

## **Multi-stakeholder engagement in national reviews: a dialogue between VNR**

### **Countries and Major Groups and other Stakeholders**

**12 July 2017, 18:15 – 19:30**

**Conference Room A, United Nations Headquarters**

### **Bios of Speakers**

#### **Mr. Thomas Gass Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs, UN DESA**

Thomas Gass was appointed by the Secretary-General as Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs in UN DESA and he took office on 3 September 2013. He brings with him wide-ranging experience in bilateral and multilateral development cooperation. From 2009 to 2013, he 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.

Before his posting to Nepal from 2004 to 2009, Mr. Gass was Head of the Economic and Development Section at the Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the UN in New York, where he represented Switzerland's interests, in particular in the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), its subsidiary Commissions, the General Assembly and the Executive Boards of the major UN Funds and Programmes. During this time, Mr Gass was the Chair of the Donor Group of the UN Global Compact.

In 2006, he was the Vice-President for Western European and Other Group (WEOG) of the Commission on Population and Development, and in 2008 he was the Vice-President (WEOG) of the Executive Board of UNDP/UNFPA. In 2007, he successfully facilitated the landmark TCPR/QCPR Resolution, the periodic review of the General Assembly operational system for development.

Mr. Gass also served as Policy and Programme Officer for the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, as Deputy Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Guyana, and as Regional Director for Europe with the International Plant Genetic Resources Institute in Rome.

Born in 1963, Thomas Gass holds a PhD in natural sciences from the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich and a MSc and engineering diploma in agricultural sciences from the same Institute. He is married and father of three adult children.

## Ms. Alessandra Nilo General Coordinator, Gestos, Brazil

Ms. Nilo is a journalist, film director and screenwriter with an academic specialization in communication and health and post-graduation in Diplomacy. She is co-founder and Executive Director of Gestos, an HIV and Sexual Right's organization located in Recife, Brazil.

Since 2001, Ms. Nilo has worked to publicize the UN General Assembly Declaration of Commitment on HIV and AIDS as a tool to monitor and evaluate the implementation of national HIV policies. In 2003, she developed the UNGASS-AIDS Forum platform in Brazil. This was later expanded and used throughout the world as an advocacy and research tool to support a network of women activists in the field of sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Ms. Nilo dedicates her career to increasing civil society' influence on decision-making processes at local, national and international levels and full implementation of international commitments on matters related to HIV and sexual and reproductive health and rights. She has represented civil society in the Brazilian national delegations to the High Level Meetings on HIV, and has been involved with delegations for the Commission on the Status of Women, Commission on Population and Development and the 2030 Agenda negotiations at UN. S

Ms. Nilo was member of the *High Level Task Force for ICPD and Beyond*<sup>1</sup>, and is co-leading the Women Won't Wait campaign in Latin America. She is the Regional Director of the Latin American and Caribbean Council of AIDS Organizations<sup>2</sup>, and represents NGOs from that region at the UNAIDS Program Coordinating Board.

In Brazil she is among the leaders of the CSO Working Group for the 2030 Agenda, a coalition composed by more than 40 members, including CBOs, NGOs, networks and social movements.

## Ms. Ekaete Judith Umoh President, Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities, Nigeria

Ekaete Judith Umoh is a disability rights activist committed to inclusive development for people with disabilities, she is founder and Executive Director, Family Centered Initiative for Challenged Persons (FACICP).

Ms. Umoh is the first elected female National President, of the **Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities,-JONAPWD**, Nigeria, an umbrella organization of all organizations of persons with disabilities in Nigeria. At the sub-regional and regional levels, Ms. Umoh is deeply involved in disability politics and development, she is Vice chairperson, West Africa Federation of the Disabled-WAFOD and Executive Council member, Africa Disability Forum-ADF, representing women with disabilities. Internationally, she has served on the International Planning Committee of the Association of Women's Rights in Development-AWID representing women with disabilities. As National coordinator of Global Fund for Women Grantee's Network, Nigeria Ms. Umoh became the first elected woman with a disability to head a mainstream women's network in Nigeria, she is also on the on Board of Women Trust Fund, an organization created to support political participation of women in Nigeria and

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<sup>1</sup> [www.icpdtaskforce.org](http://www.icpdtaskforce.org)

<sup>2</sup> [www.laccaso.net](http://www.laccaso.net)

For over 15 years, she has actively advocated for accessible, quality sexual and reproductive health services for women and girls with disabilities in Nigeria and elsewhere. She was advisor for Hesperian Foundation, on the **project “Health Handbook for women with disabilities”** and a facilitator/facility member of CREA’s Disability Sexuality and Rights Online institute.

As a social inclusion expert, she has served as consultant to a few International development agencies, providing technical assistance on disability inclusion in programs and project. Ms. Umoh is very passionate about inclusive development of persons with disabilities and strongly desire for an increased visibility of women and girls with disabilities in both the women’s and disability movement.

Ms. Umoh is a public speaker and trainer and has delivered so many papers at conferences and other public functions. She holds a Master degree in Social works.

### **Ms. Christine Mulvad Policy and communications adviser, The Danish 92 Group, Denmark**

Christine Jacobsen Mulvad is a policy and communications adviser for the Danish NGO network the Danish 92 Group, a collaboration between environmental and development organisations.

The Danish 92 Group was established in conjunction with the United Nations conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 and is working to promote government and individual action on sustainable development. The network is working with national and international political processes on sustainable development, multilateral environmental conventions and Denmark’s international work on development and environment.

Ms Mulvad coordinates the networks work on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and has in this role established a Danish NGO working group on the SDGs, led the networks work in relation to the SDG negotiations in 2015 and in the Open Working Group from 2013 - 2014 and prior to that been involved in the negotiations at the Rio+20 conference in 2012, contributed to the work of different international NGO groups and participated and represented Danish civil society in various international meetings and negotiations.

She is driven by her overall interest in sustainable development and strengthening the influence of civil society in decision-making processes at local, national and international level.

### **H.E. Mr. Charles Thembani Ntwaagae Permanent Representative of Botswana to the United Nations**

Ambassador Charles Ntwaagae has served as Botswana’s Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations since July 2008.

He simultaneously serves as a non-resident Ambassador of Botswana to Jamaica and Cuba.

Ambassador Ntwaagae has had an illustrious public service career which spans nearly 4 decades, during which he held various positions of responsibility both in the Home and Foreign Service of Botswana.

Prior to his current post, Ambassador Ntwaagae served as Permanent Secretary (equivalent to CEO) for the Ministry of International Affairs and Cooperation.

Before then, he served as Botswana's Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations Office and World Trade Organisation in Geneva, with bilateral accreditation responsibilities for Austria and Greece.

His responsibilities in Geneva extended to all International Organisations, including Intergovernmental and International Civil Society humanitarian organisations. He was also Permanent Representative to the Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Ambassador Ntwaagae's wide ranging work experience has entailed issues of Sustainable Development, Climate Change, International trade, International law, International, Humanitarian Law, International Criminal Justice System, Rule of Law, Human Rights, International Peace and Security, etc.

Ambassador Ntwaagae attained a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Political Science and Public Administration from the then University of Botswana and Swaziland in 1977. He subsequently attained a Masters Degree in International Affairs and International Public Affairs at Penn State in 1985.

## **H.E. Mr. Juan Carlos Mendoza-García Permanent Representative of Costa Rica to the United Nations**

The Permanent Representative of Costa Rica to the United Nations, Juan Carlos Mendoza, presented his credentials on May 2014.

Until his appointment as Permanent Representative for the Mission of Costa Rica in 2014, Mr. Mendoza García was a presidential candidate in Costa Rica, representing the Citizens Action Party in the primary elections. Previously, he served as Congressman representing the Citizens Action Party from 2010 until 2014, during which time he was President of Congress from 2011 to 2012 and opposition leader from 2010 until 2011.

Mr. Mendoza García attended a number of Committees while in Congress, including, among others, the Permanent Commission of Economic Issues; Permanent Commission of International Affairs and Commerce; Commission on Electricity; and Commission to Ensure Access to Water as a Human Right. He is also the founder and leader of "Movimiento Esperanza" within the Citizens Action Party.

Holding a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from the University of Costa Rica, Mr. Mendoza García is a candidate for a master's degree in communication and development, also from the University of Costa Rica.

Mr. Mendoza García was born in 1975 and is married.

## **Mr. Pieter Leenknecht** UN Coordinator at the Belgian Directorate General for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Affairs

Pieter Leenknecht is the Coordinator for the UN Development Agenda at the Belgian Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid in the Belgian Foreign Ministry in Brussels. He is also the Belgian focal point for the 2017 National Voluntary Review and acted as one of the two pen holders of the actual NVR report.

He is a career diplomat with previous postings in Kabul, Geneva, Nairobi, the Permanent Representation of Belgium to the EU and in the private office of two successive ministers of Foreign Affairs.

Mr. Leenknecht holds degrees in law of Leuven University-Belgium, the College of Europe of Bruges-Belgium and Harvard Law School, International relations in Leuven, and art history in Leuven and the Complutense University in Madrid.

## **Mr. Timotej Šooš** Slovenia Development Strategy Lead, Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy

**Timotej Šooš** leads the efforts of the Government of Slovenia to develop Slovenia's long-term vision and development strategy. He is a career diplomat who recently returned from his post at the Mission of Slovenia to the OECD in Paris. He believes the rise of a networked society has resulted in open, complex, dynamic and networked challenges that require new problem solving strategies.

Until November 2014 Timotej Šooš was a Special Adviser to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. He was also Digital Diplomacy Coordinator at the Slovenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Director of the Young Bled Strategic Forum. His previous appointments include Adviser to the State Secretary, and Junior Adviser at the Permanent Mission of Slovenia to the UN in New York.

Timotej has participated in various projects on communication of complex scientific concepts, and was awarded the Marshall Memorial Fellowship by the German Marshall Fund of the United States.