



Inter-Parliamentary Union  
For democracy. For everyone.



**Strategic Inter-parliamentary Dialogue gender-responsive recovery post-COVID-19**  
*Gender-sensitive parliaments and gender-responsive legal reforms*

**21 April 2021**

8:00AM – 10:00AM (EST)

2:00 PM – 4:00PM (CET)

**Biographies**

**MODERATOR:**



**Sandra Pepera** is a career diplomat and international development professional. Before joining The National Democratic Institute as its director for Gender, Women and Democracy in 2014, she spent thirteen years as a senior officer at the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), including leading programs in the Caribbean, Rwanda-Burundi and Sudan. Prior to joining DFID, Sandra spent time in British domestic politics; lecturing in political science and international relations at the University of Ghana; and as a political analyst in the Political Affairs Division at the Commonwealth Secretariat.

Much of Sandra's career has been spent working in or on transitional economies, focusing on the building of resilient and inclusive institutions. She led work on women and politics at the University of Ghana and in outreach public policy during the period of intense and unstable political transition in the early 1990s. This included participating in a program that supported the ANC Women's League during South Africa's transition from apartheid to majority democratic rule in 1993.

Sandra is a member of the Cambridge Sustainability Leaders Network, the Royal Commonwealth Society, the Global Board Ready Women initiative, and the International Advisory Board of the Commonwealth Journal for International Affairs (the Round Table). She holds the Financial Times Diploma for Non-Executive Directors and serves as a trustee for the pension fund of an intergovernmental organization.

## **PANELISTS:**



**Ester Anyakun** is a MP in Uganda, serving since 2016. She is the Vice Chairperson on Presidential Affairs, a member of the Parliamentary Committee on Public Accounts, and served as a member of the Uganda delegation to the 139<sup>th</sup> IPU Assembly in October 2018. Prior to being elected as an MP, Ms. Anyakun worked as a Regional Community Coordinator at Resilience through Wealth, Agriculture and Nutrition Project, a Sustainable Consultant for the Karamoja Food Security and Community Stabilization Program and a Case Worker on international and local trafficking of women and children, International Organization for Migration (IOM). She holds a Bachelor Degree in Procurement and Logistics Management from Nikumba University and diplomas in Health Administration and Social Work and Social Development.



**Beatrice Duncan** is a Policy Advisor at the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) on the topic of access to justice. She previously worked at UNICEF and the UN Economic Commission for Africa on gender and human rights. She has over 25 years of experience in legislative and constitutional reforms, research and policy development, and advocacy with emphasis on the rights of women and children.



**Zeina Hilal** works to advance gender equality and human rights in and through parliaments since 20 years. She joined the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in 2006 where she is now the Manager of two flagship programmes of the organization: Gender Partnership and Youth Participation. She works with parliaments from around the world to inform and support deliberations, legislation and policy-making for the elimination of gender-based discrimination and violence and for the empowerment of women and youth. Promoting and supporting the participation of women and youth in politics is a key area of her expertise and a key priority for the global organization of national parliaments that she serves.



**Nahla Haidar** is a member of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and a Commissioner of the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ). She has over 30 years of professional experience mainly within the United Nations System, ranging from social development, to relief coordination, to peace-building and human rights. Ms. Haidar is CEDAW's rapporteur on reprisals and covers cases on women human rights defenders. In all areas of work, one of the main features throughout her career has been gender mainstreaming. She holds an advanced University degree in "Law and Sociology" from the University "Panthéon-Sorbonne" in Paris.



**Senator Fiona O'Loughlin** is a MP from Ireland. She is Chair of the Oireachtas Education and Skills Committee, a member of the Future of Mental Health Committee, Vice President of the Fianna Fáil Party, Member of the Seanad Reform Committee, Votáil 100 Committee and the Inaugural Women's Caucus. With a background in education (as a teacher), local government (member of Kildare County Council and Newbridge Town Council) and the Special Olympics (2003 World Summer Games and subsequently as an advocate for people with intellectual disability across Europe), Fiona has had diverse experiences which inform and support her work as a member of the Dáil since she was elected in 2016.

She has introduced 5 bills in the Dáil and has been involved in the formation of legislation to address social problems such as hate crimes and revenge pornography, domestic violence and mental health.



The **Honourable Mereseini Vuniwaqa** is the Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation in the Fijian Government. Hon. Vuniwaqa was first elected into parliament following the 2014 general elections and initially served as the Minister for Lands and Mineral Resources until 2016 where she then took on the mantle of Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation.

Prior to her political career, Hon. Vuniwaqa was a civil servant and lawyer. She holds a degree in Law from the University of the South Pacific and a Post Graduate Diploma in Legal Practice from the Australian National University. She served as a State Solicitor for Fiji's Office of the Attorney General from 1998. She served as Chair of the Telecommunications Authority of Fiji in 2008 and as Permanent Secretary for Justice and Acting supervisor of Elections from 2012 to 2013.