

# MEMBER PROFILES





Nordic Women Mediators - Finland is a network of sixteen leading professionals in peace and security, with expertise ranging from civilian crisis management and international law to diplomacy and peace mediation.

Members of NWM-Finland come from diverse professional backgrounds, including the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, multilateral and regional organisations such as the UN and OSCE, civil society and Finnish political life.

NWM-Finland is part of the Nordic Women Mediators. It shares the vision and mission of the Nordic network and works towards realizing them in Finland and abroad.

The overarching aim of NWM Finland is to promote the inclusive and meaningful participation of women in all phases of peace processes and to advance the engagement of Finnish professionals in support for peace globally.

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## BATULO ESSAK

Batulo Essak is a Somalia-born civil society leader, distinguished for her work on multiculturalism and gender equality. She is a midwife and public nurse by profession, which has led her to engage in women's rights issues both in Finland and Somalia. She is currently leading efforts to support women's meaningful engagement in peacebuilding and political decision-making in Somalia. Ms Essak has played prominent roles in the Advisory Board for Ethnic Relations and the Honours Committee on Equality in Finland and as elected member of Vantaa City Council in 2005-2008. She has received considerable recognition for her work for gender and social equality. In 2016, Ms Essak was awarded the D&K-suomi Humanitarian Award for her work to raise awareness of international humanitarian priorities.



## TARJA FERNÁNDEZ

Tarja Fernández is Ambassador of Finland to Lebanon and Jordan and serves as Chargée d'affaires to Syria. She has extensive experience of conflict and post-conflict countries, peace processes, crisis management and nation-building. She has taken part in various multilateral negotiations within the framework of the United Nations, and has actively promoted the Women, Peace and Security agenda in her leadership positions. She has served as the Ambassador of Finland to Kenya, Somalia, Eritrea, Seychelles, Uganda and as Permanent Representative to the UN in Nairobi. Her prior positions also include serving as Director of the Unit for European Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), as well as in various other positions in Tel Aviv, Stockholm, Pristina and the UN Headquarters in New York.



## ANNA-KAISA HEIKKINEN

Anna-Kaisa Heikkinen is currently serving as Finland's ambassador to Mozambique. Prior to assuming these duties in September 2020, she served as Finland's ambassador to Palestine in 2017-2020. In 2014-2017, she served as the special advisor in international affairs to the Prime Minister of Finland. Her earlier responsibilities at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs include, among others, work as the deputy head of unit for Russia, and postings in New Delhi, Moscow and Petrozavodsk. She joined the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in 2003 after several years of work in the field of communications. Ambassador Heikkinen holds a master's degree in international relations from the University of Tampere. Besides her native Finnish, she speaks English, Swedish, German, Russian, Hindi, Arabic, French and Portuguese.



## KIRSI HENRIKSSON

Kirsi Henriksson is President of DCAF (Geneve Centre for Security Sector Governance) and Director of Crisis Management Centre (CMC) Finland, which is a governmental institution and a centre of expertise in civilian crisis management. The main tasks of CMC Finland are to train and recruit experts for international peace operations as well as to conduct research in the field. CMC Finland acts as a national head office for all seconded Finnish peace-building professionals. Kirsi Henriksson has been Head of the European Union EUCAP Sahel Niger civilian crisis management mission (2016-2018). Preceding that, Ms Henriksson worked in Mali, Libya and Iraq. Before her current and international posts, she worked as a researcher and lecturer at the University of Tampere, namely at Tampere Peace Research Institute.



## PIA HORTTANAINEN

Pia Horttanainen is currently working as seconded Legal Adviser (Rule of Law) at European Union Capacity Building Mission (EUCAP) Somalia in Mogadishu. Her permanent position is Legal Counsellor at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland. She holds expertise on rule of law, development co-operation, humanitarian aid and peace mediation related to fragile countries and conflict contexts. She has also served as Counsellor at the Embassy of Finland in Kabul, Afghanistan. Prior to her current position, she was Legal Officer at the Army Command Finland in 2009-2013. She started her legal career in the private sector. Ms Horttanainen has vast experience also as lecturer and trainer. She holds Master's degree in Law (University of Lapland) and degree of Master of Advanced Studies ETH in Mediation in Peace Processes (ETH, Zurich).



Photo: Riku Isohella

## KIRSI JOENPOLVI

Kirsi Joenpolvi is team leader at the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa at the United Nations. Prior to her current position, she worked for the UN Mediation Support Unit in the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs as a focal point for technical advice to the UN's mediation efforts at the subnational and local levels and for enhancing mediation support capacities of regional organizations. Prior to joining the UN in 2015, Joenpolvi worked for the OSCE in Vienna and advised the Secretary-General on Ukraine. In 2007-2013, Joenpolvi headed the Africa Programme at CMI, supporting peace processes in Liberia, Mali and South Sudan and advising the African Union's Peace and Security Department. Joenpolvi has also worked on conflict resolution and good governance in Timor-Leste, Afghanistan, Ethiopia and China. She is a certified and practicing community mediator in New York.



## TIINA JORTIKKA-LAITINEN

Tiina Jortikka-Laitinen is Ambassador of Finland to Spain and Andorra. She has previously served as Ambassador-at-Large for Euro-Mediterranean and MENA regions in 2015-2017, and as Ambassador of Finland to Tunisia and Libya in 2010-2013. She has also served as Foreign Minister's Special Envoy for Ebola and as Ambassador for Countering Radicalization, Violent Extremism and Terrorism, as well as Director of the International Environmental Policy and as Deputy Director of Civilian Crisis Management at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland. Since 2013, Ambassador Jortikka-Laitinen has been engaged in informal dialogue processes focusing on the MENA region, for example at the Helsinki Policy Forum. She has extensive experience of co-operation with women's civil society organizations, particularly in the MENA region.



## PIRKKO-LIISA KYÖSTILÄ

Pirkko-Liisa Kyöstilä is Ambassador of Finland to Namibia and Angola. She is a diplomat with over 30 years of experience in international affairs. She has expertise in peace processes, peace mediation, particularly from Nepalese and Palestinian contexts, and is currently working on post-conflict reconstruction in Namibia and Angola. Prior to her current position, she has served as Ambassador of Finland to Palestine in Ramallah, as Director of the Unit for Non-Governmental Organisations at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, as Head of Mission at the Embassy of Finland in Nepal, and as Counsellor at the Permanent Delegation of Finland to the OECD in Paris, among other roles.



## HANNA LEPISTÖ

Hanna Lepistö is Mediation Support Adviser at the European Union External Action Service. Prior to this position, she has been a career diplomat at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, with several years of experience working on security policy in the Middle East and Northern Africa regions, including on the Syrian conflict and related mediation and peacebuilding support initiatives. She is finalizing a Master's degree on Mediation in Peace processes (2017-2019) at the Center of Security Studies at ETH Zurich. Previously, Ms Lepistö has served in the Embassies of Finland in Paris, Santiago de Chile and in the Permanent Representation of Finland to the European Union during the Finland's EU presidency in 2006. She holds a Master's degree in Social Sciences with a major in contemporary history.



## ANNE MESKANEN

Anne Meskanen works currently in EUAM Iraq as Deputy Head of the Mission. Besides the CSDP action, she has almost 25 years of solid diplomatic experience consisting working broadly with post- and in-conflict countries. During her diplomatic career Anne has held positions as Finnish Ambassador to Afghanistan, Head of Mission at the Embassy of Finland in Kosovo and Deputy Head of the Mission at the Embassy of Finland in Damascus among others. She has always given particular attention to promoting Women, Peace and Security Agenda both in Finland and international forums and is now keen to bring the 1325 Agenda even more to focus of the CSDP Missions. Anne is also a well-known pioneer in empowering girls and women through sports.



## SIRPA MÄENPÄÄ

Sirpa Mäenpää is Ambassador for Peace Mediation at the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and a leading expert on regional mediation, with a focus on Africa and the Middle East. Prior to her current role, she was the Ambassador of Finland in Addis Ababa covering Ethiopia, South Sudan and Djibouti, as well as the work of regional organisations. In this capacity, she was involved in supporting the African Union's capacity-building in mediation, and closely followed the South Sudanese peace negotiations. In 2009-2013, Mäenpää served as Ambassador of Finland in Bangkok covering Thailand, Myanmar, Lao PDR and Cambodia. Under her leadership, the Embassy supported peace negotiations for ethnic movements, a peace dividend program in Myanmar, and civil society's mediation efforts in southern Thailand.



## ANNE PALM

Anne Palm is Executive Director of the Wider Security Network WISE in Helsinki. Prior to her current role, she has worked as Advisor to the Commissioner on Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Council of the Baltic Sea States in Denmark, Operations Officer at the European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia in 2008-2011, and Operations Officer at the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine in 2014-2015. She has edited several books on conflict prevention, peacebuilding and crisis management. She is a member of the Steering Committee of the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO). Palm holds a Master's Degree in International Politics from the University of Helsinki.





## PIA STJERNVALL

Pia Stjernvall is Ambassador of Finland to Kosovo. She has extensive experience from Afghanistan, Somalia, Uganda, Eritrea and Kenya, and thematic expertise in thematic expertise in civilian crises management, conflict resolution, mediation, leadership, gender and inclusion. Prior to her current role, she worked as Ambassador for Civilian Crisis Management, as Head of Mission of EUPOL in Afghanistan and as Special Representative of Finland for International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and State-building. During her stay in Kenya as Finland's Deputy Permanent Representative to UNEP and UN-HABITAT, she worked on the Somali peace process and negotiations with Islamic Courts Union in 2006. Ambassador Stjernvall's role was pivotal in starting Finland's cooperation with Afghanistan on the UN Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security.



## NINA SUOMALAINEN

Nina Suomalainen is an international crisis management professional, with over 20 years of experience in political processes, strategic management, dialogue facilitation and communications in international mission contexts. Since May 2018 she works as Executive Director of Justice Rapid Response in Geneva, which provides expertise to investigations on war crimes and human rights violations around the world. From 2015 to 2018, she was Head of Mission at OSCE Mission to Skopje, leading a field operation with 150 staff focusing on inter-ethnic relations, early warning and conflict prevention. She has also served as Deputy Head of OSCE Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, senior adviser to the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, and as an adviser to the director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). Ms Suomalainen has a Master of Political Science degree from Åbo Akademi University in Turku, with a major in International Law.



## ASTRID THORS

Astrid Thors served as the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities from 2013 until 2016. She led the OSCE's mediation efforts in de-escalating tensions involving national minorities within the OSCE's area. Ms Thors has over two decades of experience of democratic politics, with particular expertise in minority rights. She has been an elected member of the European Parliament (1996-2004) and a member of the Finnish Parliament (2004-2013). During the latter tenure, she also served as Minister for Migration and European Affairs (2007-2011). Ms Thors has advanced the cause of equality in numerous leadership posts, including as chair of the Advisory Board on Human Rights Affairs at the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, as vice chair of the Swedish People's Party, and as chair of UNICEF Finland.



Photo: Jutta Urpilainen / juttaurpilainen.fi/kuva

## JUTTA URPIILAINEN

Jutta Urpilainen is the European Commissioner for International Partnerships and oversees the European Commission's work on international cooperation and sustainable development. She is a strong advocate for gender equality, social justice and youth participation. Before joining the Commission, Ms Urpilainen served as a Member of the Finnish Parliament, representing her electoral district of Vaasa for almost 17 years, from 2003 to 2019. In 2008, she became the first woman leader of the Social Democratic Party of Finland. From 2011 to 2014, she served as Finland's Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister. During that time (2013-14), she became closely involved in development issues and international solidarity, joining the Development Committee of the World Bank Group and IMF and chairing the Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development. She also served as the Foreign Minister's Special Representative on Mediation (2017-19) and chaired the Finnish National Commission for UNESCO (2015-18).



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**Nordic Women Mediators**

[www.nordicwomenmediators.org](http://www.nordicwomenmediators.org)

**Global Alliance of Regional Women Mediator Networks**

[www.globalwomenmediators.org](http://www.globalwomenmediators.org)

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