Speaker Biographies



Dr. Cecilia Kinuthia-Njenga – Director, Intergovernmental Support and Collective Progress Division, UNFCCC Secretariat

Dr. Cecilia Kinuthia-Njenga is an economist and urban and regional planner with over 25 years of experience in sustainable development and international environmental governance. She leads the UNFCCC's Intergovernmental Support and Collective Progress Division, which supports 198 Parties in advancing climate negotiations, building consensus and assessing collective progress under the Convention and Paris Agreement.

Previously, she held senior positions at the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), including Head of its Sub-Regional Office in Pretoria, and at UN-Habitat, where she supported sustainable urban development initiatives across developing countries. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Economics and a Master's degree in Urban and Regional Planning from the University of Nairobi, as well as a PhD in Urban Planning from Chalmers University of Technology, Sweden.



Prof. Celeste Saulo – Secretary-General, World Meteorological Organization (WMO)

Celeste Saulo became Secretary-General of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) in January 2024, becoming the first woman to hold the position. She previously served as Director of Argentina's National Meteorological Service and as First Vice-President of WMO.

She is a Professor of Meteorology at the University of Buenos Aires and has extensive experience in atmospheric sciences, weather forecasting, climate services and international meteorological cooperation. She holds a PhD in Atmospheric Sciences from the University of Buenos Aires.



Ms. Kushla Munro – COP 31 Executive Director

Kushla Munro leads the Climate Change Group at Australia's Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water. She serves as Executive Director of Australia's COP31 Presidency of Negotiations, supporting the President of Negotiations, the Hon Chris Bowen MP, and leading engagement with UNFCCC Parties to build consensus and advance negotiations.

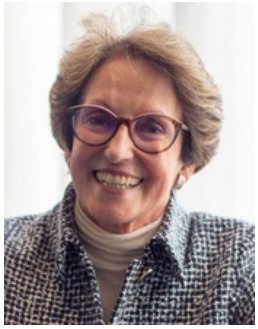
She has led major climate initiatives, including Australia's Net Zero Plan and Future Made in Australia measures. Previously, she headed the International Climate and Energy Division, helping strengthen Australia's engagement in global climate forums. She has also held senior roles across several Australian government departments and served as Australia's lead negotiator on the UN Sustainable Development Goals in 2015. She holds a Bachelor of Science and Bachelor of Laws (Hons) from the University of Queensland and a Master's in Environmental Sustainability (Distinction) from the University of Edinburgh.



Volkan Mutlu Coşkun – COP 31 Presidency, Director General, Turkish State Meteorological Service (MGM), Türkiye

Volkan Mutlu Coşkun has served as Director General of the Turkish State Meteorological Service since 19 August 2018 and was reappointed in August 2023. He previously held senior positions at Türkiye's State Hydraulic Works (DSİ) and the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock, including Chief of Cabinet to the Minister and Deputy Undersecretary.

He serves as Türkiye's Permanent Representative to the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and a member of the WMO Regional Association VI (Europe) Management Group. He was first elected to the WMO Executive Council in 2019 and re-elected in 2023 for the 2023–2027 term. He holds degrees in Meteorological Engineering from Istanbul Technical University and Economics from Anadolu University.



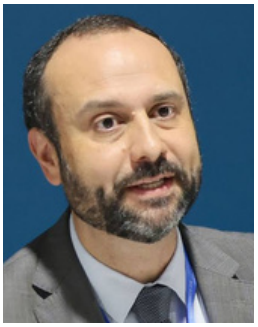
Dr. Thelma Krug - GCOS Chair

Thelma is a Brazilian mathematician, teacher and researcher working in the area of climate change. She received her bachelor's and master's degrees from Roosevelt University, in the United States, and completed her doctorate in spatial statistics from the University of Sheffield, in England. She is a retired researcher at Inpe (National Institute for Space Research) and from 2015 to 2023 she was vice-president of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Since October 2023, Dr Thelma Krug is the Chair of the Global Climate Observing System (GCOS) Steering Committee and member of the WMO Infrastructure Commission Management Group.



Ms Afke van Rijn – Vice Minister for Environment and International Affairs, Netherlands

Afke van Rijn was appointed Director-General for the Environment and International Affairs at the Dutch Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management on 1 February 2023. Her responsibilities include circular economy, waste management, environmental protection, air quality, climate adaptation, and international, EU and bilateral affairs. Previously, she served as Deputy Director-General for COVID-19 at the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport (2021), and held several senior positions at the Ministries of Education, Culture and Science; Social Affairs and Employment; Security and Justice; and Economic Affairs. She holds a degree in Computer Engineering from Delft University of Technology.



Pedro Ivo - Coordinator for Scientific and Technological Affairs, Climate Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Brazil

Pedro Ivo Ferraz da Silva is Chair of the UNFCCC Technology Executive Committee and a Brazilian career diplomat coordinating scientific and technological affairs at Brazil's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He is also Brazil's focal point to the IPCC and co-founder of the São Paulo Innovation and Science Diplomacy School (InnSciD SP).

Previously, he held diplomatic and science, technology and innovation positions at Brazilian embassies in Berlin and New Delhi, and represented Brazil at the UN Commission on Science and Technology for Development. He holds degrees in Electrical Engineering and Philosophy, a master's in Philosophy of Technology, and is currently pursuing a PhD in Science and Technology Policy at the State University of Campinas (Unicamp).



Hans Olav Ibrekk - Special Envoy, Climate and Security, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norway

Mr. Hans Olav Ibrekk is Special Envoy, Climate and Security, Section for Energy, Climate and Environment, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Mr. Ibrekk led Norway's work on climate and security during its' term in the UN Security Council (2021-22). He is a member of the Board of the Green Climate Fund (GCF) (since 2017) and served on the Board of the Adaptation Fund 2007-2017, including serving as Chair in 2013 and 2015. Mr. Ibrekk is also the co-facilitator of the UNDESA-appointed SDG7 Technical Advisory Group.



Cheikh Ndiaye Sylla – Technical Advisor, Ministry of Environment and Ecological Transition, Senegal

Cheikh Ndiaye Sylla is an environmental engineer with approximately 40 years of experience in environmental policy, sustainable development and international environmental negotiations. He previously served as Director of Environment and Classified Establishments and Head of Cabinet at Senegal's Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development.

He has represented Senegal and Africa in international environmental negotiations since 1992, including climate change and sustainable development, and has served as Vice-President of COP21. He has also represented Africa in international mechanisms and funds, including the Adaptation Fund, Global Environment Facility (GEF) and Green Climate Fund (GCF)



Nuala O'Brien - Director of the Climate Unit, Department of Foreign Affairs, Ireland

Nuala O'Brien is Director of the Climate Unit at Ireland's Department of Foreign Affairs, where she leads Ireland's international climate policy and partnerships. She previously served as Ireland's Ambassador to Egypt and Lebanon and Ambassador to Mozambique, Eswatini and Madagascar. With a career spanning diplomacy, development cooperation and humanitarian action across Africa, the Middle East and Asia, she brings extensive experience of working with vulnerable countries on resilience, climate risk and sustainable development.



Sandra Cortés - Chile Scientific Committee, Chile

Sandra Cortés Arancibia is a Chilean veterinarian, environmental epidemiologist and Associate Professor at the School of Public Health, Faculty of Medicine, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile. She holds a PhD in Public Health from the University of Chile and specialises in environmental and occupational epidemiology, with research focusing on the health impacts of environmental pollution, exposure to pesticides and other contaminants, and climate change. She has served as President of Chile's Scientific Advisory Committee on Climate Change and contributed to the scientific committees of COP25 and COP26. She is also a Lead Author of the IPCC Seventh Assessment Report, contributing to the chapter on Central and South America.



Lionel Fabre - Director of the Environment and Climate Change Department, Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, France

Lionel is a senior French diplomat with over two decades of experience in international affairs, and expertise spanning multilateral diplomacy, development, and environmental and climate policy. Early in his career, his experience was focus on European, economic and political affairs. As Adviser to the Secretariat-General of France's 2019 G7 Presidency (2018–2019), he developed expertise in G7 coordination and high-level multilateral diplomacy. His four years as Deputy Head of Mission in Nairobi (2020–2024) strengthened his expertise on Africa, regional dynamics and development cooperation. As Deputy Secretary-General at the Ministry for the Ecological and Inclusive Transition (2019–2020) and, since September 2024, Director of the environment and climate department at the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, he has developed expertise in environmental policy, climate diplomacy and international cooperation.



Dr. Florian Pappenberger – Director-General, European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF)

Florian Pappenberger became Director-General of ECMWF on 1 January 2026, having previously served as Deputy Director-General and led the Centre's forecasting operations. He joined ECMWF in 2004 and has extensive experience in weather forecasting, hydrology and the prediction of natural hazards, including floods and fires.

He has played a key role in developing ECMWF's contributions to the Copernicus programme and Destination Earth initiative, as well as advancing the operational use of artificial intelligence in weather forecasting. He holds a PhD in Environment from Lancaster University



Winston Chow – Co-Chair of IPCC Working Group II

Winston Chow was elected Co-Chair of the IPCC Working Group II in July 2023. He is Professor of Urban Climate and a Lee Kong Chian Research Fellow at Singapore Management University's College of Integrative Studies.

He contributed as a Lead Author to the IPCC Sixth Assessment Report, focusing on cities, settlements and key infrastructure, and led the cross-chapter paper on cities and settlements by the sea. His research focuses on urban climate risks, vulnerability, and heat island adaptation and mitigation. He is also Co-Lead Principal Investigator of the Cooling Singapore initiative. He holds a PhD in Geography from Arizona State University and Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Geography from the National University of Singapore.



Simonetta Cheli - Director of Earth Observation Programme, European Space Agency (ESA)

Simonetta Cheli is the Director of Earth Observation Programmes at the European Space Agency (ESA) and Head of ESA's European Space Research Institute (ESRIN) in Frascati, Italy. She joined ESA in 1988 and has over three decades of experience in international relations, programme strategy and Earth observation. She studied Law and Economics at Yale University, holds a degree in Political Science from the University of Florence, with a specialisation in international satellite telecommunications law, and a diploma in Advanced Diplomatic and Strategic Studies from Paris. In her current role, she oversees ESA's Earth observation programmes, promoting international cooperation and the use of satellite data to address environmental and climate challenges. She also represents ESA in international forums and contributes to academic and international committees