

# Speaker Biographies – Opening



**Minister Carolina Schmidt**  
COP25 President

Minister Schmidt holds a business administration degree from Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile.

She served as SERNAM (National Women's Service) Minister and Education Minister during the first government of Sebastián Piñera.

She has served as a director and CEO of various companies. Prior to her appointment as minister, she was the General Media Manager for the Copesa group, and director of the Santiago Municipal Theater, advisor at the Center for Public Policy of the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile and advisor to Comunidad Mujer, a nonprofit that addresses leadership, training and mentoring for women.



**Nigel Topping**  
High-Level Climate Action Champion,  
United Kingdom

Nigel Topping is the UK's High-Level Climate Action Champion, appointed by the UK Prime Minister in January 2020. Nigel works alongside the Chilean High-Level Climate Action Champion, Gonzalo Muñoz. The role of the high-level champions is to strengthen collaboration and drive action from businesses, investors, organisations, cities, and regions on climate change, and coordinate this work with governments and parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Nigel was most recently CEO of We Mean Business, a coalition of businesses working to accelerate the transition to a zero carbon economy. Prior to that he was Executive Director of the Carbon Disclosure Project, following an 18 year career in the private sector, having worked across the world in emerging markets and manufacturing.



**Patricia Espinosa**  
Executive Secretary,  
UN Climate Change

Patricia Espinosa, previous to her appointment as Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in 2016 served as Ambassador of Mexico to Germany since 2012 and from 2001 to 2002.

Patricia Espinosa was Minister of Foreign Affairs of Mexico from 2006 to 2012, bringing more than 30 years of experience at highest levels in international relations, specialized in climate change, global governance, sustainable development, gender equality and protection of human rights.

# Speaker Biographies – Panel



**Sigita Strumskyte**  
Coordinator for Gender  
and SDGs, Environment  
Directorate, OECD

Sigita Strumskyte is the Coordinator for Gender and SDGs in the OECD Environment Directorate. She manages a team in charge of analysis to mainstream inclusiveness, gender equality and women's empowerment in environmental policies. She has contributed to publications on women and infrastructure, policy coherence for sustainable development, and SDG governance. She also served as advisor to the OECD High Level Representative to the UN, and worked on private sector development in Eurasian countries. Prior to her current role at the OECD, she worked in the private sector, supporting entrepreneurship.



**Eva Bernard**  
Principal Advisor, Gender and  
Green Economy, EBRD

Eva is leading the Green and Gender agenda at the EBRD. In doing so, she is managing and overseeing a portfolio of gender activities mainstreamed in climate projects in Eastern Europe, Asia and Northern Africa, and is building internal capacity on gender and climate change issues within the EBRD. Previously, she worked at UNICEF and at the World Bank Group on Skills, Education, Gender and Climate Change issues, mostly in Africa. Eva is an alumna of the Harvard Kennedy School of Government, where she also graduated from the Women and Public Policy program, Sciences Po Paris and of l'Ecole Normale Supérieure in France.



**Blerta Cela**  
Deputy Regional Director of  
UN Women, Regional Office in  
Istanbul

Blerta Cela is the Deputy Regional Director of UN Women, Regional Office in Istanbul, Turkey. A native of Albania, Blerta brings with her 20 years of experience in programme management, design and implementation. Blerta most recently was the UNDP Deputy Resident Representative in Ukraine. Prior, Blerta served as Head of Partnerships, Results and Resource Management with UNDP Bangladesh. And before that, she worked with the Bureau for Development Policy, UNDP in New York, with the Gender Team and the HIV/AIDS group. Prior to working with the UN, Blerta worked with several civil society and human rights organizations to promote socioeconomic development, gender equality and human rights.

# Speaker Biographies



**Jakub Caisl**

Statistics Officer, European Institute for Gender Equality

Jakub Caisl is currently a statistics officer at the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) in Vilnius, Lithuania. EIGE is a regulatory agency of the European Union. It supports the EU and its Member States in promoting gender equality, fighting discrimination based on sex and raising awareness about gender issues. Previously, Jakub worked as a senior policy consultant in the private sector, focusing on the areas of gender equality, economics and education. He started at EIGE in 2018, and was responsible for managing the research that went into the review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action – Beijing +25.



**Elena Grozdanova**

State Counselor for Equal Opportunities Ministry of Labour & Social Policy, Republic of North Macedonia

Elena Grozdanova, M.Sc. in the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy is an expert on issues related to gender equality, non-discrimination, prevention and protection against trafficking in human beings and illegal migration, as well as issues related to peace and security activities. From 2017 to April 2018 he worked as State Secretary at the MLSP and is currently in the position of State Adviser for Equal Opportunities. In 2007, with a decision from the Minister becomes a State Adviser for Equal Opportunities, and is one of the founders of the Department for Equal Opportunities and the entire national machinery for equal opportunities and non-discrimination.



**Danijela Bozanic**

Climate Change Expert, Serbia

Danijela Bozanic, MSc in Meteorology, was national UNFCCC and GEF OFP. More than 15 years of experience in climate and climate change field, vulnerability assessment, adaptation and mitigation, policy and legal development. Experience in preparation of the UNFCCC national reports (NCs, BURs) and other climate change related documents, publications and position papers. Experience regarding the GCF projects, including development of the Country Programme and NDA RoP. Experience in organization & delivery of trainings, seminars and workshops at the national & regional level. Proven knowledge of the UNFCCC, Paris Agreement and the EU climate acquis.



**Ala Druta**

Team Leader on Adaptation, Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development & Environment, Moldova

Ala Druta is the Team Leader on Adaptation, Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment, Republic of Moldova. She leads the mainstreaming of gender dimension into the country's NAP process, leads the development of gender-sensitive adaptation component of the Republic of Moldova updated NDC; strengthening gender into the composition and operation of National Commission of Climate Change and its cross-sectoral national climate steering mechanism. She leads the development of gender-sensitive country policy and programmes.

# Speaker Biographies



**Michelle Winthrop**  
Policy Director, Department of  
Foreign Affairs and Trade,  
Ireland

Michelle Winthrop is the Director of the Policy Unit within Irish Aid, the official Development Cooperation agency of the Irish Government. Prior to this role, she led on climate change for the Irish Foreign Ministry, which included becoming a LEG member. Prior, Michelle was Director of Programmes for Farm Africa, a British NGO working with on agriculture, forestry and market development in Africa. Michelle has also worked as an adviser within the UK's Department for International Development, in the UK, on secondment to the World Bank, and overseas.



**Etleva Bushati**  
UNFCCC Gender Focal Point  
Albania

After graduating in Architecture at the Polytechnic University of Tirana, she completed his Master's degree at the La Sapienza University of Rome within the HECDP-TEMPUS program. On completion of post-graduate studies, she completed her PhD program on: The role of climate in cultural heritage conservation. Etleva has been a lecturer and researcher 2009 at the Polytechnic University of Tirana, Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism. Her research field is related to cultural heritage and climate change, energy efficiency in buildings and new technologies and its sustainable development. Since 2019 she holds the position of Gender Focal points for Albania under the UNFCCC.

# Biographies – Facilitators



**Valeria Arroyave**  
MRV Climate  
Transparency Analyst, UNDP  
Istanbul

Valeria Arroyave has been working in UNDP since 2016 for the jointly implemented UNDP/UNEP initiative - Global Support Programme- in Istanbul Regional Hub. The GSP provides technical and financial support in the elaboration of National Communications (NCs), Biennial Update Reports (BURs) and the Capacity Building Initiative for Transparency (CBIT). Valeria has been supporting countries with the Climate Transparency Framework as the MRVs, the elaboration of GHG inventories and reporting climate mitigation actions, among the different regions. Valeria has worked for the last years in supporting the preparation of gender responsive NCs. and BURs.



**Katharina Habersbrunner**  
Head of Gender and  
Energy, WECF

Katharina Habersbrunner is board member and team leader for “Sustainable Energy and Climate Solutions” at Women Engage for a Common Future. WECF’s climate and energy programmes include projects in Africa, Central Asia and Europe. Prior, she served as Risk Manager in the private sector. Her professional expertise is in implementing decentralized citizen’s energy projects and advocating for socially sound climate solutions on national and international level. Gender equality is central to the energy and climate projects with gender mainstreaming as one of the core tools. She is a board member of BEEen, the umbrella association for citizen’s energy in Germany.



**Anne Barre**  
International  
Coordinator Gender & Climate  
Policies, WECF

At Women Engage for a Common Future, Anne Barre coordinates advocacy on gender and climate at UNFCCC, as a member of the Women and Gender Constituency. She engages in climate negotiations, conceiving and implementing advocacy, communication and awareness raising actions, mobilising and training CSOs and NGO partners and co-writing position papers and reports. Anne coordinates technical and financial partnerships. She is the founder and Chair of WECF France, developing strategy in France and contributing to international strategy. She facilitated a ToT programme on Gender, Climate & SDGs with the Moroccan Council for Human Rights.



**Gotelind Alber**  
Co-founder  
GenderCC

Gotelind Alber is an independent researcher and advisor on sustainable energy and climate change policy with a special focus on gender issues, climate justice and multi-level governance. She is co-founder and board member of the global network GenderCC, and has served several years as focal point of the Women and Gender Constituency. She holds an advanced university degree in physics and has 35 years of working experience in research, policy and management. Her current work focuses on the integration of gender dimensions into urban climate policy, and she is leading GenderCC’s project “Gender into Urban Climate Change Initiative”.



**Dr. Rastislav Vrbensky**  
Founder & CEO  
AvantGarde Ideas

Dr. Rastislav Vrbensky is currently Founder & CEO of AvantGarde Ideas, consultancy in sustainability, climate & innovation as well as Visiting Lecturer at the Central European University. Previously, he served as UNDP Deputy Assistant Administrator, Deputy Regional Director for Europe and the Central Asia and Manager of UNDP Istanbul Regional Hub. He worked as UN Resident Coordinator & UNDP Resident Representative in Montenegro(2011-2014), Country Director in UNDP Tajikistan (2008-2011) & Deputy Resident Representative in UNDP Serbia (2004-2007). From 2000 to 2004, he held several positions at UNDP Regional Centre Bratislava, including Assistant Director.

# Biographies – Facilitators



**Sasmita Padhi**

Women and Gender working group – YOUNGO

Sasmita Padhi is a member of the Women and Gender working group – YOUNGO. She is a Ph.D. research scholar in the Department of Social Work at Visva-Bharati University in West Bengal. Her research areas include empowerment for weaker sections and ecology and environment. She presented a paper titled “Women in Protection and Restoration of Forest Resources: A Case of a remote village in Dhenkanal District of Odisha, India” in the 7th International Consortium for Social Development Asia Pacific (ICSADAP) biennial conference held at Islamic University, Bangladesh in 2019.



**Zainab Yunusa**

Women and Gender working group – YOUNGO

Zainab Yunusa advocates for women’s rights and gender justice. Her areas of influence include gender, development and climate justice. She collaborates with UNICEF Nigeria as an ambassador of over three million U-Report subscribers in Nigeria. She is also a Regional Focal Point for SDG 5/Gender Constituency of the UN Major Group for Children and Youth, as well as a Women and Gender Working Group member of the UNFCCC’s Youth Constituency (YOUNGO). As a Project Assistant, she performs background research on feminism and conceptualises a gender-sensitive approach in programmatic activities of Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Nigeria Office.



**Olga Djanaeva**

Co-founders and Head of the PA Women's organization  
Alga

Olga Djanaeva co-founded Alga in 1995, after the 4th World Women's Conference in Beijing. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and CEDAW became a main foundation for Alga's goals and directions. Since, Olga developed and implemented a comprehensive program on Rural Women's rights, socio-economic empowerment and sustainable livelihoods. Olga is a member of national and regional women's movements and networks. Since 2015 she is working on the Agenda 2030, building capacity and leadership dev. of rural women for participation in the implementation and in the monitoring of the SDGs in the country from the Feminist Development Justice perspectives.



**Nanna Birk**

Team leader for Climate Action, LIFE e.V.

Nanna Birk leads the team Education for Sustainable Development and Climate Politics at the German NGO LIFE e.V. LIFE is a founding member of the Women & Gender Constituency, one of the stakeholder groups of the UNFCCC. Together with many allies LIFE advocates for integrating gender equality into climate and environmental policies and programs. Nanna especially works on aspects around the participatory design of local climate projects and climate policies as well as on gender equality within the transport sector. Further she also works as a trainer on climate politics and climate justice for young people.