

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 Ambassador and Head of Mission at the Representative Office of Finland in Ramallah, Palestine since 2017. Prior to her current position, she served as the diplomatic advisor in international affairs for two Prime Ministers of Finland. Her earlier responsibilities at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs include, among others, acting as 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. She has authored a textbook of Hindi for Finnish-speaking students.



KIRSI HENRIKSSON

Kirsi Henriksson is Director of Crisis Management Center (CMC) Finland, which is a governmental institution and a center 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 peacebuilding 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 Legal Counsellor at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland and legal expert on development co-operation and humanitarian aid related to fragile countries and conflict contexts. The scope of work includes e.g. negotiation processes related to international agreements. 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 at 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).



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.

Photo: Riku Isohella



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 for 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 is a leading expert in the Department for Africa and the Middle East at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland. Most recently prior to her current position, she served as Ambassador and Special Representative of Finland for Afghanistan and as Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues and Gender Equality. Her career in diplomacy spans over twenty years, during which she has held positions as Chargée d'Affaires at the Embassy of Finland in Kosovo, as Deputy Head of Mission at the Embassy of Finland in Syria, and at the Mission of Finland to the United Nations in New York, among others. Prior to her career in diplomacy, Ambassador Meskanen worked as a journalist covering both domestic and international affairs.



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.



JUTTA URPILAINEN

Jutta Urpilainen is former Deputy Prime Minister of Finland and EU Commissioner-designate for International Partnerships. She has devoted her political career to advancing issues of human rights, gender equality, development and tax justice. As the first woman in Finland to lead the Social Democratic and to hold the position of Minister of Finance, she has been a pioneer in promoting gender equality and women's leadership in politics. Currently, she is Member of Parliament and the Foreign Minister's Special Representative on Mediation, focusing on strengthening the role of women and youth in peace processes. Her commitment to international solidarity is reflected in her long-standing memberships of the Finnish Development Policy Committee from 1999 to 2007, and the Finnish National Commission for UNESCO (chair 2015-2019, member 1999-2011).

Photo: Jutta Urpilainen /
<https://www.juttaurpilainen.fi/kuvat>



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Nordic Women Mediators

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Global Alliance of Regional Women Mediator Networks

www.globalwomenmediators.org

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