



DESA



Global Policy Dialogue Series

Speakers' Biographies

Building Food and Water Security in an Era of Climate Shocks

Building a Global Coalition for Sustainability after COVID-19
Session 1 of the UN DESA Global Policy Dialogues for Climate Action

Wednesday, 24 March 2021, 8:30-10:00 a.m. EDT

Welcome remarks



Mr. Liu Zhenmin

Liu Zhenmin of China has served as the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs and head of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs since July 2017. Prior to his appointment, Mr. Liu was Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of China since 2013. Among his various diplomatic assignments, he served as Ambassador and Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the United Nations Office at Geneva and Other

International Organizations in Switzerland (2011-2013).

Mr. Liu brings to the position more than 30 years of experience in the diplomatic service, with a strong focus on the promotion of bilateral, regional and global issues. He was deeply involved for 10 years in climate change negotiations including the conclusion of the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement. He also widely participated in the international activities on the protection of our planet including Antarctica and the oceans. Over the last several years, in various capacities, he has been consistently highlighting and advocating for sustainable development issues.

Keynote remarks



Mr. Qu Dongyu

Qu Dongyu, who took office on 1 August 2019 as Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, has spent his life working on how to make sure the world is fed.

Born in 1963 to a rice-growing family in China's Hunan Province, Qu studied horticultural science at Hunan Agricultural University and then plant breeding and genetics at the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences. He later added environmental science to his knowledge portfolio while earning a PhD at Wageningen University, in the Netherlands.

He then progressed through a range of national and international activities, engaged simultaneously in science and management, all during a time when China's reform and opening-up process led the country to dramatically reduce poverty and hunger in a country with 20 percent of the global population, 9 percent of the world's cultivated land, and where over 90 percent of the rural population is engaged in small holder farm operations working less than 3 hectares. Before coming to FAO, Qu served as China's Vice Minister of Agriculture and Rural Affairs.



Mr. Amir Mahmoud Abdulla

Amir Mahmoud Abdulla became the Deputy Executive Director of the World Food Programme in March 2009. Since February 2017, he has led the successful implementation of the new corporate architecture aligning WFP's strategy, human resources, programme structure, financial management, and planning, monitoring and reporting to help achieve the Sustainable Development Goals at country level. In addition to his responsibilities as deputy principal, he currently oversees the Executive Board Secretariat and the divisions providing key support to WFP field operations worldwide: Emergency Operations, Supply Chain Operations, and Security.

In 2015 and 2016, Mr Abdulla was based in New York to enhance WFP's engagement with the United Nations system, Member States and key stakeholders. In addition to his WFP responsibilities, he was appointed Vice-Chair of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) from January 2016 until November 2017 and facilitated the inter-agency discussions around the repositioning of the United Nations development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda and related reform initiatives.

Prior to joining WFP as logistics officer in 1991, Mr Abdulla was a Branch Manager in Juba and Port Sudan for the shipping and forwarding company Transintra, and Assistant Area Manager for the engineering company Burmeister & Wain Scandinavian Contractor in the Sudan. He also taught at the American School and Comboni College in Khartoum.

Mr Abdulla is a graduate of the Imperial College of Science and Technology, London University, where he read Electrical Engineering and graduated in June 1978 with a BSc Honours degree. He is an Associate of The City & Guilds of London Institute. A national of the Sudan and the United Kingdom, Mr Abdulla was born in Khartoum in 1957.

Moderator

Ms. Fiona Harvey, journalist, The Guardian

Fiona Harvey is an award-winning environment journalist for the Guardian. Prior to this, she worked for the Financial Times for more than a decade. She has reported on every major environmental issue, from as far afield as the Arctic and the Amazon, and her wide range of interviewees include Ban Ki-moon, Tony Blair, Al Gore and Jeff Immelt.

Discussion 1: Ensuring sustainable access to water and food for all in an era of climate shocks



Ms. Cherrie Atilano

Cherrie Atilano is the Founding Farmer, CEO and President of AGREA Agricultural Systems International, Inc., a for-purpose and inclusive business, that is creating the first replicable one-island economy that is zero hunger, zero waste, and zero insufficiency, through the “Ecology of Dignity” approach. AGREA aims to help eradicate poverty for farming and fishing families in order to alleviate the effects of climate change and establish food security in the Philippines.

Ms. Atilano started teaching farmers at the age of 12, has 22 years of vast experience in Sustainable Food Systems. She graduated top of her class - Magna Cum Laude at the Visayas State University, with a BS in Agriculture, Major in Horticulture specializing on tissue culture.



Ms. Betty Chinyamunyamu

Betty Chinyamunyamu is a Development Economist with extensive knowledge and experience in agribusiness development, food security, rural development, project development and management, policy and advocacy, farmer organization development and management, and women's economic empowerment.

She is currently the Chief Executive Officer for the National Smallholder Farmers' Association of Malawi (NASFAM)—Malawi's largest independent smallholder farmer organization, with a membership of over 130,000 farmers. Previously, she worked as a Policy and Programmes Manager for the Smallholder Agribusiness Development Project, an agribusiness project managed by ACDI/VOCA. She has also held various positions in NASFAM including Programmes Manager; Development Director; and Deputy CEO during which time she has engaged extensively with Malawi's policy processes.

Dr. Chinyamunyamu is a Board member of several organizations in Malawi and the Southern Africa region. She is a member of the Core Advisory Panel of the National Planning Commission, a member of the Reserve Bank of Malawi Monetary Policy Committee, Board member of the parastatal Malawi Investment and Trade Centre, Vice Chair of CISANET (Civil Society in Agriculture Network), Trustee of the Economics Association of Malawi (ECAMA) and Board member of Agricultural Commodity Exchange for Africa (ACE). She has a bachelor's degree in Economics (distinction) from Chancellor College, University of Malawi; a master's degree in Development Studies (distinction) from the University of Cambridge (UK); and a PhD from the University of Leeds (UK).



Mr. Mark Gordon

Mark Gordon, Head of the Asset Creation and Livelihoods Unit at the World Food Programme, is an international development and humanitarian response professional with over 20 years of experience with local and international non-governmental organizations and the UN in Africa, South-East Asia, Central Europe and Central America. Since 2002 Mark has worked for WFP in the areas of emergency assessment and programme design. Prior to serving as Chief of the Asset Creation and Livelihoods Unit, Mr. Gordon served as a Senior Programme and Policy Adviser for WFP in Somalia and South Sudan.



Mr. Mike Khunga

Mike Nkhombo Khunga is a nutritionist professional with 4 years' experience working with civil society, the private sector, and government to address high levels of stunting in Malawi. Mr. Khunga is a part of the Civil Society Organization Nutrition Alliance (CSONA), where he focuses on nutrition budget analysis to reveal the nutrition financing gap. He also trains local media to develop programmes that will increase community awareness of nutrition. He is also the youth chair of Action Track 5 on building resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks and stress, of the UN Food Systems Summit to take place in September 2021.

Mike campaigns for youth participation in nutrition platforms by featuring on TV and radio programmes.



Ms. Sasha Koo-Oshima

Sasha Koo-Oshima has nearly 30 years of experience in international assistance, policy development in agriculture water and environment/natural resource management, integrated land and water management, and land management and restoration. Currently, she is the Deputy Director and Head of Water at the UN Food & Agriculture Organization (FAO), leading programs on agricultural water development, land restoration, and governance, geospatial data, and integrated water resources management with linkages to climate, energy, health and nutrition.

She formerly served as Senior International Advisor at the U.S. Environment Protection Agency (EPA) advising the Minister/Administrator of Environment, State Department, and was the Secretariat of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), where she directed and managed international environmental programs/compacts with donors agencies; i.e., public-private-partnerships, climate resilience, multi-stakeholder and multi-jurisdictional policy engagements, blended financing/resource mobilization, and effective policy governance in sustainable water and natural resource-agriculture management.

She serves in various Governing Boards of the World Water Council and the CGIAR's Water Land Ecosystems, and on Steering Committees in Agri-Environment of the OECD and UNEP Global Partnerships on nutrient management, circular economy, and has implemented and supervised a substantial set of country projects. In addition, she served on various international technical advisory panels for the GEF and the Ramsar Convention, in support of research and policy-making for planning and management.

Discussion 2: Innovative solutions for improving access to clean and safe water



Mr. Samir Ibrahim

Samir Ibrahim is the CEO and co-founder of SunCulture. SunCulture develops and commercializes life-changing technology that solves the biggest daily challenges for the world's 570 million smallholder farming households. Samir is recognized as a Forbes 30 Under 30, Top Conscious Business Leader by Conscious Company Media, and a World Energy Council Future Energy Leader alumnus. Samir is also on the Organizing Committee of Shikilia, a coalition of public and private sector organizations providing emergency cash transfers to low-income Kenyan communities.

Ms. Tania Eulalia Martinez Cruz

Tania Eulalia Martinez Cruz is an Èyuujk indigenous woman from Tamazulápam del Espíritu Santo, Mixe, Oaxaca, México. She holds a multidisciplinary background, a B.Sc. in Irrigation Engineering from Chapingo Autonomous University, a MSc. in Agricultural and Biosystems Engineering from the University of Arizona and a PhD in social sciences at Wageningen University in the Netherlands. Currently, she is a postdoctoral researcher in public health and anthropology at the University of Greenwich in the United Kingdom working on nutrition, gender, and indigenous peoples' food systems in the Peruvian Amazon.

Ms. Martinez Cruz has collaborated in international development with different international organizations for more than 12 years. Among her topics of expertise are sanitary engineering, biofuels production, water management and irrigation, agricultural research and development, climate justice, gender and social inclusion, nutrition, and food sovereignty. She promotes the conservation of indigenous knowledge as key to the biocultural diversity of indigenous peoples and to tackle global problems. In 2018, she presented on these issues at the 1st High-Level Expert Seminar on Indigenous Food Systems at the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in Rome, in 2019 in the Global Landscapes Forum in Bonn, Germany and the United Nations headquarters in New York and the virtual edition in 2020. She is a member of the Global-Hub on Indigenous Peoples' Food Systems lead by the FAO and currently contributes to the Action Track #2 of the United Nations Food Systems Summit 2021.

She continues working with her Èyuujk community and in 2020 she received "a baston de mando" (a symbolic wooden cane that her people use to confer authority/responsibility through their own self-governing structures and the community assembly) and she fulfilled a year of community service as the secretary of the Women's office to support the welfare of women in her community.



Mr. Zahin Razeen

Razeen is a UN Young Leader for the Sustainable Development Goals as well as a deep-tech futurist on a mission to drive the world towards industry 5.0 where the high-speed accuracy of industrial automation will undergo symbiosis with the cognitive, critical thinking skills of humans.

He is the founder of a company named “Quantum Polychemics Biotechnology“. It is a biotechnology spin-out from the Atomic Energy Commission and Nuclear Research Establishment, founded by him, produces non-toxic, organic biopolymers that are fully programmable to a time-controlled degradation and while remaining environmentally friendly. Their mission is to drive our world towards a circular bio-economy, where major brands utilize eco-friendly bioplastics in packaging, food services, agriculture, textiles and many other areas to reduce the 18 billion pounds of plastic polluting our oceans every year while improving the economic status of and employment opportunity for thousands.

Among the companies, he founded Hydroquo+, Bangladesh’s first Hydro-Informatics R&D up-start dedicated to ensuring water security leveraging Industrial Internet of Things and Lingwing ed-tech which uses artificial intelligence to provide quality personalized education, in addition to co-founding Aqualink Robotics, which makes Industrial IoT devices for companies seeking automation.



Mr. Felix Reinders

Felix Reinders is the Chair of the Global Framework on Water Scarcity in Agriculture and the immediate past President of the International Commission on Irrigation and Drainage.

He is a professional engineer, registered with the Engineering Council of South Africa and completed his engineering studies in 1979 at the University of Pretoria in South Africa.

He specialises in water resources management and irrigation engineering in the agricultural and civil engineering field, including research, design, training and mentoring. He is the author of several scientific papers and manuals.