



The role of foreign policy in advancing gender equality: Addressing the challenges, pushbacks and obstacles faced by women"

Conference organised by the
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SPEAKERS BIOGRAPHIES

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REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

COUNCIL OF EUROPE
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Conference Moderator: Giorgos Ioannides was born on 15 July 1972 in Nicosia. He holds a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology from the University of Oregon (USA) with postgraduate degrees in International Relations from the University of Nicosia and International Peace and Conflict Resolution from American University in Washington D.C. He joined the Foreign Ministry as a career diplomat in October 2001. Prior to this, he worked at several non-governmental organisations on humanitarian issues, as well as at research institutions dealing with, among others, issues relating to the then European Union candidacy of the Republic of Cyprus. At the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he served initially in the Cyprus Question Directorate during the period 2001-2004 dealing with issues relating to human rights, enclaved Greek Cypriots, missing persons, cultural heritage and bicommunal relations. He then served at the Permanent Representation of the Republic of Cyprus to the Council of Europe, dealing mostly with issues relating to the European Court of Human Rights. Duri ng the period 2009-2013 he served in the Cyprus Question Directorate, the Energy and Marine Policy Directorate and as Director of the Office of the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Prior to his current duties as Head of Multilateral Relations and International Organisations Department – a position he holds since 1 August 2018 – he served at the Permanent Representation of the Republic of Cyprus to the European Union as Relex Counsellor (2014-2015) and Head of the Team for relations with the European Parliament (2016-2018).

Opening remarks



Nikos Christodoulides was born on 6 December 1973 in Paphos. He holds a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science, Economics, and Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies from City University of New York, Queens College, with postgraduate studies in Political Science at New York University and Diplomatic Studies at the University of Malta. He holds a doctorate from the Department of Political Science and Public Administration of the University of Athens. He was a career diplomat between 1999 and 2013. During this time, he served as Director of the Office of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Spokesperson of the Cyprus Presidency of the Council of the EU in Brussels, Deputy Chief of Mission at the Embassy of Cyprus in Greece, Director of the Office of the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Consul General at the High Commission of the Republic of Cyprus in the United Kingdom. Prior to his appointment as Minister of Foreign Affairs, he served as Director of the Diplomatic Office of the President of the Republic of Cyprus (2013- 2018) and Government Spokesman (2014-2018). He was a Lecturer and Research Associate at the Department of History and Archaeology of the University of Cyprus between 2007 and 2010. He is the author of two books, Plans for Solution of the Cyprus Problem 1948-1978 (2009) and Relations between Athens and Nicosia and the Cyprus Problem, 1977-1988 (2013). He has also published extensively in domestic and international journals. He is married to Philippa Karsera and has four daughters, Ioanna, Ekaterini, DespinaMaria, and Phoebe.



Annita Demetriou is a Cypriot politician serving as President of the House of Representatives since June 2021, following her re-election for a second parliamentary term. She is the first-ever woman and youngest person to hold the post. Ms Demetriou is a staunch defender of human rights and an outspoken champion of gender equality in all spheres of public and private life. In 2019 she was appointed as a WPL Ambassador on behalf of the Cyprus House of Representatives. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Social and Political Science and a Master's degree in International Relations and European Studies.



Bjørn Berge serves as the Council of Europe's Deputy Secretary General since 1 March 2021. As the Deputy Secretary General, he is involved in a number of key areas of the work of the Organisation, including advising and overseeing the implementation of the Secretary General's reform agenda, in line with the decisions and priorities of the Committee of Ministers. His priorities include shaping the Programme and Budget, while ensuring that the Organisation's activities have maximum impact in advancing democracy, human rights and the rule of law. He also oversees the Council of Europe's staff policy, as well as other key areas of the work of the Organisation. Before taking up his post, Mr Berge was for a period of four years Director General and Secretary to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. Between 2009-2017, he served as Director of the Private Office of the Secretary General and the Deputy Secretary General, helping to prepare, co-ordinate and implement a number of comprehensive reforms of the Organisation. Mr Berge has over thirty years of international professional experience. As a former Norwegian diplomat, he served as International Adviser to the Prime Minister and as Deputy Director of the Foreign Minister's Cabinet responsible for all matters related to Parliament. He also served as speechwriter to three Norwegian Foreign Ministers. Mr Berge has published several books on a range of issues relating to speech writing and speeches, as well as articles on the Council of Europe's mandate and work. He was a Fulbright Scholar and holds a M.A. in International Relations from the Paul Nitze School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), Johns Hopkins University, Washington D.C., USA.

Session 1 - The role of multilateralism in the promotion of women's rights



Session Moderator: Kalliope Agapiou Josephides holds a PhD in Political Science from Paris I Panthéon - Sorbonne University, Paris, France, and is a Jean Monnet Chair holder (2001) and Assistant Professor at the University of Cyprus. She sits on the Council of the Global Campus of Human Rights and is the European Master's Director for her University. She served as Chair of the European Institute for Gender Equality (EU Agency) and Vice-President of the European Inter University Centre for Human Rights and Democratisation, Venice. She is a founding member of the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network and a member of the Scientific Advisory Board of the European Yearbook of Human Rights. She has a great interest, and long experience, in the nexus of human rights, democratisation and gender equality. She served as lead author in the United Nations Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty and the European Parliament study on Women's Rights During Democratic Transitions. She also served as a convener of the Venice School of Human Rights. She has participated in and led several national and international research projects. She has served as academic convener/speaker at high-level international events and has taught/delivered lectures around the world.



Elvira Kovács was born on 18 July 1982 in Zrenjanin, Serbia, where she completed her secondary education. She was studying on the Faculty of Economics in Subotica, Serbia and one semester on the Faculty of Business in Vienna, Austria. She was a student vice-dean at her faculty. She earned her Bachelor of economics in 2006. Since then, until July 2007, she was working in Novi Sad, for the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, in the Provincial Secretariat for Health and Social Policy. Her career in Serbian politics started in 2000 with here active participation in the elections. She became a member of the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians. From 2006 she was in the Executive of Youth of this strongest Hungarian minority party in Serbia. From the middle of 2007 she is a Member of Parliament in the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia and the Parliamentary Assembly of Council of Europe. She was a Deputy Chair of the Committee for European Integration and a Deputy Chair of EU-Serbia Stabilisation and Association Parliamentary Committee, a Member of the Committee for Human and Minority Rights and Gender Equality, as well as of the Committee for Rights of Children. From January 2018 to January 2020, she was the Chair of the Committee for Equality and Non-discrimination as well as a member of the Committee for Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development in PACE. From October 2020 she is a Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia, a Chair of the Committee for European Integration and a Member of the Foreign Affairs Committee. She was the Women's Forum leader from 2009 until 2015 when she became a vice president and the international secretary of her party, AVH. In 2019, she was re-elected as a vice president of Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians. In addition to Serbian and Hungarian, she also speaks English. She is married, a mother of one son.



Stella Ronner-Grubačić [The Netherlands] was appointed on 1 July 2021 as the Ambassador for Gender and Diversity at the European External Action Service (EEAS). After having obtained her Masters' degree (European Studies) at the University of Amsterdam in 1989 and having finished post-graduate studies of International Relations at the Clingendael Institute in The Hague, Stella Ronner-Grubačić started her diplomatic career at the Dutch Foreign Ministry in August 1991. She worked in the Foreign Ministry's multilateral department, after which she was posted at the Embassy in Belgrade. Her following posting in Paris was preceded by a year ('Cycle International') at the French 'Ecole Nationale d'Administration' in Paris. In 2001, Stella Ronner-Grubačić was seconded to the OSCE Mission to the FRY (Former Republic of Yugoslavia). Following that, she became Spokesperson to former Foreign Minister Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, at the time when the Netherlands carried out the OSCE Chairmanship. In 2004, she took up the position of Spokesperson for the Dutch EU Presidency. Following various other positions in the Ministry in The Hague, including as Ambassador for the Millennium Development Goals, Stella Ronner-Grubačić was appointed Ambassador to Croatia in 2010. After having served in The Hague as Director of Communication, she was accredited as Ambassador to Romania and the Republic of Moldova. From Bucharest, she moved to Athens, where she was accredited as the Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the Hellenic Republic in September 2019. She is married to Bratislav Grubačić and together they have one son.



Alia El-Yassir was appointed as UN Women Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia in September 2018 and in this capacity also serves as UN Women Representative to Turkey. She has been working on gender equality and women's empowerment within the United Nations system since the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995. She has extensive experience of working as UN Women Representative at country level managing normative, coordination and operational work within complex contexts that span the development, humanitarian and political continuum. She has also served at HQ level supporting UN Women's global programmatic work. In her country, regional and global roles, she has built strong partnerships with and among diverse groups of stakeholders to advance the rights of women and girls. Before joining the UN system, Alia El-Yassir worked as a teacher and developed educational media for children, in addition to volunteering with a number of women's and human rights non-governmental organisations. Alia El-Yassir holds a BSc degree in Biology (with a specialisation in Ecology) from McGill University and a MSc degree in Desert Studies (with a specialisation in Gender Studies) from Ben Gurion University of the Negev.

Session 2 - Promoting women's rights and gender equality through a feminist foreign policy



Session Moderator: Claudia Luciani joined the Directorate of Political Affairs of the Council of Europe in 1990, first in the External Relations Department and then as political adviser on South East Europe and minorities. She held a number of positions in the Directorate of Political Affairs, including in the field, and served as Director of Political Advice and Co-operation for five years. She was appointed Director of the Office of the Directorate General of Programmes in 2011 and then of the Democratic Governance and Diversity. Since 2018, she is the Director of Human Dignity, Equality and Governance with a particular focus on the implementation of the Istanbul and Trafficking Conventions. Claudia's work on governance focuses on the functioning of institutions, election assistance, civil society and she organises annually the World Forum for Democracy. Claudia studied philosophy at Trinity College (Washington DC), graduated in Political Science (University of Padua) and holds a specialisation in International Public Law and studied at ENA (Paris).



Josie Christodoulou is an independent expert on issues related to women's rights, gender equality, migration, trafficking in human beings and the promotion of gender mainstreaming in policies at national, regional, European and international levels. In February 2019, she was appointed as the Gender Adviser to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. She has since contributed to the writing, designing and day-to-day implementation of the Framework of Action on Gender Mainstreaming in Foreign Policy of the Republic of Cyprus. She continues to work extensively on preventing and combating violence against women including femicides, trafficking in women for the purpose of sexual and labour exploitation, on gender and migration, and on equal representation between women and men, among others. She has served as Policy Co-ordinator at the Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies for 14 years where she contributed to the formation and sustainability of the Institute. As Policy Co-ordinator of the Institute, she has been an active member of various European and national platforms and networks such as a member of the Board of Directors of the Cyprus Women's Lobby (national platform of the European Women's Lobby), a member of the European Network of Migrant Women as well as a member of the working group on sexual violence of the European Network Women Against Violence in Europe (WAVE - Women Against Violence Europe). Josie contributed to many publications, including research reports, books, manuals and journals, and held a series of seminars and trainings. She holds a Master's Degree on Racial Equality Studies from Middlesex University in the United Kingdom and a Bachelor's degree in Psychology from Indianapolis University in the USA.



Delphine O is ambassador-at-large and Secretary General for the Generation Equality Forum (Beijing+25). She leads the organisation of the largest international summit for women's rights since 1995, convened by UN Women and co-chaired by France and Mexico. She was previously a Member of Parliament for La République en Marche, elected in Paris. A member of the Foreign Relations Committee and chairwoman of the France-Iran friendship group at the French National Assembly, she authored a report on the strategic stakes in the South China Sea. Delphine O graduated from the Ecole Normale Supérieure and the Harvard Kennedy School. After working at the French embassy in Seoul, the Consulate General in New York and the Stimson Center in Washington, she moved to Iran and cofounded the information website "Persian Letters". She is a French-American Young Leader 2019, Munich Young Leader 2019, member of the Council at the Council on Foreign Relations, member of the Strategic Orientation Board of the German Marshall Fund France and a board member of IRIS (Institut des Relations Internationales et Stratégiques).



Pascalle Grotenhuis is Director for Social Development and Ambassador for Women's rights and Gender Equality since 1 October 2020. Before that she was Director of Protocol and Host Country Affairs. From 2015 until 2018, Pascalle was the Netherlands Ambassador to Mozambique. Before that she was heading the division for the Private Sector and Corporate Social Responsibility within the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands. She joined the ministry 17 years ago and held various positions, amongst others at the Africa department, a secondment to the Africa Department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, at the Royal Netherlands Embassy in London, as private secretary to the DG for International Development and as co-ordinator for the MDGs and Public Private Partnerships. Before that she worked at a political institute and for two Dutch NGO's. Pascalle is married to Sjoerd Lemm and has a daughter Sophie who is 14 and a son Olivier who is 11 years old.



Sofia Calltorp is the Ambassador for Gender Equality and Co-ordinator of the Feminist Foreign Policy of Sweden. From 2019 to 2021 she was International Director of the Swedish Red Cross; from 2016 to 2019 she was Ambassador of Sweden to Zimbabwe, Malawi and Mauritius; from 2012 to 2016 she was Deputy Director/Head of Humanitarian Section of the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs; from 2008 to 2012 she was Deputy Head of Mission/Councillor at the Embassy of Sweden in Sudan; from 2005 to 2008 she was First Secretary at the Swedish Mission to the UN in Geneva; from 2003 to 2004 she was Deputy Head of the Swedish Government's Initiative for Global Responsibility at the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs; from 2002 to 2003 she was Desk Officer and alternate Swedish Delegate in COAFR, in the Africa Department of the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs; from 2000 to 2001 she was Second Secretary in the Embassy of Sweden in Kenya; from 1999 to 2000: Second Secretary at the Swedish Mission to the UN in Geneva.

Session 3 - Migration and global women's rights: the role of gender-sensitive foreign policies in the area of migration



Session Moderator: Vera Eloi da Fonseca is the Chair of the Council of Europe Drafting Committee on Migrant Women. She presently co-ordinates a Project Team on Intersecting Inequalities at the High Commission for Migration, a Public Institute responsible for the Integration of Migrants in Portugal. She is responsible for the area of Gender Mainstreaming in the Institute. Vera previously worked at the European Institute for Gender Equality, as the Stakeholders and Networking Co-ordinator. She has experience working at the European and national government level, mostly in the areas of gender equality, human rights, migration, international relations and training. Her academic background is as a Women's and Gender Studies major and a Political Science minor, having graduated from Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey (USA). As a trainer she specialises in the areas of international migration, human rights, gender equality and intercultural relations.



Katja Saha Savarimuthu holds a Master's in Law from the University of Lapland, Finland, and post graduate diplomas in NGO management and international co-operation from Valencia, Spain, where she also studied international law. Ms Saha Savarimuthu worked with UNICEF Spain from 1998 – 2003 and joined UNHCR in Syria in 2003. She has held several positions with UNHCR IDP and refugee operations in Middle East, Africa, Latin America and Europe, including regional responsibilities covering Latin America and South East Europe at the UNHCR Headquarters in Geneva from 2011- 2015. Ms Saha Savarimuthu arrived in the Republic of Cyprus from the Director's Office in Amman, Jordan in July 2018. She is married and has one daughter.



Salome Mbugua, researcher, gender equality activist and human right advocate, Dr Salome Mbugua is a commissioner for Irish Human Rights and has over 20 years' experience of working with under-represented groups in particular women, children, and the youth, in Europe, Africa and internationally. Founder of Wezesha and AkiDwA-The migrant women's network where she works as the head of operation and strategy. Her strong belief in equality and justice has shaped her career, leading to engagement with policy makers in Ireland, Europe and international level. She serves at various advisory committee, expert groups and boards in Ireland and at European level. She is the Co-President of European Network of migrant women and seats in the expert group on violence against women with European Women Lobby, seat on EU expert group on economic migration. In September 2018, she was appointed by Tánaiste [Deputy Prime Minister] to chair the working group developing Ireland 3rd National Action Plan on Women Peace and Security. She serves as the Chair of Equality Diversity & Inclusion project board for Public Appointment Services. She is 2015 OHCHR-UN Fellow of people of African Descent and 2010 Eisenhower Fellow on women Leadership



Philippa Karsera Christodoulides is a Cypriot career diplomat. She holds a Bachelor Degree in International and European Studies from Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences in Athens, with postgraduate Studies in War Studies at Kings College of London and a degree in LL.B Law at University of Cyprus. She joined the Diplomatic Service of the Republic of Cyprus in November 1999. Since then, she has been an active diplomat, serving in various positions in Cyprus and abroad. During this time, she served as First Secretary at the Cyprus High Commission in London, Counsellor B' at the Embassy of Cyprus in Athens, Counsellor A' at the Permanent Representation of Cyprus in the EU in Brussels and Deputy Director of the Diplomatic Office of the President of the Republic of Cyprus. From April 2018 to March 2021, she was also the Adviser of the President of the Republic of Cyprus on European Affairs (Sherpa). She currently holds the position of the Acting Secretary General for European Union Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cyprus. She is married and has four daughters, Ioanna, Ekaterini, Despina Maria and Phoebe.

Rapporteurs

Session 1



Constantinos Constantinou holds a Bachelor of Political Science from the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (Greece) and a Master of Arts in Social and Political Thought from the University of Sussex (United Kingdom). He joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cyprus in July 2021 and works on multilateral issues.

Session 2



Ioanna Demosthenous holds a Bachelor of Laws from the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (Greece) and an LLM in Public International Law from the University of Nottingham (United Kingdom). She was a trainee advocate at the Law Office of the Republic of Cyprus and admitted to the Cyprus Bar in 2012. She has previously worked as a legal adviser at the Permanent Representation of Cyprus to the Council of Europe (2015-2018). Ioanna is the founder - and until very recently - the President of Cyprus Youth DiplomaCY, a youth NGO registered in the Republic of Cyprus, aiming to empower and inspire young people, and especially young women, to pursue a career in diplomacy and international relations. She joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cyprus in July 2021.

Session 3



Myrianthi Spathi holds a Degree from the University of Ionion (Greece) on Translation and Interpretation and a degree from the Open University of Athens (Greece) on European Studies. Ms Spathi joined the diplomatic service of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cyprus in 2006. She has been posted abroad in several missions, including the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Cyprus in Geneva, from 2009 to 2013, as well as a Deputy Head/Counselor of the Embassy of Cyprus in Beijing, from 2015 to 2020. Currently, she holds the position of Human Rights/COHOM Delegate, in the Multilateral and International Organisations Department. She speaks Greek (native), English and French.