



# DESA



## Global Policy Dialogue Series

### Speakers' Biographies

## Shaping a New Social Contract and New Global Deal: UN DESA Fireside Chats

Session 1: “Ensuring Equality, Inclusive Growth and Access to Opportunities”  
(Tuesday, 19 January 2021, 8:45-10:15 a.m. EST)

Session 2: “Using Data and Statistics to Support the Climate and SDG Agenda”  
(Thursday, 21 January 2021, 8:45-10:15 a.m. EST)

### Session 1: Tuesday, 19 January 2021

#### Welcome remarks

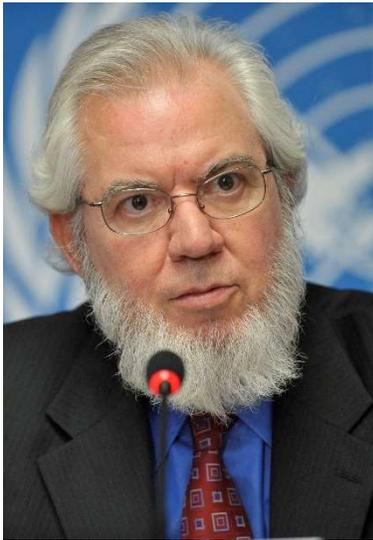


Mr. Elliott Harris

Elliott Harris has served since 2018 as UN Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development and Chief Economist in the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA). Mr. Harris has more than 25 years of international experience in the fields of international economics and development policy analysis, coupled with knowledge of the United Nations system, multilateral and inter-agency coordination processes. He has extensive experience in the design of macroeconomic policies and its application as a central instrument for the reduction of poverty and for resilient and sustained economic development. His work in the field of economics also focuses on the macroeconomic linkages with global social and environmental policies. Since 2015, Mr. Harris has served as Assistant Secretary-General and Head of the New York Office of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). He joined UNEP’s Senior Management Team in 2013 as Director of the New York Office and Secretary to the Environment Management Group. Prior to joining UNEP, Mr. Harris began his career in the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 1988, where he worked in the African Department and the Fiscal Affairs Department. In 2002 he became an Adviser in

the Policy Development and Review Department, and was appointed in 2008 as Special Representative to the UN, in addition to serving as Assistant Director of the Strategy and Policy Review Department.

## Opening remarks



Mr. Juan Somavía

Juan Somavía, a national of Chile, served as Director-General of the International Labour Organization from 1999 to 2012, and Special Adviser to the UN Secretary-General on Interregional Policy Cooperation from 2013-2015. As former Director-General of ILO (1999-2012) and Ambassador of Chile to the United Nations in New York (1990-99), Mr. Somavía has a long and distinguished career in civil, political and international affairs, holding key positions at the United Nations system, such as: Chair of the Preparatory Committee of the World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen (1995); President of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (1993-94 and 1997-98); and Representative of Chile on the United Nations Security

Council, including President of the Security Council in April 1996 and October 1997.

Mr. Somavía's multifaceted career has been driven by a strong concern for social justice, peace, human rights and democracy. His pursuit of these ideals has earned him several citations and awards, among them the Leonides Proaño Peace Prize from the Latin American Human Rights Association, the International Golden Dove of Peace awarded in July 2005 by the Italian NGO Archivio Disarmo, and most recently the Silver Rose Award from SOLIDAR for his vision of decent work and for defending the rights and freedoms of workers.

## Moderator



Ms. Kristen Saloomey

Kristen Saloomey is an award-winning news correspondent with the international network, Al Jazeera English. She brings international perspective to grass-roots reporting across the United States and, at times, the globe on everything from elections to natural disasters and protest movements. Based in New York, she has considerable experience navigating the halls of the United Nations and issues of international justice. Her reporting on the source of Haiti's cholera epidemic has been recognized by the United Nations Correspondents Association. She serves on the board of the Foreign Press Association

and has worked as an editor for Vital Interests, a foreign policy newsletter put out by Fordham University's Center on National Security.

## Discussion 1: Promoting equality and inclusive growth during COVID-19



Ms. Astra Bonini

Astra Bonini is a Senior Sustainable Development Officer with the in the Division for Sustainable Development Goals in UN DESA, where she works to identify interlinkages among the SDGs and apply science, technology and innovation to achieve these goals. A sociologist with research and policy expertise in areas including inequality, food systems, social mobility and education; Ms. Bonini began her career as an engineer. Prior to joining UN DESA, she was a senior researcher with the Human Development Report Office of the United Nations Development Programme and a Postdoctoral Research Scholar with the Committee on Global Thought at Columbia University.



Mr. Hamid Rashid

Mr. Rashid, Chief of the Development Research Branch in the UN DESA Economic Analysis and Policy Division, leads the writing team for the World Economic Situation and Prospects. Previously, he served as the Senior Inter-Regional Adviser for Macroeconomic Policy in UN DESA, advising finance, central banks and planning authorities in developing countries on how to design and implement policies to manage short-term economic shocks and realize the long-term goals of equitable growth and sustainable development. Prior to joining UN/DESA in 2010, Hamid served as a Senior Adviser in UNDP's Bureau for Development Policy and also as the Director General for Multilateral Economic Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Bangladesh. He earned his Ph.D. in finance and economics from Columbia University in New York, working under his advisor and mentor, Professor Joseph Stiglitz. Hamid also obtained a MPhil in Economics and MPA from Columbia University and a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Texas. His research interest includes macroeconomic policies, international finance, financial market liberalization and their impact on economic growth and development.



**Ms. Wenyan Yang**

Ms. Wenyan Yang is Chief of Global Dialogue for Development Branch in the Division for Inclusive Social Development of UN DESA. She has extensive experience working on a broad range of sustainable development issues. Her current work focuses on the social dimension of the sustainable development agenda, addressing poverty, inequality and social inclusion to advance the wellbeing of all people through research, analysis and policy recommendation. Ms. Yang is UN DESA/DISD focal point to coordinate substantive support to the UN

Commission for Social Development & the preparation of the World Social Report. She also serves as DESA's Principle Focal Point for Gender. An economist by training, she started her UN career as a macroeconomic policy analyst.

## Discussion 2: Deploying digital technologies for an inclusive and sustainable future



**Mr. Richard Roehrl**

Richard Roehrl is a scientist, economist and policy analyst. At present, he works as Senior Economic Affairs Officer in the UN DESA Division for Sustainable Development Goals, where he is responsible for science, technology and future research. He works towards strengthening the science-policy interface and has supported the creation of a number of new UN entry points for science and technology stakeholders, including the UN Technology Facilitation Mechanism and the UN

Global Sustainable Development Report, among others. Mr. Roehrl has advised governments, supported negotiations and engaged with science communities on a wide range of issues. He has led analytical work and assessments on technology change and foresight, emerging science, cross-border infrastructure, energy, climate and scenario analysis. Mr. Roehrl received his education from the universities of Munich, Oxford, London and Erlangen.



**Ms. Shari Spiegel**

Shari Spiegel is Chief of the Policy Analysis and Development Branch in the Financing for Sustainable Development Office of UN DESA. She leads the work on the Financing for Sustainable Development Report of the Inter-agency Task Force. Prior to joining the UN, she worked as Executive Director of IPD at Columbia University, a Principal at New Holland Capital, Director of FI emerging markets at Lazard Asset Management, and CEO of Budapest Alapkezelő, which launched the first domestic investment funds in Hungary in the early 1990s.



**Mr. Deniz Susar**

Deniz Susar is a Governance and Public Administration Officer in the Digital Government Branch of the Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government of UN DESA. Mr. Susar’s main work areas include digital government and preparation of the biannual UN DESA flagship publication “United Nations E-Government Survey.” As part of his current role, he also supports the Internet Governance Forum (IGF). His main research areas include e-government, open government, citizen engagement, internet governance, artificial intelligence and other frontier technologies and open government data. Deniz holds a

Master’s Degree on International Political Economy and Development from Fordham University, New York, United States, and a Computer Engineering degree from the Bosphorus University of Istanbul, Turkey.

## [Session 2: Thursday, 21 January 2021](#)

### Welcome remarks



**Ms. Maria-Francesca Spatolisano**

Maria-Francesca Spatolisano was appointed the United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs in December 2018. Ms. Spatolisano has 33 years of experience in public service including extensive senior leadership in multilateral affairs. She has served as the European Union Ambassador to the OECD and UNESCO, Monaco and Andorra. She was a member of the EU Delegation to the United Nations, serving as the Head of its Economic and Trade Section. She covered all issues related to trade, development and environmental policies in the Second

Committee and ECOSOC and was also the European Commission representative to the Fifth Committee of the UN.

## Opening remarks



Mr. Jomo Kwame Sundaram

Jomo Kwame Sundaram writes regularly on sustainable development. He was an economics professor until 2004 and Assistant Secretary General for Economic Development in the United Nations system (UN DESA and the Food and Agriculture Organization) from 2005-2015. Jomo received the Wassily Leontief Prize for Advancing the Frontiers of Economic

Thought in 2007.

## Moderator



Mr. Stefan Jungcurt, IISD

Stefan Jungcurt leads IISD's work on indicators and data for SDG monitoring. Since 2003, Mr. Jungcurt has worked for IISD in various positions, including writer and team leader for the Earth Negotiations Bulletin, content editor for the SDG Knowledge Hub, and project officer on climate change and energy. He was also a program manager and research associate at the Council of Canadian Academies. His previous work has focused on science-policy interactions in the areas of energy, sustainable agriculture, genetic resources for food and agriculture, and linkages between international regulation on biodiversity conservation and other issue areas such as trade and climate change. He completed his Ph.D. on institutional interplay in global environmental governance at Humboldt University, Berlin in 2007. Originally from Germany, Stefan is based in Gatineau, Québec.

## Discussion 1: Aligning the climate and SDG agenda to recover better



Mr. Sainivalati S. Navoti

Mr. Sai S. Navoti joined UN DESA as the Chief of the SIDS Unit in the Division for Sustainable Development Goals in 2017. Previously, he served as a military officer, civil servant and a senior diplomat for Fiji. Mr. Navoti was the Lead Climate Negotiator for the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) in 2012 and the Lead Negotiator for the G77 and China in 2013. Mr. Navoti also worked for UNODC and most recently as the senior legal advisor at the International Seabed Authority. The UN DESA SIDS Unit provides substantive Secretariat support to intergovernmental and inter-

agency processes related to the monitoring, review and coordination of the implementation of sustainable development priorities of Small Island Developing States. The Unit acts as a liaison and focal point for Governments, organs, programmes and agencies of the United Nations system, as well as other relevant intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, on matters related to the follow-up to and implementation of the SAMOA Pathway.



Ms. Mita Sen

Ms. Mita Sen has been a Programme Officer with the United Nations Forum on Forests Secretariat since August 2006. She has been working on sustainable development issues at the United Nations for over 20 years, with a specific focus on international forest policy, partnership-building, communication and outreach. She has a Master of Environmental Management in Resource Economics and Policy from Duke University.



Ms. Irena Zubcevic

Irena Zubcevic has over 20 years of experience in sustainable development, international relations, diplomacy, policy and advocacy as well as national level experience especially how to translate global policies into concrete deliverables on the ground. Prior to working in the UN Secretariat, she worked from 1992 to 2008 in the Croatian foreign service including in the Permanent Mission to the UN in New York, where she focused on policy issues related to sustainable development, international relations and peacebuilding.

Currently the Chief of Intergovernmental Policy and Review Branch, in the Office of Intergovernmental Support and Coordination for Sustainable Development of UN DESA, Ms. Zubcevic is leading a team of professionals working on intergovernmental UN processes related to sustainable development, notably the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Sustainable Development Goals and is supporting the work of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) including providing assistance to countries in presenting their voluntary national reviews at the HLPF. She is also working on policy coherence and tradeoffs in SDG implementation and interlinkages between SDGs and climate change.

## Discussion 2: Using data and statistics to support climate and SDG action in the COVID era



**Mr. Bela Hovy**

Bela Hovy is both a humanitarian and development expert, who has worked for the UN on three continents for over three decades. In Cameroun, he trained graduate students at a demographic research center. In Geneva, he created a system for refugee statistics for the UN refugee agency. In New York, he led the work of the UN Secretariat on international migration and development for over a decade. Today, he oversees the publications programme and outreach activities if the field of population and migration and provides support to the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. Mr. Hovy holds an advanced degree in human geography of developing countries from Utrecht University and a certificate in development economics from Wageningen University, the Netherlands. He is the author of numerous reports on migration, refugees and asylum.



**Mr. Ingo Pitterle**

Ingo Pitterle is a senior economist in UN DESA's Economic Analysis and Policy Division. He is one of the lead authors of the United Nations' annual flagship publication World Economic Situation and Prospects (WESP). He is responsible for analyzing macroeconomic trends and policies in the global economy, with a particular focus on Latin America and the Caribbean. He is also contributing to DESA's modelling and forecasting work, examining the linkages between economic growth, poverty and inequality. Mr. Pitterle has published journal articles, working papers and policy briefs in the area of international macroeconomics. His areas of expertise include economic growth; fiscal policy and sovereign debt; and financial crises. He has also served as instructor of Political Economy Analysis courses for United Nations staff in field missions. Before joining DESA, Mr. Pitterle worked at the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UNESCWA) in Beirut, Lebanon. He prepared macroeconomic analyses for the member countries and was one of the lead authors of the Millennium Development Goals Report for the Arab Region.

Mr. Pitterle is a national of Germany and holds a Ph.D. in Economics from the Eberhard-Karls University in Tübingen, Germany.



Ms. Reena Shah

Reena Shah is the Chief of the Environment Statistics Section in the Statistics Division of UN DESA. There, she is responsible for the development of methodological work on environment statistics (e.g. the Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics ), global data collection and dissemination of environment statistics with particular focus on water and waste statistics, coordination of international activities in environment statistics, capacity building in environment statistics, and more recently, the development of a

Global Set of Climate Change Statistics and Indicators.

The Global Set of Climate Change Statistics and Indicators was mandated by the Statistical Commission in 2016 and reinforced in 2018, and the Statistics Division is working in very close collaboration with the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change to promote the link between statistics and policy. The Global Set, which is structured according to the Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics and assessments by the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change, is expected to be approved by the Statistical Commission in 2022. It will benefit all countries and the international climate change reporting process to monitor the drivers of climate change and its impacts, assess mitigation and adaptation measures, as well as evaluate vulnerability. The Global Set will also be considered under the Enhanced Transparency Framework of the Paris Agreement and the Global Stocktake as a way of linking the reporting requirements stemming from the Paris Agreement and the necessary statistics or indicators to support climate policy action.