



PERMANENT MISSION
OF MALTA TO THE UNITED NATIONS
NEW YORK

 Permanent Mission
of Austria to the
United Nations in New York



Buan-Ionad na hÉireann
chun na Náisiún Aontaithe
Permanent Mission of Ireland
to the United Nations



Side Event during the 70th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW70)

Empowering Women in the Nuclear Field & Strengthening the Role of Men as Allies in Gender Equality

11 March 2026, at 10.00hrs to 11.15hrs

Conference Room 9, UNHQ

Biographies

Moderator

Ms Francesca Gatt, Senior Counsellor, Senior Lead on Women Peace and Security, WPS Focal Point and Gender Focal Point for TPNW



Since 20 October 2025, Ms Gatt is the senior lead and focal point on Women, Peace and Security and is lead on Children and Armed Conflict within the Global Issues Directorate at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Tourism.

Since joining the Maltese Foreign Service in 2003, she has served in New York at the Permanent Mission of Malta to the United Nations, Brussels at the Permanent Representation of Malta to the European Union and Malta's Missions in The Hague and Prague.

Previously from July 2017 to July 2020, she was first Acting and then Director for Global Issues within the Directorate-General for Global Issues, International Development and Economic Affairs. Within the Directorate for Global Issues, Ms Gatt supported and advised the formulation, projection and implementation of foreign policy in a number of areas.

Ms Gatt obtained a first-class degree in BA (Hons) International Relations and a MA in Diplomatic Studies, both from the University of Malta.

Speakers

HE Maritza Chan, Permanent Representative of Costa Rica, Chair of CSW70



Ambassador Maritza Chan is Costa Rica's Permanent Representative to the United Nations—the first woman to hold this position since Costa Rica's founding membership in the UN. With nearly 30 years of distinguished service in international peace and security, disarmament, non-proliferation, arms control, gender equality, and the governance of emerging technologies, she has held multiple leadership positions at the United Nations.

Ambassador Chan currently serves as Chair of the 70th Commission on the Status of Women (March 2025-March 2026). In 2025, she served as Vice-President of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) for the Humanitarian Affairs Segment. Under her leadership, she issued a Call to Action that garnered unprecedented support from 151 Member States, transcending ECOSOC's membership. She also served as co-facilitator with Spain of the intergovernmental process that established the Independent International Scientific Panel on Artificial Intelligence and the Global Dialogue on Artificial Intelligence Governance in 2025.

In 2024, Ambassador Chan served as Chair of the First Committee (Disarmament and International Security) for the 79th Session of the General Assembly—the first female Permanent Representative to preside over this Committee. That same year, she led the Fourth United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects to a consensus outcome. She previously served as Vice-Chair of the Open-Ended Working Group on Conventional Ammunition (2022-2023), which elaborated The Global Framework for Through-life Conventional Ammunition Management.

Ambassador Chan served as President of the UNICEF Executive Board (2022) and Vice President of the UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS Executive Board (2023). She is a Board Member of the United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF), Security Council Report, and the International Peace Institute.

HE Natasha Meli, Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations



Ambassador Natasha Meli, a career diplomat with 25 years of experience in bilateral and multilateral affairs is Malta's Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York, since 8 September 2025.

Ambassador Meli takes up this position after having served as Malta's Ambassador to the Federal Republic of Austria, and as the Permanent Representative of Malta to the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), to the United Nations and to the other International Organisations based in Vienna.

In 2024, during Malta's OSCE Chairpersonship, she served as Chair of the Permanent Council of the OSCE, and led negotiations that resulted in decisions on the Top 4 positions of the Organization and its Chairpersonship for 2027.

Prior to taking up her responsibilities in Vienna, between 2016 and 2014 Ambassador Meli served as Malta's Ambassador to Poland and non-resident Ambassador to Georgia, Moldova, Belarus and Armenia.

In 2014, she was appointed Deputy Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations, covering the Security Council, and was Malta's representative on the 1st and 4th Committees.

She previously served in the Embassy of Malta in France, and as Antici in the Permanent Representation of Malta to the European Union prior to and following Malta's accession.

Ambassador Meli holds a Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in International Relations from the University of Malta, and a Master's Degree in European Politics and Administration from the College of Europe in Bruges, from where she graduated in 2000. She also holds a *Diplome d'Hautes Etudes en Français* and a *Diplome d'Etudes Supérieures* from the *Alliance Française*. Prior to joining the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, she was an intern with the European Commission and had a brief experience in journalism. Between 2002 and 2003 she was a visiting lecturer on Euro-Mediterranean relations at the European Documentation and Research Centre, University of Malta.

She is fluent in Maltese, English, French and Italian and has knowledge of German and Polish.

Born on 30 July 1977 in Malta, Natasha Meli has two children.

Panellists

Ray Acheson, Director of Reaching Critical Will



Ray Acheson (they/them) is Director of Reaching Critical Will, a project working for disarmament and demilitarization. They provide analysis and advocacy at the United Nations on nuclear weapons, autonomous weapons and the militarization of AI, the arms trade, military spending, and more. Ray served on the steering group of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), which won the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize for its work to ban nuclear weapons. They are the author of *Banning the Bomb, Smashing the Patriarchy* and *Abolishing State Violence: A World Beyond Bombs, Borders, and Cages*, and are a Visiting Researcher at Princeton University's Program on Science and Global Security.

Dr. Emma Belcher, President of Ploughshares and member of Women Transforming Global Security



Renowned expert on nuclear weapons policy, Dr. Emma Belcher is the President of Ploughshares. In leading the largest foundation singularly focused on reducing the threat of nuclear weapons, Dr. Belcher is an authority on the threat of nuclear weapons and the nuances of nuclear weapons policy. She has experience in a variety of media concerning the threat of nuclear weapons. Although she's spent the past 13 years working for foundations, her experience extends beyond philanthropy. She began her career as a Public Affairs Officer at the Australian Embassy in Washington, DC; served as a national security and international affairs advisor in Australia's Department of the Prime Minister; and held multiple fellowships at prestigious organizations, including the Council on Foreign Relations and Harvard University's Belfer Center during and after earning her doctorate degree from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University. Dr. Belcher is available to speak on nuclear weapons reduction, philanthropy, US foreign policy as it relates to nuclear weapons, the importance of intersectionality and inclusion in advocating for peace, and related topics. To read, view, or listen to Dr. Belcher's previous media appearances, visit the <https://ploughshares.org/>. Her 2019 TED Talk on the importance of confronting, humanizing and

ultimately solving the existential threat of nuclear weapons can be viewed https://www.ted.com/talks/emma_belcher_3_questions_we_should_ask_about_nuclear_weapons

Mr. Stefan Pretterhofer, Deputy Permanent Representative of Austria to the United Nations



Mr. Stefan Pretterhofer assumed his position as Deputy Permanent Representative of Austria to the United Nations in New York in August 2023. Prior to his appointment as Deputy Permanent Representative, Mr. Pretterhofer held a number of positions.

He was a Member of the Cabinet of Federal Minister Alexander Schallenberg in the Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs of Austria (August 2020 to July 2023). He worked as Head of Unit for South and Southeast Asia in the Department for Asia and the Pacific (October 2019 to July 2020), as Counsellor at the Permanent Mission of Austria to the United Nations in New York (November 2014 to September 2019), as First Secretary and Attaché at the Austrian Embassy in Budapest (July 2010 to October 2014 and October 2009 to April 2010 respectively).

He also worked as desk officer in the Department for Tourist and Cross-Border Traffic, the Department for Bilateral and Multilateral Trade Relations and the Department for Eastern and South Eastern Europe.

Mr. Pretterhofer holds a bachelor's degree in Business Administration, a master's degree in Management and International Business and a master's degree in Law from the University of Graz, Austria. He also spent a year as an exchange student at the Institut d'études politiques de Paris ("Sciences Po").

Ms Fiona Simpson, Deputy Chief, Weapons of Mass Destruction Branch, Office for Disarmament Affairs, United Nations Secretariat

Fiona Simpson is a Senior Political Affairs Officer and Deputy Chief of the Weapons of Mass Destruction Branch at UNODA. Prior to joining the United Nations, she spent four years as a Senior Fellow at the Center on International Cooperation (CIC) at New York University, where she researched and wrote about WMD issues. She spent two years (2003-2005) as an External Relations and Policy Officer at the IAEA, in its Verification and Security Policy Coordination section, and began her career in the UK at the British-American Security Information Council (BASIC) and at the Acronym Institute for Disarmament Diplomacy.

Simpson hold a BA from the University of British Columbia and a PhD from the University of St Andrews in International Relations, for a thesis on the evolution of the nuclear non-proliferation regime and the impact of shocks on regime development. She has published in journals such as Arms Control Today and Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists and is the co-author of a book (with Christine Wing), entitled: Detect, Dismantle, and Disarm: IAEA Verification, 1992-2005, written during her time at CIC.