



**Event Title:** Elevating Women’s Leadership for Effective Water Diplomacy

**Event Date:** Tuesday, June 20, 13:00 – 14:30

**Location:** US Institute of Peace 2301 Constitution Avenue NW, Washington, DC

**Background:**

In honor of the [first anniversary of the International Day of Women in Diplomacy](#), USIP and partners at the Environmental Law Institute and the Stockholm International Water Institute will reflect upon women’s leadership in water diplomacy from around the world. Women’s leadership in decision making is essential to effective transboundary water cooperation. Research shows that including women in peace processes makes agreements more durable and leads to lower instances of conflict. Despite this, less than [10 percent](#) of negotiators in peace processes are women. In addition, [women are specifically underrepresented in transboundary water management](#), especially at higher levels of decision-making. However, entities such as [the Women in Water Diplomacy Network](#) are looking to change this by supporting a community of practice focused on empowerment, peer to peer learning, and collective advocacy for formal and informal women water diplomats working in transboundary waters with a focus in conflict-sensitive regions such as the Nile Basin, Central Asia, and Afghanistan, among others. In this event, women water diplomats from the Network and beyond will discuss water conflict sensitivities, share lessons learned, and enumerate paths forward for peace including take-away’s from the [Women in Water Diplomacy Network’s engagements at the recent UN Water Conference](#). This event will be hosted in-person at the United States Institute of Peace in Washington D.C. and livestreamed online participation available. For in person and online registration please visit: <https://www.usip.org/events>.

**Indicative Program:**

**Introductory remarks:**

**Kayly Ober**, Senior Program Officer, Climate, Environment, and Conflict, USIP (confirmed)

**Welcome remarks:**

- **Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter**, Sweden (invited)
- **Henk WJ Ovink**, Special Envoy for International Water Affairs and Sherpa to the UN 2023 Water Conference, Kingdom of the Netherlands (confirmed)

**Keynote address:**

**Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield**, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations (invited)

**Roundtable discussion followed by Q&A moderated by:**

**Elizabeth A. Koch**, Senior Manager for International Programs, Environmental Law Institute, Process Support Lead for the Women in Water Diplomacy Network (confirmed)

**Expert guest speakers:**

- **Tanya Trujillo**, Assistant Secretary for Water and Science, U.S. Department of Interior (confirmed)
- **Swathi Veeravalli**, Director of Climate Security and Adaptation, National Security Council (confirmed)
- **Foman Forough**, Former Director General of the Kabul River Basin, Afghanistan (confirmed)
- **Zodwa Dlamini**, South Africa’s former Chief Delegate and Permanent Representative on the Lesotho Highlands Water Commission (confirmed)



- **Rena Lee**, Ambassador for Oceans and Law of the Sea Issues and Special Envoy of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Singapore (to be invited)
- **Dr Aubrey Paris**, Senior Policy Advisor, Gender, Climate Change & Innovation, Secretary's Office of Global Women's Issues, U.S. Department of State (confirmed)

**Speaker Bios (in order of appearance):**

**Kayly Ober** (confirmed) serves as the Senior Program Officer for the Climate, Environment, and Conflict Program at the United States Institute of Peace. She primarily leads the institute's portfolio on transboundary water issues. Previously, she was the senior advocate and program manager of the Climate Displacement Program at Refugees International. She also served as a member of the Task Force on Displacement established under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change's Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage. She has worked on climate change and migration issues for more than a decade, including for the Asian Development Bank; the World Bank, where she authored the flagship report *Groundswell: Preparing for Internal Climate Migration*; Overseas Development Institute; and Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, among others. Kayly holds a Master of Science in Environment and Development from the London School of Economics and a Bachelor of Arts in International Studies from American University. She is currently completing her PhD in Geography at the University of Bonn, where her dissertation analyzes policymaking and governance structures around the climate change-adaptation-migration nexus.



**Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter**, Sweden (invited)

**Henk WJ Ovink**, Special Envoy for International Water Affairs and Sherpa to the UN 2023 Water Conference, Kingdom of the Netherlands (confirmed)

**Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield** (invited) was nominated by President Joseph R. Biden, Jr. to be the Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations as well as the Representative of the United States of America in the Security Council of the United Nations on January 20, 2021. She was confirmed by the U.S. Senate on February 23, 2021, and sworn in on February 24, 2021 by the Vice President of the United States of America. Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield, a career diplomat, returned to public service after retiring from a 35-year career with the U.S. Foreign Service in 2017. From 2013 to 2017 she served as the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, where she led the bureau focused on the development and management of U.S. policy toward sub-Saharan Africa. Prior to this appointment, she served as Director General of the Foreign Service and Director of Human Resources (2012-2013), leading a team in charge of the State Department's 70,000-strong workforce.





**Elizabeth A. Koch** (confirmed) serves as the Senior Manager for International Programs at the Environmental Law Institute (ELI) and leads the Women in Water Diplomacy Network's Process Support Team, supporting the Network's development since inception. Elizabeth has over 15 years of experience supporting water diplomacy engagements in conflict sensitive basins on behalf of ELI, SIWI's Shared Waters Partnership programme, the UNESCO Category II International Centre for Water Cooperation, and EcoPeace Middle East.



**Tanya Trujillo** (confirmed) is the Assistant Secretary for Water and Science at the U.S. Department of Interior. She is a water lawyer with more than 20 years of experience working on complex natural resources management issues and interstate and transboundary water agreements. She most recently worked as a project director with the Colorado River Sustainability Campaign. Before then, she served as the Executive Director of the Colorado River Board of California. She has served as Senior Counsel to the U.S. Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee and as Counselor to the Assistant Secretary for Water and Science at Interior.



**Swathi Veeravalli** (confirmed) is a member of the Center for Climate and Security Advisory Board, and an interdisciplinary research scientist at the Geospatial Research Laboratory, Engineer Research and Development Center, US Army Corps of Engineers. Since 2010, she has been Principal Investigator on several basic and applied research projects where she focuses on developing the capability to better understand the impact of climate variability upon humans and the environment. Prior to government service, Swathi was a water analyst at Global Water Intelligence, where she assessed and monitored water, wastewater, and desalination projects of the international water industry. She also helped coordinate a World Bank longitudinal study examining the productive uses of piped water in Kenya. Swathi has several years' experience in international development, youth engagement and advocacy. Swathi holds a Master's of Science in Water Science, Policy & Management from the University of Oxford. At Oxford, her research focused on peri-urban water development with fieldwork in Kenya and Botswana. Swathi also holds a BA in International Affairs with concentrations in African Politics and Development from the George Washington University. She has worked and travelled in over 68 different countries.



**Foman Forough** (confirmed, pending visa) holds an MSc of Hydraulics structure from Ferdowsi University and served at the National Water Affairs Regulation Authority (NWARA) as General Director of Kabul River Basin, the largest basin in Afghanistan, before the Taliban captured Kabul in 2021. Since 2021 Foman relocated to Canada where she is now serving as a Water Resource Specialist and Engineer at the South Nation Conservation Authority (SNC). The SNC, established under Canada's Conservation Authorities Act of Ontario in 1947, has a strong history in watershed management and leadership in applying sustainability practices and decades of practical experience in protecting our environment and engaging communities. Foman has extensive experience in transboundary water management serving in various capacities at NWARA including as acting director of water allocation, dam and river adviser, and hydraulic structure design specialist. In addition, Foman has taught courses on hydraulic structure at Kateb Private University and is a proud board member of the





Afghanistan Infrastructure Transparency Initiative (COST), which works in the field of transparency in infrastructure projects, access to information, and the clean-up against corruption.

**Zodwa Dlamini** (confirmed) is a seasoned international transboundary water management specialist, development professional, and senior infrastructure projects manager. As the former South Africa's Chief Delegate and Permanent Representative on the Lesotho Highlands Water Commission (LHWC) for 11 years, she oversaw the Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP) and its implementation and served as South Africa's Chief Negotiator for Phase 2 of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project that is currently being implemented in Lesotho. LHWP is Africa's largest water transfer scheme to date. Zodwa further ensured that gender policies in the LHWP are intentional and decisive in matters of gender inclusivity and participation of women. It was during her tenure when the LHDA first appointed a woman Chief Executive Officer (CEO) in over 20 years of its existence. Dr Zodwa is a founding member of the Women in Water Diplomacy Network and serves as a member of the Network's Leadership Council.



**Rena Lee** (to be invited) is Singapore's Ambassador for Oceans and Law of the Sea Issues and Special Envoy of the Minister for Foreign Affairs. She specializes in the practice of public international law, covering areas including law of the sea, environmental and climate change law. Rena was elected as President of the UN Intergovernmental Conference on an International Legally Binding Instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) in 2018. She is also a member of the Legal and Technical Commission of the International Seabed Authority.



**Dr Aubrey Paris**, Senior Policy Advisor, Gender, Climate Change & Innovation, Secretary's Office of Global Women's Issues, U.S. Department of State (confirmed)