

COMMISSION for SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

United Nations Headquarters, New York



Bios of Speakers

Panel Discussion on Emerging Issues

*“The Influence of Digital Transformation on Inclusive Growth and Development:
A Path to Realizing Social Justice”*

Wednesday, 7 February, 3:00 pm-6:00 pm, Conference room 4

Moderator:

**Ms. Cynthia Samuel-
Olonjuwon**



Ms. Cynthia Samuel-Olonjuwon (Nigeria) is the Special Representative of the the International Labour Organization (ILO) to the United Nations and Director of its Office in New York. Prior to her current appointment, she was the Assistant Director-General and Regional Director for Africa of the ILO and has held this position since 2017. Ms. Samuel-Olonjuwon joined the ILO in 1995 and has undertaken different responsibilities in the field and Geneva, including Deputy Regional Director for Africa, Chief of the ILO Programming Unit for Africa and Deputy Director of the ILO Office in Pretoria.

As a member of the ILO senior management team, with a special focus on Africa, Ms. Cynthia Samuel-Olonjuwon has played an important role in the development and implementation of regional strategies to deliver high quality decent work results that advance social justice as well as foster opportunities for regional cooperation; particularly with the African Union, African Development Bank and Regional Economic Communities, while building strategic alliances throughout the region. She served, along with the African Development Bank President, on the UNECA supported High-level Panel on Migration chaired by President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf.

A committed facilitator of strategic collaboration between UN agencies and regional institutions like the African Union, Ms. Samuel-Olonjuwon effectively led the AU/ILO/IOM/ECA team that developed the Joint Programme on Labour Migration Governance for Development and Integration in Africa (JLMP), which was adopted by African Heads of States in 2015. This joint programme has led to a strengthened and strategic collaboration between the AU, ILO, IOM and other partners to improve the effective governance of labour migration in the continent, and from Africa to other regions such as Europe and the Middle East. It also supports the achievements of the First Ten Year Implementation Plan (2013 to 2023) of the African Union's Agenda 2063 and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Among many other pioneering initiatives, she is strategically leading the ILO/ITU/AU Joint Programme on Boosting Decent Jobs and Enhancing Skills for Youth in Africa's Digital Economy. The vision of the programme is to enable more young African people to access decent work in the digital economy. With a holistic approach that addresses the labour market supply side, the labour market demand side as well as labour market intermediation, the programme provides the comprehensive support that enable the initial nine target African countries to maximize the decent work opportunities for young women and men.

Ms. Samuel-Olonjuwon holds a BSc in Sociology (1980) and a Masters' Degree in Industrial and Labour Relations from the University of Ibadan in 1982. With about 40 years of experience in the world of work, she had worked as Assistant Director in the Nigerian Employers' Consultative Association (NECA). Prior to that, she was a Senior Researcher and Trainer at the National Institute for Labour Studies, and had been a Lecturer on Gender Issues, Industrial Sociology and Group Dynamics at the Ahmadu Bello University. During her stint in the academia, she was appointed to the Board of the International Sociological Association (Research Committee on Women in Society) from 1986 to 1990. Ms. Cynthia Samuel-Olonjuwon's exemplary leadership has been recognized beyond the UN; she was named as one of the 100 Most Influential African Women in 2019 by Avance Media.

H.E. Mr. Gabriel Bastos



Gabriel Bastos, born in Lisbon in 1973, is the Secretary of State for Social Security of the Ministry of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security of Portugal.

He graduated in Law and has a postgraduate degree in Legal-Administrative Science from the University of Lisbon School of Law (1997). He was Vice-Chairman of the Governing Board of the Social Security Institute (ISS) from 2016 to 2019. He was Secretary of State for Social Security in Prime Minister António Costa's second Government. He was also the Portuguese representative at the EU Social Protection Committee and substitute member of the Economic and Social Council from 2016 to 2019. He was a technical advisor on Portugal's delegation at the OECD from 2007 to 2010 and an advisor to different ministerial cabinets under the field of Social Security and Social Equipment. He was Chief of Cabinet of the Minister of Labour and Social Solidarity from 2005 to 2007.

He was head of the Criminal Offences Department at the central services of the Financial Management and Social Security Institute (1998-2002) and head of the Identification, Qualification, and Contributions Department (2011-2012) of the Social Security Institute. He was a trainer in various courses organised by the ILO (Turin training centre) under the framework of cooperation with the Portuguese-Speaking African Countries and East Timor.

Ms. Heba Hagrass



Ms. Heba Hagrass, from Egypt, was appointed by the UN Human Rights Council as the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities from 1 November 2023.

She is an advocate, an international disability consultant, and a researcher on the rights of persons with disabilities with an extensive experience in Egypt, the Arab Region, and worldwide. Ms. Hagrass is a sociologist with PhD in Disability Studies at the University in Leeds (2010) with a specialization in disability rights and social policies, gender, and employment. At the international level, Ms. Hagrass was notably a representative of women with disabilities in the International Disability Caucus (IDC) who participated in the drafting of Article 6 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) on women with disabilities.

From 2015 to 2020, Ms. Hagrass served as a Member of the House of Parliament of Egypt where she represented persons with disabilities. In this role, she submitted five draft laws relating to the rights of persons with disabilities covering different areas. Prior to becoming a member of parliament, she was the Secretary General of the Egyptian National Council for Disability Affairs. She is a board member of both the National Council for Persons with Disabilities and the National Council for Women. In Egypt, she was also a member of the committee drafting the National Human Rights Strategy of Egypt and a founding member of the Inclusive Education Foundation, a key advocate for starting the implementation of inclusive education in 2009.

Between 2017 and 2020, Ms. Hagrass served as a member of the Governing Council of the National African Peer Review Mechanism. Further, she is a founding member of the Arab Organization of Disabled People in 1998, where she was active until 2008, including as the head of its Women's Affairs Committee. She was a member of the Arab Forum for Social Sciences and Health between 1997 and 2000. Ms. Hagrass has wide experience as a consultant on disability rights and inclusion with numerous international, regional and national organizations, such as UN agencies, the International Disability Alliance, CBM Advisory Group, Disabled People International, Rehabilitation International, Save the Children UK, Plan Egypt, Coptic-Evangelical Organization for social services, Arab Labor Organization, and diverse Egyptian Ministries and others.

Ms. Ursula Wynhoven



Ursula Wynhoven is a lawyer with 24 years of experience, the last 16 of which have been with the United Nations. She is the Representative to the United Nations in New York for the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and Head of its UN Affairs Division and NY Liaison Office. The ITU is the UN's specialized agency for information and communication technologies committed to connecting the world wherever people live and whatever their means. She works at the intersection of technology and development, promoting digital inclusion and the use of ICTs for sustainable development.

Prior to joining the ITU, Ursula worked with the UN Global Compact, the UN's corporate sustainability initiative, as its Chief, Social Sustainability, Governance and Legal, where she led legal affairs, and developed and led programming on social sustainability and governance issues, spearheading initiatives such as the Women's Empowerment Principles, Children's Rights and Business Principles, and Business for the Rule of Law. Before joining the UN, Ursula worked for the OECD on its corporate responsibility initiative, for government human rights agencies, and for law firms in Australia and the US.

She has Master of Laws degrees from Columbia University, where she was a Human Rights Fellow, and from Monash Law School, as well as Bachelor's Degrees in Law (Hons), Economics and Letters. She has been admitted to practice law in jurisdictions in the United States, United Kingdom and Australia.

Ms. Aida Opoku-Mensah



Ms. Aida Opoku-Mensah is currently the founder and MD of Centric Digital Ltd., a private company based in Ghana, which is providing innovative, practical & value-centric services and applications to promote the digital economy of the country. She is also the founder of the Consortium on the Fourth Industrial Revolution for Africa's Development (FIRCAD). She previously worked with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) as Chief of Staff to the Executive Secretary & Special Advisor on SDGs where she coordinated and provided strategic advice on SDGs activities within the Commission, including the African Union-UN Framework on SDGs & Agenda 2063.

In previous roles in the same organization she was Director, ICT, Science & Technology Division, where she managed ECA's programme on Harnessing Information, Science and Technology for Africa's Development, which included the Knowledge, Library and Information Services programme. As Director of that division, she specifically led and implemented impressive initiatives such as ECA's African Information Society Initiative (AIS) a continental digital agenda supporting African countries to develop and implement national ICT4D policies and strategies. In supporting African countries to develop and implement digital policies, Ms. Opoku-Mensah and her team promoted Internet Governance & cybersecurity issues at the continental level as well as contributed to the AU Cyber Security Convention otherwise known as the Malabo Convention.

Aida holds a BA Hons in Linguistics from the University of Ghana; a Diploma in - International Studies from the University of London; a MA in Communication Policy Studies from the City University, London; and a PhD in Political Science and Communications from the School of Politics and International Studies at the University of Leeds. Ms. Opoku-Mensah sits on a number of boards, including the Walker Institute Advisory Board (University of Reading), is a member of the University Advisory Council of the Accra Institute of Technology, and vice-chair of the advisory board of the Lagos-based CSO, Paradigm Initiative that focuses on digital rights in Africa. She is also on the Advisory Committee of the ATAF African Tax Research Network. She was instrumental in the registration of the Network of African Women in Cybersecurity and is a director/executive member of the organization.

Ms. Julia Stoyanovich



Ms. Julia Stoyanovich is an Institute Associate Professor of Computer Science and Engineering, Associate Professor of Data Science, and Director of the Center for Responsible AI at New York University. Julia's goal is to make "responsible AI" synonymous with "AI". She works towards this goal by engaging in academic research, education and technology policy, and by speaking about the benefits and harms of AI to practitioners and members of the public. Julia's research interests include AI ethics and legal compliance, and data management and AI systems. She has co-authored over 100 academic publications, and has written for the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, and The Hill. Julia holds a Ph.D. in Computer Science from Columbia University. She is a recipient of the National Science Foundation (NSF) CAREER Award and a Senior Member of the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM).