Internacional de Engenharia SA. He worked for 21 years at the Internacional de Engenharia SA, where he held the position of Head of the Civil Engineering Department. He has also been Infrastructure and Environment Director at ICF Kaiser and consultant of several water resources studies and development plans. At the National Water Agency he was Associate Superintendent and then Water Resources Planning Superintendent. In his current role Mr Maranhão is responsible for creating and implementing the National Policy on Water Resources, the National Policy on Solid Waste, Urban Environmental Management, Ecological-Economic Zoning and issues involving chemical security are within the scope of the Secretariat of Water Resources and Urban Environment.

Dr. Dunixi Gabiña – Deputy Director of IAMZ-CIHEAM Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Zaragoza. In subject-matters related to drought and water scarcity, he has been the coordinator of the project MEDROPLAN - Mediterranean Drought Preparedness and Mitigation Planning, EU MedaWater; and has been in charge of dissemination and/or training activities in DEWFORA - Improving Drought Early Warning and Forecasting to strengtnen preparedness and adaptation to droughts in Africa, EU-FP7; REACTION - Restoration Actions to Combat Desertification in the Northern Mediterranean; EU-FP6; and DeSurvey- A Surveillance System for Assessing and Monitoring of Desertification; EU-FP6.

Dr. John J. Qu is a professor in the College of Science, George Mason University (GMU), just outside of Washington, D.C. He is the founder and director of both the Global Environment and Natural Resources Institute (GENRI) and the Environmental Science and Technology Center (ESTC) at GMU. He has over 30 years of experience in satellite remote sensing, environment and climate sciences with strong interest in drought management, integrated approaches to soil moisture observations and applications. He has established long-term partnerships with WMO and FAO. He received Ph.D and M.S degrees from Colorado State University and a B.S. degree from Nanjing Institute of Meteorology, China.

Mr. Melchiade Bukuru is currently the Chief of the New York Office of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). Before joining the United Nations more than 15 years ago, Mr. Bukuru, a career Diplomat from Burundi, was working at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as Counsellor at the Permanent Mission of Burundi to the United Nations where he served several times as Head of Mission in the capacity of Chargé d'Affaires a.i. During his tenure at the Permanent Mission he specialized himself in sustainable development issues and has been at the forefront in making the case for a legally binding treaty to address desertification, land degradation and drought.

Mr. Jamal Shah is a WASH Specialist Emergencies at UNICEF. Mr. Shah has a Masters in Sanitary Engineering and over twenty two years of national and international professional experience with core expertise in planning, design and execution of urban and rural water supply and sanitation projects. He is also experienced in management of emergency interventions in natural and man-made disasters (including camps and non-camps IDP's support), cluster coordination and early recovery, reconstruction and rehabilitation of community based rural and urban water supply, sewerage, and rural sanitation projects; institutional capacity building and organizational restructuring; development & organization of training programs for government line agencies' staff and beneficiary communities in operation and management of rural and urban water supply and sanitation projects.

Glenn Dolcemascolo is Climate Change Coordinator at UNISDR - the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction. His portfolio aims at promoting coherence and mutual reinforcement among the international agendas for disaster risk reduction, climate change and development. He is responsible for building multi-stakeholder partnerships that deliver results across these agendas. Glenn has a PhD in Ecological Anthropology. He brings more than 18 years of experience in disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and ecosystem management – and has worked to build bridges between bridge indigenous and local communities, national governments and international action.