



Biographies for participants in order of programme

High-Level Round Table 1

Strengthening the three pillars of social development: poverty eradication, full and productive employment and decent work for all, and social inclusion

Tuesday, 4 November 2025 - 3:00pm- 6:00pm



Co-Chair:

H.E. Jakov Milatović

President, Montenegro

Jakov Milatović was born in Podgorica on December 7, 1986. He completed primary, secondary school, and university in Podgorica. As a recipient of a U.S. government scholarship, he spent one academic year at Illinois State University. After that, he spent one semester at the Vienna University of Economics and Business (WU Wien) as a scholarship holder of the Austrian government. Under the

sponsorship of the European Commission, he spent one academic year at La Sapienza University in Rome. He completed his master's studies in economics at the University of Oxford, where he was a scholarship holder of the British government.

He attended programs organized by the United Nations in New York, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation in Germany, the Embassy of Montenegro in Rome, and the Office for International Cooperation at the Faculty of Economics in Podgorica. He also attended the Oxbridge Academic program at Oxford, a series of programs at the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in London, as well as at the London School of Economics (LSE). He furthered his education at Peking University, the University of Belgrade, and the Leadership Academy of Stanford University. He has worked in the banking sector both in Montenegro and abroad. In the department for economic and political analysis at the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), he worked on economic analysis for the Southeastern Europe region and the Western Balkans. From 2018 to 2020, he worked in Bucharest as the EBRD's lead economic analyst for Romania, Croatia, Slovenia, and Bulgaria. In the fall of 2022, he was a visiting lecturer at the Luxembourg School of Business. He is the author of several expert papers and co-author of two books.

In December 2020, he was appointed Minister of Economic Development in the 42nd Government of Montenegro. In June 2022, he founded the "Europe Now!" Movement and is one of its leaders. After the success of the list he led in the Podgorica local elections, he ran in the presidential elections. He assumed office as President of Montenegro on May 20, 2023. He speaks English, Italian, and Spanish.



Co-Chair:

H.E. Mr. Edil Baisalov

Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers, Kyrgyzstan

Edil Baisalov (Russian: Эдил Байсалов) is a Kyrgyz politician, civil society activist who currently serves as the Kyrgyz Republic's Ambassador to the Court of St James's. He played a prominent role in the Tulip Revolution of 2005 and following the 2010 Kyrgyzstani uprising on April 7, 2010 briefly served as Chief of Staff of the interim government led by Roza Otunbayeva. In 1999-2007 Baisalov led the 'Coalition for Civil Society and Democracy', the largest Kyrgyz advocacy and election monitoring network.



Keynote Speaker:

Ambassador Juan Somavia

Former Permanent Representative of Chile to the UN and Chair of the 1995 WSSD PrepCom and Main Committee, former ILO Director-General, Honorary Member of the Club de Madrid

Juan Somavia (Chile) was Director-General of the ILO from March 1999 to September 2012. He has had a long and distinguished career in civil, political and international affairs. His wide experience in all areas of public life – as Ambassador, CEO, policy-maker, and his involvement in social development, business, civil and academic organizations have all helped shape his vision of the need to secure decent work for women and men through productive investments in the real economy. He believes that in many ways the quality of a society is defined by the quality of work available. He has been particularly active in addressing the social dimension of the present financial and economic crisis. Throughout his career, he has written and lectured widely on trade, security, social, economic, labour, and human rights issues and holds numerous citations and awards for his work in the areas of peace, human rights and social development. Throughout his tenure, he has been an active

participant in the activities of the World Economic Forum in Geneva and the annual gathering in Davos. He was also involved in the initial meetings of the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre and Mumbai.

Prior to his election as Director-General of the ILO, Mr Somavia was Ambassador of Chile to the United Nations in New York from 1990 to 1999, representing the newly elected democratic government of Chile. He held some key positions at the United Nations. After graduating in 1962, he continued higher studies in economic development at the School of Law and Economics at the University of Paris from 1964 to 1966.

Mr Somavia was awarded a Doctorate Honoris Causa by Connecticut College in 1996, by the Universidad Católica del Perú in 1999, by the University of Turin in 2001, the University of Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne in 2003, and in 2009 by the University of Coimbra and the University of Kassel.



Moderator

Mr. Gilbert F. Hounbo

Director-General, International Labour Organization (ILO)

Gilbert F. Hounbo was born in Togo in 1961 and has spent much of his life working to improve the prospects of the world's most vulnerable people, using his extensive experience in policy issues, economic development, diplomacy and financial accountability.

Following an advanced degree in business management from the University of Lomé (Togo), Gilbert F. Hounbo obtained a degree in accounting and finance from the Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières (Canada). He is a member of the Canadian Institute of Chartered Professional Accountants.

Gilbert F. Hounbo joined Price Waterhouse in Canada in 1986 and worked with them until 1993. Between 1994 and 1996 he served as Director of Finance at the International Bank of Mali, before moving to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) where he held several posts, including as Head of Financial Reporting and Trust Fund Management, Comptroller and Director of Finance and Administration, Chief of Staff, and Assistant Secretary-General and Regional Director for Africa.

In 2008, Gilbert F. Hounbo was asked to serve as Prime Minister of Togo, a position he held until 2012. He returned to the United Nations system in 2013 as Deputy Director-General for Field Operations and Partnerships at the International Labour Office. In 2017 he was elected as the sixth President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), and in 2021 he was re-elected to the post. Gilbert F. Hounbo chairs the Board of the Natural Resource Governance Institute (NRGI) and is a board member of the International Center for Biosaline Agriculture (ICBA).

In March 2022 Gilbert F. Hounbo was elected by the ILO's Governing Body as the Organization's 11th Director-General, becoming the first African to hold the position, and took up the role on 1 October 2022.

He is focusing his mandate on promoting greater social justice, fighting inequalities and discrimination in the world of work and achieving better working conditions both through national action and by building more effective multilateral coordination and leadership. To bring this about, he is placing special emphasis on universal social protection, decent work in global supply chains and in the platform economy, the fight against child and forced labour, protecting the rights of migrant workers, promoting social dialogue and freedom of association, ensuring just transitions and attaining gender equality.



Panellist

H.E. Ms. Mariëlle Paul

Minister of Social Affairs and Employment, Kingdom of the Netherlands

Mariëlle Paul, born in Geldrop, the Netherlands, on 5 November 1966, has been Minister of Social Affairs and Employment in the Schoof Cabinet since 5 September 2025. Prior to that, she was State Secretary for Primary Education and Emancipation in the Schoof Cabinet between 4 July 2024 and 4 September 2025.

She had previously served as Minister for Primary and Secondary Education in the Rutte IV Cabinet between 21 July 2023 and 2 July 2024. Prior to that, she was a member of the House of Representatives between 31 March 2021 and 21 July 2023. Between 6 December 2023 and 2 July 2024, she was again a member of the House of Representatives. Ms Paul is a member of the VVD.



Panellist

H.E. Mrs. Naima Ben Yahia

Minister of Solidarity, Social Integration and Family, Morocco



Panellist

H.E. Ms. Diana Pokie

Minister of Social Affairs and Housing, Suriname

Ms. Pokie is a teacher by profession, she started her teaching career at VOJ Brokopondo where she worked for four years, and became vice president of VOJ Hockeystraat in Ramgoelam, Latour, Paramaribo. In 2005 she became Assembly member for the Brotherhood and Unity in Politics party. Five years later she was elected but she fell out with her party. She lost her place as the BEP representative and she switched her allegiance to the General Liberation and Development Party (ABOP) in 2014 appearing in yellow and black and lauded by the leader, Ronnie Brunswijk. The following year she was elected again to the Assembly. In 2017 while she was the MP, Brokopondo was chosen as the region to celebrate independence and Pokie was particularly pleased that they would be hosted at the largest village, Brownsweg, as that was her birthplace. In May 2019, she became the first female vice-chairman of the ABOP. She was called on that year to hear the complaints of local prospectors who had been moved on from the Canadian owned Rosebel gold mine in scenes where one man was killed. She called the local police action as dastardly and she asked the mine owners to find a solution and that they should feel responsible and they should pay compensation to the dead man's family. In 2020 she was re-elected again for Brokopondo, this time there were two successful candidates from the ABOP party. The party also took two seats in Marowijne and in Sipaliwini. With the single seat in Para and Paramaribo, this brought the total to eight members in the assembly.[9] On 16 July, Pokie became the Minister of Land and Forest Management. In the cabinet of Santokhi. On 11 October 2020, Pokie became the first cabinet minister to test positive for SARS-CoV-2. She quarantined herself, but it was not disclosed whether she had been in contact with other ministers.



Panellist

Mr. Luc Triangle

General Secretary, International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC)

Luc Triangle was elected ITUC General Secretary at the 6th ITUC Extraordinary World Congress in October 2023, after serving as Acting General Secretary from April 2023. The ITUC represents around 200 million workers in 169 countries and territories and has 340 national affiliates. Luc also holds several notable positions where he represents the global trade union movement: Board member of the UN Global Compact. Co-chair of the labour commission of the International Energy Agency. Vice-Chair of the Coordinating Committee at ILO Global Coalition for Social Justice. Member of the Civil Society Advisory Group to the WTO Director General. Leadership Group member of the Committee on Workers' Capital.

Luc's trade union work began in 1982 in the young workers' organisation of the ACV-CSC, Belgium. From 1984 – 2011, he worked on many different projects at the ACV-CSC at European and international levels, including supporting young workers and serving as Director of the training centre.

In 2011, Luc was elected as General Secretary of the European Trade Union Federation for Textiles, Clothing and Leather (ETUF-TCL).

He was elected as Deputy General Secretary of IndustriAll European Trade Union in 2012, and then General Secretary in 2016, with a re-election in 2021. IndustriAll Europe represents seven million working men and women across supply chains in manufacturing, mining and energy sectors across Europe.



Panellist

Mr. Amitabh Behar

Executive Director, Oxfam International

Amitabh Behar, Executive Director of Oxfam International, is a global civil society leader, with decades of experience in human rights, economic inequalities, governance accountability, philanthropy, democracy, social justice and building citizen participation. Prior to this role, he was the Chief Executive Officer of Oxfam India. Amitabh Behar, Executive Director of Oxfam International, is a global civil society leader, with decades of experience in human rights, economic inequalities, governance accountability, philanthropy, democracy, social justice and building citizen participation. Prior to this role, he was the Chief Executive Officer of Oxfam India.

Mr. Behar was the Vice Chair of the Board of CIVICUS, a global alliance of civil society organisations and activists dedicated to strengthening citizen action and civil society across the globe. He has also served as the Chair of Navsarjan (Ahmedabad) and the President of Yuva in Mumbai, and board member of the Global Fund for Community Foundation. He currently serves on the boards of several other organizations, including the International Civil Society Centre and the Norwegian Human Rights Fund, and also holds the position of Chair at the International Civil Society Centre.

Prior to Oxfam, Mr. Behar was the Executive Director of National Foundation for India and served as the Convener of National Social Watch Coalition and the Co-Chair of Global Call to Action Against Poverty, a network of over 11,000 civil society organisations.



Panellist

Ms. Esther Nagey

Youth Fellow, International Disability Alliance (IDA)

Esther Nagey is a youth and disability inclusion advocate and a Youth Fellow with the International Disability Alliance, focusing on meaningful inclusion and effective youth participation in global decision-making and development agendas. She coordinated the youth engagement strategy at IDA for the Global Disability Summit 2025. Esther led the development and the subsequent promotion of the Youth Call to Action for GDS 2025, a global framework calling for meaningful participation, digital inclusion, and social justice for youth with disabilities. She was also one of the youth speakers at GDS 2025 in Berlin, where she contributed to many global conversations representing the voices and opinions of youth with disabilities. She is passionate about inclusive development and continues to advocate for stronger accountability, representation and disability inclusive systems that empower young people with disabilities to lead and influence policies that impact their lives.

I am an initiative-taking, results-oriented professional with a Bachelor's Degree in Political Science and Philosophy from the University of Ghana and a substantial leadership, communication and advocacy background.



Lead discussant:

H.E. Mr. Åsmund Grover Aukrust

Minister of International Development, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norway

The Minister of International Development is responsible for international development efforts in countries outside the OSCE, the Middle East and Afghanistan. He is also responsible for Norwegian humanitarian efforts, development cooperation under the auspices of the UN system, the World Bank, the regional development banks and other global funds and programmes. In addition, he is Minister for Nordic Co-operation and responsible for Norad, Norec and Norfund.



Lead Discussant:

Ms. Sima Bahous

Executive Director, UN Women

Ms. Sima Sami Bahous became UN Women's third Executive Director on 30 September 2021. A champion for women and girls, gender equality, and youth empowerment, as well as a keen advocate for quality education, poverty alleviation, and inclusive governance, Ms. Bahous brings to the position more than 35 years of leadership experience at the grassroots, national, regional, and international levels, coupled with expertise in advancing women's empowerment and rights, addressing discrimination and violence, and promoting sustainable socio-economic development towards the achievement of the Sustainable

Development Goals.

Ms. Bahous most recently served as Permanent Representative of Jordan to the United Nations in New York. Prior to this position, she served as Assistant Administrator and Director of the Regional Bureau for Arab States at the United Nations Development Programme from 2012 to 2016 and Assistant Secretary-General and Head of the Social Development Sector at the League of Arab States, from 2008 to 2012.

She has also served in two ministerial posts in Jordan as President of the Higher Media Council from 2005 to 2008 and as Adviser to King Abdullah II from 2003 to 2005. She was Media Adviser and Director of Communication for the Royal Hashemite Court from 2001 to 2003, Acting Executive Director for the King Hussein Foundation from 2000 to 2001 and Executive Director of the Noor Al Hussein Foundation from 1998 to 2001. She also worked for UNICEF and with a number of United Nations and civil society organizations, and taught development and communication studies at different universities in Jordan.

Ms. Bahous holds a PhD in mass communication and development from Indiana University, United States, a Master of Arts in literature and drama from Essex University, United Kingdom, and a Bachelor of Arts in English literature from Jordan University. She is fluent in Arabic and English, and proficient in French.