

Speakers and Panelists Biographies

Strategic Visioning Meeting of “Women’s Increased Leadership for Resilient and Peaceful Societies” Programme



Doina Gherman is the Deputy Speaker of the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova. She is a dedicated gender equality champion and has been instrumental in advancing women's rights in Moldova. Her efforts and direct involvement have led to increased representation of women in Parliament, stronger legal frameworks to economically empower women, as well as to combat gender-based violence, including the ratification of the Istanbul Convention and the establishment of the first ever GBV Agency in Moldova. Ms. Gherman also leads the Women’s Caucus within Moldovan Parliament.



Elisa Fernandez Saenz is the Deputy Regional Director for the UN Women’s ECA Regional Office since May 2023. She has 26 years of professional experience and demonstrated commitment to advance gender equality and the empowerment and rights of women and girls worldwide. Elisa has a wealth of corporate and field experience, serving for the past 6 years as Country Representative for UN Women in Vietnam. Prior to her assignment in Vietnam (2017), she served for 5 years as Chief for UN Women’s Fund for Gender Equality based New York (2012-2017), managing a grant-making mechanism supporting women’s organizations interventions to promote women’s economic and political empowerment worldwide, with a total portfolio of US \$64 million dollars’ worth of grants among 125 programmes in 80 countries. Elisa first started as a Programme Specialist for the Latin America and the Caribbean Region for UNIFEM in 2007, and later served as Manager for global programmes on gender and aid effectiveness and financing for gender equality as the organization transitioned into UN Women in 2010. Elisa initiated her career at the Inter-American Development Bank in Washington DC in 1998, where she worked for 8 years on the design and implementation of development projects on gender, ending violence against women and women’s economic and political empowerment for Latin America and the Caribbean. Elisa holds a Master’s Degree in Public Policy (and Certificate in International Affairs) from the Johns Hopkins University. She also has a Bachelor’s Degree in Psychology from the University of Costa Rica.



Jasmin Frentzel Sørensen is Deputy Head of the Embassy of Denmark in Moldova since the opening of the Embassy of Denmark in Moldova in January 2024. Mrs Sørensen has a background in International Development Studies and before arriving in Chisinau, she was Head of Section for Denmark's support to reforms in Ukraine and Moldova in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark. This engagement included working for Denmark at the EU Anti-Corruption Initiative in Kyiv, Ukraine. Prior to her experience in the Eastern Neighbourhood Countries, she worked in and with reforms and research in Sub-Saharan Africa.



Steliana Nedera is the Manager of the UNDP Regional Hub in Istanbul since September 2023. Before she had the role of Resident Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina since May 2019. Prior to this, Ms. Nedera undertook three separate assignments as UNDP Deputy Resident Representative in Serbia (2014-2019), in Kosovo* (2011-2014) and in Kazakhstan (2007-2011). She joined UNDP in 2004, as Assistant Resident Representative with the UNDP office in Moldova. Ms. Nedera's experience prior to joining UNDP was with DFID as Head of the DFID office in Moldova (2000-2004) and with private foundations on the development of civil society and the media (1996-1999). Ms. Nedera holds a Master's in Development

Management, currently studying towards a second Master's in Global Diplomacy and has a bachelor's in Law.



Mariia Zheltukha is UNDP Project Analyst for International Law at the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration - Ministry for Justice of Ukraine. In 2021, she obtained a Master's degree in International Law at the Institute of International Relations of Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv; and, in 2024, she obtained a Master's degree in International Human Rights Law at Lund University. From 2021 to 2022, she worked as an assistant to Mykola Gnatovskyy, the Chair of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture at the time. From 2022 to 2024 she worked as a UN Women National Consultant on CRSV to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration of Ukraine.

Continues acting as a Legal Analyst at the Analytical Centre JurFem since 2021.



Felicia Bechtoldt is the State Secretary of the Labour and Social Protection Ministry, with extensive working experience at the department of employment of the Oregon state, USA. She is currently coordinating the work of the Departments for Gender Equality, Demographic and Employment Policies within her Ministry. Ms. Bechtoldt is Chair of Working Group No 2 "Free movement of workers" of the National Coordination Mechanism for Moldova's Accession to the European Union. She is also a member of the group of the representatives of the institutions responsible for screening process of the European Union acquis on Chapter 23 on the component gender equality and violence against women.



Ekaterine Gamakharia is the head of the Tbilisi Representative Office of CSO Women Fund "Sukhumi" in Georgia, with over twenty years of experience in Gender Equality and WPS with both non-governmental and international organizations. She leads advocacy efforts to address the gender-specific human security needs of women and girls in Western Georgia, particularly those affected by conflict and displacement. Ekaterine is actively involved in dialogues and forums with conflict-divided societies from Abkhazia, Georgia and Tskhinvali region/ South Ossetia, Georgia and is dedicated to the peace process and conflict transformation in Georgia. Guided by CEDAW, UNSCR 1325, and other international and national women's rights instruments, she developed gender-focused projects and provided trainings to expand women's roles in peacebuilding and decision-making processes. She published several policy papers and analyses that served as evidence-based information for advocacy with relevant government officials at local, national, and international levels.



Milica Radovanovic Dumonjic is a senior advisor at the Ministry of European Integration, Republic of Serbia. She has been with the ministry for 11 years and is the Head of Group for Monitoring and Reporting on EU funds and Development Assistance in the area of Human Resources and Social Development, within the Sector for Planning, Programming, Monitoring and Reporting on EU Funds and Development Assistance. In her work, she is dealing with monitoring system of IPA within indirect management system of IPA and establishing system for monitoring of cohesion policy and Operational programmes. She is in charge for monitoring and reporting of all programs and projects in the area of human resources development and social development. At the same time, coordinates process of gender mainstreaming of IPA

programming documents and capacity building activities of public servants for gender mainstreaming in cooperation with EC and UNW since 2017.



Magdalena Mueller-Uri is Head of Cooperation at the Delegation of the European Union in Moldova and a dedicated gender equality champion within the Delegation. She has over 20 years of experience in external relations at the European Union. Her efforts have led to continued and dedicated funding for gender equality agenda in Moldova from EU. Under her leadership, the EU Delegation has prioritized support for projects aimed at increasing women's representation in politics, addressing gender-based violence, and ensuring gender equality is embedded in public policies and budgets. Her strategic guidance has ensured that gender equality remains a central theme in EU-funded projects across sectors, from education and health to economic development and governance.



Mihaela Cimbriciuc is a women's rights activist and Communications Manager at the National Coalition "Live without violence", where she creates and implements activities to promote gender equality and women's rights. Prior to joining the Coalition, she worked at Moldova.org, the first and only feminist media outlet from Moldova. Mihaela is an active promoter of gender equality and vocal in advancing women's right to a life free from abuse and violence.



Corina Ajder is the Secretary of State the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Moldova. Her portfolio includes topics including labor relations, social security, and social dialogue, among others. She studied law at the State University of Moldova, Moldova, and Universität des Saarlandes, Germany, and public policy at the Central European University, Hungary. Her experience includes work as a legal assistant at the European Center for Roma Rights in Hungary and Ukraine, and as a legal advisor for the European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights in Berlin.



Katarina Ivanković Knežević is Director for Social Rights and Inclusion in the Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion since September 2018. Her area of activity is modernisation of social protection systems and wider social policies fostering social and labour market inclusion, through the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights and other relevant social policies of the European Union. She is leading a work on disability and inclusion and is also DG EMPL Equality Coordinator. Before joining the European Commission she was a State Secretary in the Ministry of Labour and the Pension System of the Republic of Croatia, in which she was responsible for the management and implementation of the European Social Fund and other EU instruments aiming at human resources development. For the last 20 years her professional interests are human rights and gender equality, social and employment policies.



Vasil Tsakadze holds the position of Head of Social Statistics Department at National Statistics Office of Georgia – Geostat - since 2019. Previously he was Head of Agricultural and Environmental Statistics Division. Vasil has master's degree in economics. Vasil led the implementation of the first ever Time Use Survey in Georgia in 2020-2021, which generated internationally comparable time-use data for Georgia and filled important gaps in gender statistics, specifically in reporting on SDG 5.4.1. He is also managing gender data portal of Geostat and annual publication Women and Men in Georgia, both capturing specific sections on women's economic empowerment.



Daniela Gasparikova (Slovakia) serves as UNDP Resident Representative to the Republic of Moldova since May 2023. In her role, Ms. Gasparikova is the UNDP Administrator's representative at the country level, and head of the country office, being ultimately responsible for the quality and sustainability of UNDP interventions, including corporate policies and procedures. Daniela has 20 years of experience working for UNDP both in Europe and Asia-Pacific regions. Prior to this appointment, Daniela served as the UNDP Resident Representative in Montenegro (2019-2023) and the UNDP Deputy Resident Representative in Mongolia (2016-2019). She also served as the RBM, Monitoring and Evaluation Team Leader in UNDP Bangkok Regional Hub (2011-2016) and led the UNDP Country Programs' implementation in five Central European Countries out of the UNDP Regional Centre in Bratislava, Slovakia (2005-2010). In all leadership positions she has avidly advocated for and pursued gender equality and women empowerment, climate change mitigation/adaptation, human capital development and digitalisation as central to the UNDP's work.

Daniela started her development professional career as a Program Officer for Social Inclusion with UNDP Regional Centre in Bratislava, Slovakia. She holds a Postgraduate Diploma in International Relations and Master's degree in Pedagogy of Modern Linguistics, both from Comenius University in Slovakia. She speaks English, French, Russian, and Montenegrin/Serbian.



Halyna Meshcheriakova is a UN Women Programme Management Specialist in Ukraine. She has about 20-years' experience in UN System starting with UNDP and ILO on promoting gender equality in the world of work, economic empowerment of women and combating human trafficking. Halyna joined UN Women in 2014 working on gender mainstreaming to the national and local strategic planning and policies via Sustainable Development Agenda and gender-responsive governance. She was involved in gender mainstreaming to the humanitarian response, recovery and peacebuilding in Ukraine, promoting Women, Peace and Security agenda. Starting from 2019, has

been coordinating and managing UN Women projects in Ukraine, covering national partnership with the Parliament, Government, CSOs, private sector and media to promote women's rights and empower women and girls. Now is a Head of the Governance Unit of the UN Women Country Office in Ukraine, managing programmes on strengthening legal and policy framework and national mechanisms on gender equality and women's empowerment to ensure women and girls meaningfully participate and equally benefit from gender-responsive recovery and EU integration of Ukraine. Halyna has a Masters' Degree in International Law, is fond of mountain skiing in winter and travelling in summer, is married and has two adult children.



Natalia Efros is a passionate winemaker who masterfully combines the tradition of viticulture with innovation to create remarkable wines. She is the co-founder of AlterEgo winery and host of the podcast #WinederfulWomen, where she prioritizes women in the wine world. She has also received a master's degree in the profession and went to sommelier school. Natalia has received financial support within a project implemented by UN Women Moldova amid the Covid-19 pandemic. Previously, Natalia was a lecturer at the State University of Moldova, where she is also doing her PhD in political communication.



Jonna Naumanen is a Gender Equality and Women, Peace, and Security Expert, and has served as a Senior Adviser on these topics to the EU Ambassador for Gender and Diversity since May 2022. She began her career in international affairs in 2007, focusing on women's micro-entrepreneurship and gender-based violence prevention and response in Central America. Over the past 15 years, she has also held advisory roles in three different UN organizations—UN Secretariat, ILO, and UN Women—working in various duty stations, including Honduras, Vietnam, East Timor, Jordan, and UNHQ in New York. Her work has advanced gender equality within labour market policies and laws, infrastructure development, conflict recovery programming, and military affairs, and she has led regional programming on Women, Peace, and Security. Before joining the EU, Ms. Naumanen managed a portfolio for the OSCE ODIHR in Warsaw, dedicated to promoting gender equality and safeguarding the human rights of armed forces personnel in the 57 OSCE participating States. She holds both a Bachelor's and a Master's degree in Social and Cultural Anthropology from the University of Helsinki.



Cristina Lesnic is the co-founder of CSO Institute for Democracy and Development in the Republic of Moldova and former Deputy Prime Minister for reintegration. She has about 20 years of experience in the field of law enforcement, security and conflict resolution. Cristina Lesnic was the first women chief-negotiator for Transnistrian settlement conflict in the period between 2018-2020 on the side of constitutional structures. She coordinated the first National Action Plan for Women Peace and Security agenda in the Republic of Moldova and co-participated for drafting the second-generation NAP WPS for 2023-2027. Moreover, Cristina Lesnic is working closely with UN Women in the context of Women Advisory Board for Sustainable Peacebuilding and Peace building activities.



Daniela Misail-Nichitin is the State Secretary of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. She is National WPS Focal Point, leading the implementation of the National Programme and Action Plan for the implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on WPS for 2023-2027. In the period 2015-2021, Ms Misail Nichitin was Director of "La Strada" International Center. Mrs. Misail-Nichitin is co-author of more than 15 publications (guides, information materials) in the field of countering human trafficking, investigation and coordinated response to cases of sexual violence, family violence and the victimology of sexually exploited children.



Sophio Rusetski has been working on the issues of gender equality, violence against women, and domestic violence for 18 years. For 10 years she has been working at the Office of Public Defender (Ombudsman) of Georgia and for the last three years, she has been leading the Gender Department of the Public Defender's Office. Among other work, she has prepared three publications on the Implementation of the National Action Plan of the UN Security Council Resolutions "On Women, Peace, and Security" with recommendations for the state agencies and other thematic special reports. She is a trainer on the issues of gender equality, violence against women, early marriage, femicide, and Human security. Ms. Rusetski is member of working groups of the Inter-Agency Commission on Gender Equality, Violence against Women and Domestic Violence - "Women, Peace and Security" and "Early Marriage and Other Harmful Practices" and is member of the working group on issues of femicide at the Parliament of Georgia.



Samra Filipovic Hadziabdic is the Director of Agency for Gender Equality of Bosnia and Herzegovina, of the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of Bosnia and Herzegovina. As Director of the AGE BiH, MHRR BiH she is in charge for development of governmental strategies to mainstream gender issues (including the forth generation of Gender Action Plan of BiH, Action Plan for the implementation of the UNSCR 1325 in BiH, Framework Strategy for implementation of Istanbul Convention in BiH) and has led the processes of development and adoption of the Law on Gender Equality in BiH. She was critical for establishment of gender institutional mechanisms in the early 2000s, as well as Gender Master Studies, and continues to drive the gender equality agenda in BiH to date. Ms. Filipovic Hadziabdic is a recognized UN and Council of Europe expert and has served as a member of the Ad Hoc Committee that developed the Istanbul Convention. At present, Ms. Filipović Hadziabdić is the member of the Committee of Parties of the Istanbul Convention and the Gender Equality Commission of the Council of Europe. In 2005, she established regional cooperation between gender institutional mechanisms in Western Balkans and is a chairwoman of Regional Board for Gender Equality for the Western Balkans countries.