

## GFMD 2020 ROUNDTABLES

### BIOS of Co-Chairs / Thematic Lead / Rapporteur / Speakers

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#### Roundtable 4: “Addressing gaps in migrant protection”

##### *Co-Chair*

##### **Dr. Cristopher Ballinas Valdés**

Director General for Human Rights and Democracy  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of **Mexico**



A Doctor in Philosophy in Politics from the University of Oxford, he also earned a B.A. Summa Cum Laude in Political Science (UNAM) and has also attended graduated studies in Economics at the Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University and in American Studies at the University of California – San Diego and Master Studies in Government and Public Affairs (FLACSO – México).

In December 2018, he was appointed Director General for Human Rights and Democracy at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Mexico. In that capacity he is in charge of coordinating the foreign policy in human rights and democracy. Prior to that, he served as Head of the Office for the Evaluation of Performance at the National Institute for Transparency and Personal Data Protection; and previously, served as Deputy Director General at the Ministry for Social Development, and has been Adviser to the Vice-Minister for the Interior and to the Vice-Minister for the Environment.

Dr. Ballinas Valdés has published commentaries in leading newspapers in Europe and Latin America. His media appearances include radio, TV and Internet. His latest book *The Politics of Agency Design: Political Struggles and the Forging of Autonomous Government Agencies* (Palgrave-Macmillan) gives a general account of how to understand bureaucratic autonomy and what shapes it, focusing on the political struggles during the forging of government agencies.

The National Autonomous University of Mexico also awarded him with the Gabino Barreda Medal in Political Science in 2000.

*Co-Chair*

**Mr. Ahmed Skim**

Director of Migration Affairs

Ministry Delegate to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

African Cooperation and Moroccan Expatriates of **Morocco**



Engineer from the National Polytechnic Institute of Grenoble, France (1993) - Master of Business Administration (MBA) of the Ecole Nationale des Ponts et Chaussées, Paris (2007) - Head of the Organization and Methods Division at the Directorate General of Hydraulics, Secretariat of State in charge of Water (March 2005-Dec. 2008) - Head of the Pilot Projects & Environmental Impact Studies Division, Secretariat of State in charge of Water and Environment (Dec. 2008-March 2011) - Director of the Preservation of Heritage, Innovation and Promotion at the Ministry of Handcrafts (March 2011-Feb. 2014) – In Charge of Mission to the Head of Government at the Ministry in charge of Moroccans Residing Abroad and Migration Affairs (Feb. 2014-Jan. 2015) - Director of Migration Affairs at the Ministry Delegated to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Moroccan Expatriates (since January 2015).

He led the development of the National Strategy of Immigration and Asylum and coordinates its implementation.

*Thematic Lead*

**Mr. John Bingham**

Interim Head of Stakeholder Engagement

International Organisation of Employers (IOE)



A migrant, John Bingham is interim Head of Stakeholder Engagement at the International Organisation of Employers, including managing the GFMD Business Mechanism through January 2021. A lawyer, Mr. Bingham worked for eight years in a Wall Street investment bank, where he was Vice President.

In 2019 and 2020, Mr. Bingham worked with GFMD Chairs Ecuador and the UAE, the Mixed Migration Centre, the International Centre for Migration Policy Development, and as Geneva representative of the NGO Committee on Migration/New York.

From 2005 - 2018, Mr. Bingham was Head of Policy of the International Catholic Migration Commission, where he led civil society organizing in the GFMD. Earlier, he directed immigrant services for Catholic Charities in New York. Between 1988 and 1994, Mr. Bingham taught human rights and criminal justice in a Cambodian refugee camp in Thailand, and business law

at the university in Phnom Penh, where he co-authored two books, Free Market Contract Law and an English-Cambodian Law Dictionary.

### Focused Session I

#### *Speaker 1 – Focused Session I*

##### **Amb. Evan Garcia**

Permanent Representative of the **Philippines** in Geneva



Ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of the Philippines to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva

A career diplomat, he brings over thirty years of professional diplomatic experience to his post. Before assuming his current role, His Excellency served in many diplomatic postings including, among others, as the Permanent Representative to the United Nations in Geneva (2010 to 2013), Ambassador to the United Kingdom, and Non-resident Ambassador to Ireland, Consul and Economic Officer in the Embassy of the Philippines to Japan, and as a Political Officer, Acting Consul General, and Acting Deputy Chief of Mission in the Embassy of the Philippines to the United States of America.

He was appointed as Undersecretary for Policy from 2013 to 2016 and served in various other capacities in the Office of Asian and Pacific Affairs, Office of ASEAN Affairs, and the Office of the Secretary.

He has a License in International Relations and Political Science from the Graduate Institute for International Studies in Geneva and a Bachelor of Science Degree in Foreign Service, Magna Cum Laude, from the University of the Philippines in Diliman.

#### *Speaker 2 – Focused Session I*

##### **Ms. Bitta Mostofi**

Commissioner of the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs (MOIA) in **New York City**  
*(on behalf of the Mayoral Mechanism)*



Bitta is Commissioner of the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs (MOIA) in New York City. Under her leadership, MOIA has created programs and policies to advance the integration of immigrant New Yorkers in to the city's civic, economic and cultural life. Bitta spearheaded the IDNYC outreach campaign, connecting over 1.2 millions New Yorkers regardless of immigration status to government issued identification, increasing access to services and a greater sense of belonging to the city.

Other groundbreaking achievements include helping design the ActionNYC legal services program, bringing immigration legal services and education to communities through partnerships in schools, hospitals and community based organizations. In a time of intense anti-immigrant rhetoric and policy at the federal level, Bitta has led New York City's efforts to ensure immigrant families have access to the services and resources they need, while fighting back against policies that negatively impact New Yorkers.

Bitta has been a passionate immigrant and human rights advocate throughout her career. After graduating law school from DePaul University in Chicago, she practiced civil rights law with a particular focus on the discriminatory impact of immigration practices on Muslim and Middle Eastern immigrants. She later joined Safe Horizon as Senior Staff attorney and continued her legal practice representing immigrant crime victims, asylees, and others in both affirmative and defensive petitions before the immigration court. Bitta led the organization's advocacy work on behalf of immigrant crime victims seeking U visas, including before the City and Department of Homeland Security.

Bitta also has a background in community organizing, increasing awareness of global human rights injustices and the plight of refugees from Iran and Iraq. Bitta is the proud daughter of Iranian immigrants.

*Speaker 3 – Focused Session I and Roundtable Rapporteur*

**Ms. Fiona Andrew**

Minister Counsellor

Permanent Mission of **Australia** in Geneva



Fiona Andrew has held several operational roles in the Compliance, Detention and Border areas of the Immigration portfolio within the Department of Home Affairs.

She has served overseas with key postings to Malaysia, Germany and the United Arab Emirates, and short term missions to Hong Kong, Bangkok, Mumbai and Manila.

Fiona has been instrumental in the implementation of government policy relating to detention operations and responses to illegal maritime arrivals having served as the Regional Manager in charge of operations on Christmas Island, and as Assistant Secretary of the Detention Operations Branch where she was responsible for logistical and procedural support to Australia's network of immigration detention facilities.

In 2016 she transferred to the position of Assistant Secretary Character Assessment and Cancellation Branch responsible for character and general visa cancellation and refusal processes.

In November 2017, Fiona was posted to the United Arab Emirates where she was the Regional Director of the Middle East and North Africa. In January 2021, Fiona commenced as Minister Counsellor (Home Affairs) at the Australian Permanent Mission to the UN.

#### *Speaker 4 – Focused Session I*

##### **Ms. Ruthra Mary Ramachandran**

Youth representative of Malaysia National Working Body for the ASEAN Human Rights  
(Youth Speaker - Malaysia)



Ruthra Mary is a student pursuing a Bachelors of Southeast Asian Studies at University Malaya, Malaysia. She is the youth representative of Malaysia National Working Body for the ASEAN Human Rights Commission and has been leading the first youth-led consultations on the GCM with UN MGCY. As a participant of this year's Migration Youth Forum, Ruthra participated in the Thematic Roundtable 4: Addressing Gaps in Migrant Protect and reported on the regional roundtable session for Asia and Pacific.

Over the past two years, Ruthra has been an advocate for the equal rights and protection of young, undocumented migrants through her volunteer work with Mercy Malaysia and several other NGOs in the region. Through her experience, Ruthra has assisted numerous advocacy teams to raise awareness and to provide direct assistance to protect youth most at risk.

Ruthra's work includes supporting reintegration processes and assisting in the education and training services on behalf of her civil society organization. Ruthra is a strong advocate for the rights of migrants at regional youth platforms, such as ASEAN Youth Forum and Southeast Asia Young Peacebuilders Organization. She has published an op-ed for Shape-SEA (Strengthening Human Rights and Peace Research and Education in ASEAN/Southeast Asia) that focused on the food insecurity among migrant populations in Malaysia during the Covid-19 pandemic. Ruthra also works with UNMGCY Asia Pacific Migration Working Group to conduct consultations focusing on the implementation of GCM with several youth-led and youth-centered NGOs and civil society organizations in her region.

#### **Focused Session II**

#### *Speaker 1 – Focused Session II*

##### **Ms. Sónia Pereira**

High Commissioner for Migration of **Portugal**

Sónia Pereira is the High Commissioner for Migration of Portugal thus assuming the role of President of the Management Board of the High Commission for Migration (ACM, I.P.). With a degree in Economics, master in Migration Studies and a PhD in Geography, Ms. Pereira was

responsible for coordinating the Assistance to the Government of Portugal on Refugee Resettlement at the country office in Portugal of the International Organization for Migration (IOM). She has also collaborated with the International Labour Organization and as a researcher she has specialized in migration dynamics and policy making since 2002. Her research interests include labour migration, socioeconomic inclusion, human trafficking and the artistic and political participation of migrants.

*Speaker 2 – Focused Session II*

**Ms. Helena Olea**

Associate Director

Alianza Americas

*(on behalf of the GFMD Civil Society Mechanism)*



Helena Olea currently serves as Associate Director for Programs at Alianza Americas. She is an international human rights lawyer with advocacy and litigation experience before intergovernmental bodies and governmental agencies. Helena is an attorney authorized to practice law in Colombia, with an LL.M. from the University of Notre Dame.

She has over 12 years of teaching and research experience on human rights, migration, refugees and gender. She has also worked for non-governmental organizations in Colombia and in Chile. Helena has dedicated her professional life to the human rights of migrants, refugees, internally displaced persons, and women, combining advocacy and academia.

*Speaker 3 – Focused Session II*

**Ms. Leila Ouchani**

Head of Integration Division

Directorate of Migration Affairs of **Morocco**



Leila Ouchani is a specialist in the analysis and management of local development projects, since 1996.

In 2015, she joined the Department of Migration Affairs. In this capacity, she manages and participates in the development of economic integration projects for migrants and refugees in Morocco. She has assisted in the coordination and implementation of voluntary return and reintegration programs for migrants, within the framework of the National Migration and Asylum Policy, adopted by Morocco in 2013.

*Speaker 4 – Focused Session II*

**Mr. Ibrahim Kondeh**

Ambassador for “U-Report on the Move”  
(Youth Speaker – Sierra Leone)



Ibrahim Kondeh is a migrant from Sierra Leone, who arrived in Italy three years ago as an unaccompanied minor. He currently is a student at the United World College - Adriatic and is an ambassador for “U-Report on the Move,” the digital platform launched by Unicef, where he brings awareness of migration and migrant rights.

*Speaker 1 – Focused Session III*

**Mr. Donald Cochrane**

Minister Counsellor  
Permanent Mission of **Canada** in Geneva

Don Cochrane has worked for Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) since 1992 and has been the Minister Counsellor (Migration and Refugee Affairs) at the Permanent Mission in Geneva since 2017.

He has had previous overseas operational assignments in Budapest, Vienna, Ankara, London and Beijing. He has also had various assignments in Ottawa as a program and policy advisor to senior management and, most recently, as the Senior Director in his Department’s International Region.

Mr. Cochrane is a lawyer by training and worked in private practice prior to commencing work with the Canadian Government.

*Speaker 2 – Focused Session III*

**Mr. Kanishka Weerasinghe**

Director General/ CEO  
Employers' Federation of Ceylon, Sri Lanka  
(on behalf of the GFMD Business Mechanism)





Mr. Kanishka Weerasinghe is the Director-General / Chief Executive Officer of the Employers' Federation of Ceylon.

An Attorney -at-Law by profession, Mr Weerasinghe is a former State Counsel of the Attorney General's Department and counts over twenty-five years in the bar. He has obtained post graduate qualifications in International Relations / Affairs, including a Masters. He has also received executive education from the National University of Singapore (NUS).

He holds several concurrent positions nationally and internationally. In addition to being a (employer) member of the Standards Review Mechanism Tripartite Working Group (SRM-TWG) that functions under the aegis of the Governing Body of the International Labour Organization, he is an elected substitute employer member of the Governing Body of the ILO for the Asia-Pacific region. He also serves as an Executive Committee Member of the Business Mechanism in the Global Forum on Migration and development (GFMD) on behalf of the International Organization of Employers (IOE).

Nationally, he serves on several policy making bodies related to employment in Sri Lanka, including the National Labour Advisory Council (NLAC), National Steering Committee on Migration & Foreign Employment and the Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission (TVEC).

### *Speaker 3 – Focused Session III*

**Ms. Nina Hälg,**  
Program Officer  
Section of Forced Displacement and Migration  
Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of **Switzerland**

Nina Hälg is a Program Officer Multilateral Affairs at the Forced Displacement and Migration Section of the Peace and Human Rights Division at the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs in Switzerland.

Before joining the Foreign Ministry, she worked at the United Nations Secretariat in New York from 2014-2018. In her most recent position at the UN, she was working at the Office of the Secretary-General's Special Representative, Ms. Louise Arbour, supporting Member States in reaching the agreement on the Global Compact for Migration in December 2018.

### *Speaker 4 – Focused Session III*

**Ms. Khiabet Altihu Salazar Mujica,**  
UNICEF Child Protection Specialist with Children on the Move (**Youth Speaker – Peru**)





Khiabet is the United Nations Children Fund-UNICEF Child Protection Specialist with Children on the Move, where she advised the public response, at the local level, for unaccompanied or separated children and monitored the implementation of a psychosocial intervention at the northern border.