

Delegation Bios

Elizabeth Spehar

Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support



Ms. Elizabeth Spehar of Canada is the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support, in the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. With more than 35 years of experience in international and political affairs, Ms. Spehar has worked in United Nations Headquarters and in the field, leading political, development, peacebuilding and conflict prevention initiatives. Most recently, since 2016, she was the Secretary-General's Special Representative and Head of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP), also serving as Deputy to the Secretary-General's Special Adviser on Cyprus. Previously, Ms. Spehar was

Director of the Policy and Mediation Division in the former Department of Political Affairs, now DPPA, where she worked on policy and operational matters related to conflict prevention, mediation, peacebuilding and gender mainstreaming. Prior to this, she was the Director for the Americas and Europe Division and Director of the Europe Division in the Department of Political Affairs, engaging extensively on key political issues facing the region. She also served briefly as Interim Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of UNFICYP in 2008. Before joining the United Nations, Ms. Spehar was a senior official with the Organization of American States (OAS) for more than 12 years, working to promote democracy and develop the organization's dialogue and conflict resolution instruments. Ms. Spehar holds a Bachelor of Arts with honours from Queen's University in Canada, a master's degree in international affairs from Carleton University's Norman Paterson School of International Affairs, also in Canada, and a Diplôme d'Etudes Supérieures from the University of Pau in France. She speaks English, French, Spanish, Portuguese and Croatian. Born in Port Arthur, Canada, she has a daughter.

Brian Williams

Chief Financing for Peacebuilding, Peacebuilding Support Office



Brian Williams has worked in the development field for close to 30 years. In 2021 he served in the United Nations Development Coordination Office as the ad interim Chief of Policy and Programming, following on from serving as UN Resident Coordinator in Albania from December 2015 to mid-2020. From 2010 - 2015 he was the Chief of the Peacebuilding Fund in the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office and from 2001 to 2008 he worked on the global HIV crisis, as UNAIDS Coordinator in Myanmar and in Geneva headquarters. Since 1990, Mr. Williams has lived in and worked on humanitarian assistance and

peacebuilding in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Cambodia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi and Rwanda. He has worked with the United Nations, USAID, CARE International, and the International Rescue Committee. His wife, Julie, also works for the UN (OCHA), and they have two children. Mr. Williams has a Masters from the Princeton School of Public and International Affairs and an undergraduate degree in engineering from Harvard University

Jens Ole Bach Hansen

Ambassador-Designate of Denmark to Nigeria, Equatorial Guinea, the Central African Republic, Gabon, Cameroon, and the Republic of Congo, as well as Denmark's Representative to ECOWAS.



He has an extensive diplomatic career, having served as Deputy Head of Mission and Minister Counsellor at the Royal Danish Embassy in Rome (2021–2023), Chief Adviser in Denmark's Ministry of Foreign Affairs focusing on international development (2017–2021), and Counsellor for Political Affairs at the Danish Mission to the United Nations in New York (2013–2017). His experience also includes roles as Chief Adviser in the Department for Multilateral Affairs, Deputy Head of Mission in Jordan, and Head of Section for North Africa at the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Earlier in his career, he worked with UNRWA in Gaza as a Policy Analysis Officer. He holds a master's degree in international relations from Columbia University, a Diplôme de Sciences Po from Institut d'Études Politiques de Paris, and a bachelor's degree in public administration from Roskilde University.

He is co-author of *Size and Influence in the United Nations: How Small States Can Punch Above Their Weight* (DIIS, 2013).

Jens Ole Bach Hansen is married to Siham Faidoli Hansen, a French national, and they have two children, Amira (15) and Noah (12).

SAKAGUCHI Takuma

Director of the United Nations Policy Division at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan



Mr. SAKAGUCHI Takuma is the Director of the United Nations Policy Division at Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. With over two decades of experience in diplomacy and international relations, he has held key positions in Japan's foreign service, focusing on security, multilateral diplomacy, and regional affairs.

He joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) in 2002, beginning a distinguished career that has taken him to diplomatic postings in Mexico, Spain, Egypt, and the

United Nations in New York. His expertise spans arms control and disarmament, crisis management, global environmental policy, and regional affairs in Southeast Asia, South America, and the Middle East.

He has served as Political Counsellor at Japan's Permanent Mission to the United Nations (2018–2020) and the Embassy of Japan in Egypt (2020–2022). Additionally, he was Assistant Secretary-General at the Secretariat for Official Guests of the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games (2021) and Counsellor at Japan's National Security Secretariat (2022) before assuming his current role in 2024.

Mr. Sakaguchi holds a Bachelor of Laws from the University of Tokyo (2002) and a master's degree in diplomacy and international Relations from the Diplomatic School of Madrid (2006).

He is married and has one son.

Matthew Cogan

Deputy Director of the Peace and Stability Unit of Ireland's Department of Foreign Affairs



In this role, he leads on partnership with multilateral organisation, East and West Africa, the humanitarian development peace nexus and youth peace and security.

His previous roles in the Department of Foreign Affairs include Deputy Head of Cooperation in Ireland's embassy in Tanzania and Deputy Director of Ireland's Humanitarian Unit. Before joining the Department, he served for the United Nations in Tanzania, Geneva and New York, and for Concern Worldwide in Malawi and Pakistan.

He has a BA in Social Science and MSc in Development Studies from University College Dublin and an MPH from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. He is married and has an 11 year old daughter. He speaks English, French, Irish, Portuguese and Swahili.

Meena Syed

Director of Section for UN Policy, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs



Meena Syed is UN Director in the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a position she has held since August 2023.

She has served at the Permanent Mission of Norway to the United Nations in New York several times, at the latest as Political Coordinator/Minister Counsellor during Norway's tenure as an elected member of the UN Security Council 2021-22. Before that, she was the Deputy Head of Norway's Security Council campaign for a seat on the Security Council (2018-20).

Syed has worked at the United Nations in New York over 12 years in total during various postings both at the Mission of Norway and in the UN Cabinet of the President of the General Assembly.

At the Mission of Norway, she has covered the Security Council, GA and Human Rights (3rd, 4th and 1st Committees). In the office of the President of the General Assembly (OPGA) during the 70th and 71st sessions of the GA, she was responsible for developing a new, transparent process for the selection and appointment of the next Secretary General (2015-16). She was also responsible for the intergovernmental negotiations for Security Council Reform, and led the human rights, humanitarian & international law-team of the OPGA.

Syed has previously been posted to the Norwegian Representative Office to the Palestinian Authority, and worked in the Norwegian MFA's Legal Department, UN Department, and Section for Peace and Reconciliation. She has a law degree (Cand. jur) from the University of Oslo and an M.A. in Human Rights from Columbia University in New York.

Florian Laudi

Director for the United Nations and Counterterrorism - Federal Foreign Office Berlin



Florian Laudi obtained his law degree at the University of Passau / Germany and the Universidade Católica Portuguesa / Portugal. His practical legal traineeship led him to courts, public authorities and law firms in Hamburg / Germany, Lisbon / Portugal and Milano / Italy.

He joined the Federal Foreign Office in 2002. From 2003 to 2005 he served at the Germany Embassy Kabul / Afghanistan and was in charge of constitutional reform and police reconstruction. From 2005 to 2008 Florian Laudi worked on Middle East issues (Iraq, Iran, sanctions) at the Federal Foreign Office in Berlin. Between 2008 and 2012 he was assigned to the German Permanent Representation to the United Nations in New York / U.S.A., covering non-proliferation and disarmament issues, including the Iranian nuclear file. From 2012 to 2016 Florian Laudi was Deputy European Correspondent at the Federal Foreign Office in Berlin.

From early 2017 to 2019 he led the Brexit team at the German Permanent Representation to the European Union in Brussels, serving as Brexit Delegate of the Federal Government.

From 2019 to 2020 he was the Special Envoy for Ukraine and Head of the Ukraine Task Force in the Federal Foreign Office, from 2020 to 2021 Head of Division for the United Nations Security Council, General Assembly, Peacekeeping, incl. while Germany was a non-permanent member of the Security Council. At the beginning of 2022 Florian Laudi became Director for the United Nations and Counterterrorism. Florian Laudi is married, with two children.

H.E. Ms. Natalie Kohli

Ambassador of Switzerland in the Republic of Cameroon, the Central African Republic, and the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, Switzerland



Natalie Kohli currently serves as Swiss Ambassador to Cameroon, Central African Republic and Equatorial Guinea, based in Yaoundé. She brings to this position over 20 years of extensive experience in multilateral diplomacy, peace mediation and peacebuilding with Switzerland's Foreign service. Prior to her current assignment Amb. Kohli served as diplomatic advisor to the then President of Switzerland, Mr. Alain Berset. In addition to diplomatic postings with the Swiss Foreign service in New York, Geneva, Tel Aviv and Berne, Amb. Kohli served the United Nations as Chief of staff in the UN Verification Mission in Colombia (UNVMC). Prior to joining the Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Amb. Kohli worked as ICRC

Delegate in Peru and the Republic of Congo. A lawyer by training, Amb. Kohli is also an alumna of the MAS Mediation in Peace Processes program at ETH Zurich. She is fluent in German, French, English and Spanish.

Youssef El Mezouaghi

Counselor at the Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Morocco to the United Nations.



Youssef is the expert in charge of peace and security in Africa, United Nations-African Union partnership and Peacekeeping. Youssef follows also UN sanction regimes related to Africa. He has also covered the First Committee during the Chairmanship of Morocco in the 76th session of the General Assembly. Before that, Youssef served as an Adviser in the Office of the President of the 75th session of the General Assembly. Youssef was a member of the UN Reform, Legal and Budget Team, in charge of questions related to the Administrative and Budgetary Committee (Fifth Committee). He also acted as the Arab Group liaison.

Prior to assuming his duties in the Office of the President of the General Assembly, Youssef served in the Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Morocco to the United Nations as a First Secretary. He was the expert in charge of Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and

West Africa issues in the Security Council. He was also the Arab Group and Organization of Islamic Cooperation focal point and covered other questions in the Fourth Committee. During his service in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Moroccans Abroad of the Kingdom of Morocco, Youssef was a First Secretary in the United Nations and International Organizations Department, where he oversaw different political, peace and security issues. Youssef holds a Certificate of Diplomatic Studies from the Moroccan Academy of Diplomacy and a Master's in Financial and Insurance Risk Management from Mohammed V University of Rabat. Youssef speaks Arabic, English and French.

Rasmus Lumi

**Director-General for the Department of International Organisations and Human Rights
Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs**



Since August 2024, Rasmus Lumi has served as the Director-General for International Organisations and Human Rights at Estonia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In this capacity, he plays a key role in shaping Estonia's engagement with multilateral institutions and advancing human rights on the global stage.

In 2025, Lumi represents Estonia as Chair of the Freedom Online Coalition (FOC), reflecting his commitment to digital governance and the promotion of online freedoms.

His distinguished diplomatic career includes serving as Estonia's Ambassador to the Kingdom of Spain and the Principality of Andorra (2014–2019) and as Estonia's Permanent Representative to the Council of Europe (2019–2024). During his tenure at the Council of Europe, he also held the position of Thematic Co-Coordinator on Information Policy (2020–2022), focusing on Internet governance and digital rights.

Rasmus Lumi is a graduate of the Faculty of Law at the University of Tartu and has been with the Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs since 1995, bringing nearly three decades of experience in international diplomacy and policy-making.

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