



WOMEN IN
WATER DIPLOMACY
NETWORK & PARTNERS



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Women in Water Diplomacy Network: Open Online Experience Exchange Seminar Confidence Building Measures in Water Diplomacy

Tuesday, February 11, 2025 | 8:00-10:00 EST / 14:00-16:00 CET / 15:00-17:00 CAT

This WWDN online seminar series is open to Network members and supporters globally.

Required pre-registration here:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZctceCqqjosH9VyjnP9C0ENWCo6d2v53fi>

The **Women in Water Diplomacy Network** is a community of practice comprised of both formal and informal women water decision-makers and experts, representing a wealth of collective experience and expertise in transboundary water management and decision-making with focused engagement in some of the most water insecure regions of the world. Originating in the Nile Basin in 2017, the Network is now a global community of women water leaders, and male champions supporting gender equality, working collectively to strengthen women's leadership in transboundary water decision making with support from a global coalition of partners and members in the Nile, Central Asia, Southern Africa, North America, the South Caucasus and around the world. At the heart of the Women in Water Diplomacy Network's Global Strategy '[A Path Forward for Women, Water, Peace and Security](#),' is a priority to support ongoing peer-to-peer learning and experience exchange on innovative themes of critical importance to water diplomacy and the Network's community. The Network aims to convene at least three online learning opportunities annually in partnership with Network members and partner organizations which will be open to the global Network community. Theses for the online seminar series are selected based on direct requests from Network members or elevated as part of the Network's monitoring and evaluation processes.








Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs) are mechanisms used in fragile and conflict-affected areas, which are targeted at trust-building and encouraging dialogue and cooperation between parties. They can take on a variety of forms. The goal is to contribute towards de-escalation and peacebuilding. CBMs may be designed to support various phases of conflict (pre, during and post-conflict), and at various scales, intra-state, and inter-state. CBMs can focus on water and environmental actions with the intent to improve cooperation and to feed into a broader array of peacebuilding and de-escalation measures. To be effective a CBM should create mutual incentives and benefits, foster intergroup or interstate communication, reduce misunderstandings, and build trust between conflicting parties. In the water sphere, for instance, an inter-state or intra-state CBM might foster cooperation between parties on water infrastructure crossing boundaries within a river basin. They may include for example joint projects, joint trainings on water management or joint institution building. A diversity of actors may be involved in a CBM, such as mediators, negotiators, decision-makers, civil society, local municipalities, amongst others. Inclusion of a diversity of actors and stakeholders in a CBM context increases the likelihood of positive and more sustainable impact. Projects at a cooperative level regarding water management have in the past led to some positive outcomes at a state-to-state or community level in different parts of the world, from the Nile Basin, the South Caucasus, to the Jordan River, South Sudan, and elsewhere.

This Women in Water Diplomacy Network online seminar aims to:

- Contribute to the Network's global strategy by supporting ongoing peer-to-peer learning on critical subjects of importance to water diplomacy.
- Enable discussions, joint learning and the exchange between Network members and supporters.
- Contribute to a shared understanding of key concepts, approaches as well as case studies related to the application of confidence building measures in water diplomacy related processes.



Time zones in the below program are in Central European Time (CET).

TIME (CET)	TUESDAY, February 11, 2025 (TBC) - AGENDA
13:45-14:00	<p>Virtual Coffee Break: <i>As always - before the online session officially starts, the online meeting space will be opened early for participants to check their online connections and have informal discussions before the official start time. Please join us and say hello!</i></p> 
14:00 - 14:10	<p>Welcome and Introduction to Confidence Building Measures Dr. Róisín Burke, Netherlands Institute for Human Rights, Platform on Peace Security and Human Rights, Utrecht University</p> 
14:10 – 14:20	<p>Ignite Speaker: Confidence Building Measures and Water Diplomacy Katja Ahlfors, Senior Advisor for the Northern and Western Africa Unit within the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Finland</p> 
14:20 – 14:25	<p>Women in Water Diplomacy Network Announcements Elizabeth A. Koch, Women in Water Diplomacy Network Process Support Team Lead, Environmental Law Institute</p> 
14:25 – 15:30	<p>Experience exchange panel discussion: Applying CMBs as part of water diplomacy processes Facilitated by Sogol Jafarzadeh, UN and Government Relations Coordinator & Gender and Capacity Building Focal Point for Africa, UNU-INWEH</p>  <p>Expert Network Perspectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Erika Weinthal, John O. Blackburn Distinguished Professor of Environmental Policy, Duke University, United States • Sonja Koepfel, Secretary of the Water Convention and co-Secretary of the Protocol on Water and Health, UNECE • Julia Kharashvili, Chair, Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) Women Association “Consent”, Georgia • Dr. Zodwa Dlamini, Former South Africa Chief Delegate and Permanent Representative to the Lesotho Highlands Water Commission and Founding Member of the Women in Water Diplomacy Network <p>Plenary Discussion/ Q&A</p>
15:30-15:40	<p>Take home messages for the Women in Water Diplomacy Network Elizabeth A. Koch, Women in Water Diplomacy Network Process Support Team Lead, Environmental Law Institute</p> 
15:40 - 15:45	<p>Group Screenshot/Picture: <i>No meeting is complete without one!</i> <i>Please complete the Exit Poll before departing.</i></p> 



Collected Speaker Short Bios - Alphabetical order by first name

Elizabeth A. Koch (United States) 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 2018. 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. Elizabeth holds a MA in Government, Diplomacy and Strategy and BA in International Relations.



Dr. Erika Weinthal (United States) is the John O. Blackburn Distinguished Professor of Environmental Policy at Duke University. She received her Ph.D. in Political Science from Columbia University. She specializes in global environmental politics and environmental security with an emphasis on water and energy. Erika is the President of the Environmental Peacebuilding Association and an associate editor at the new journal, *Environment & Security*. In 2017 she was a recipient of the Women Peacebuilders for Water Award under the auspices of “Fondazione Milano per Expo 2015”. Erika is author of *State Making and Environmental Cooperation: Linking Domestic Politics and International Politics in Central Asia* (MIT Press 2002), which received the 2003 Chadwick Alger Prize and the 2003 Lynton Keith Caldwell Prize. Her recent books include: *Water Quality Impacts of the Energy-Water Nexus* (Cambridge University Press 2022) and *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics* (Oxford University Press forthcoming, 2023). Erika has been an active Network Member since 2023.



Julia Kharashvili (Georgia) Chair, IDP Women Association “Consent” and Member, High Level Advisory Group for Global Study on the Impact of UNSC Resolution 1325 is a civil society activist. She has spent 28 years working on protection of rights of IDP and conflict-affected women in Georgia and throughout the South Caucasus region. Since 2013, Ms. Kharashvili has been an expert member on the UN Women High Level Advisory group for the implementation of the UNSCR 1325, which is actively working on localization of WPS agenda in Georgia. Since 2020, she also serves as a member of Global Action Network of Women in Forced Displacement. Julia is also a member of High-Level Advisory Group to OSCE WIN project, and a member of Planning Committee for the Regional platform of Women for Peace Dialogue, which supports efforts of women – peace builders and civic activists in the region of the Former Soviet Union. For her work, Julia has received several international and Georgian awards. Currently, she represents Georgia in the NATO Civil Society Advisory Panel on WPS. Prior to her work in this area, Julia was a researcher in field of immunodeficiency viruses of monkeys (in Abkhazia). Julia is married and has two sons and two grandchildren. Julia has been an active member of the Women in Water Diplomacy Network since 2024.





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Katja Ahlfors (Finland) is the Senior Advisor for the Northern and Western Africa Unit within the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland and the former Director of the Centre for Peace Mediation at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland. Prior to this she served as Senior Advisor on Horn of Africa to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland. She joined the Foreign Service in 2004 and has since served at the Department for Africa and the Middle East, the Department for Americas and Asia and at the Department for Development Policy. Ahlfors has served at the Embassies of Finland in Addis Ababa and Stockholm. She has also been seconded to the European Commission in Brussels and as Senior Advisor to CMI - Martti Ahtisaari Peace Foundation. As a senior diplomat and a peace mediator Katja has supported the Women in Water Diplomacy Network since 2022.



Dr. Róisín Burke (Ireland) is an Assistant Professor of Public International Law with the Netherlands Institute of Human Rights at Utrecht University (UU). She is also a member of UU's Research Platform on Peace, Security and Human Rights, and the Montaigne Centre for the Rule of Law and Administration of Justice. Róisín's present and past work, publications and teaching have cut across the areas of international criminal law, international humanitarian law (IHL), human rights law, women peace and security (WPS), peace operations, international security law, rule of law programming in conflict-affected states, legal pluralism, and public international law. She is leading an NWO project related to WPS, transboundary water security and environmental peacebuilding in the South Caucasus. She has been a consultant on projects related to gender, human rights, IHL, and peace-building with NGOs, and international and regional bodies. Previously, she was a Senior Law Lecturer (above the bar) at the University of Canterbury, and worked as Political Advisor to the Permanent Mission of Ireland to the UN. She holds a doctorate from the Asia Pacific Centre for Military Law, University of Melbourne, a LLB in Law and European Studies (UL), an LLM in International Human Rights Law (Irish Centre for Human Rights) and is admitted as an Attorney in New York State. Róisín has been actively involved in the Women in Water Diplomacy Network since 2022.



Sogol Jafarzadeh (Switzerland) is an Environmental Scientist with more than 12 years of experience working on environmental policy and inclusive governance. In her capacity as UNU-INWEH's UN and Government Relations Coordinator & Gender and Capacity Building Focal Point for Africa, she works with stakeholders in the region to address water, health and sanitation, climate and environmental issues as well as their gender-related and justice implications. Based in Harare, Zimbabwe, she liaises with partners and donors to identify new opportunities for collaboration and implements relevant projects and activities in East and Southern Africa. Sogol joined UNU from the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), where she served as the Environmental Affairs Adviser, focusing on transboundary water cooperation and water diplomacy. She was also the gender focal point of her department and led efforts to establish the Women in Water Management Network in Central Asia and Afghanistan. Before joining the OSCE, Sogol worked at UNEP and UNDP, supporting initiatives on environmental policy, including combating sand and dust storms. She also worked as an Adjunct Instructor at the City College of New York, teaching environmental sciences and environmental psychology, and as a researcher at ETH Zurich, looking at drivers of land degradation in water-scarce rangelands. Sogol holds an MSc in Environmental Sciences from the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH Zurich) and a postgraduate certificate in Conservation Biology from the Earth Institute, Columbia University in New York. Sogol has been actively involved in the Women in Water Diplomacy





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Network since 2021 including supporting the inception and development of the Central Asia-Afghanistan and Southern African Network communities.

Sonja Koeppel (Germany) has been working for more than 15 years in the secretariat of the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention), serviced by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) in Geneva. She is currently secretary to the Convention (with 55 Parties and more than 130 countries participating) and co-secretary to the Protocol on Water and Health, jointly serviced by UNECE and WHO-EUROPE. She also leads the activities on the global opening of the Convention to all United Nations Member States. She was previously coordinating the activities on climate change adaptation under the Convention and servicing different Convention bodies. Before joining UNECE, she worked for UNEP in Nairobi and studied environmental sciences, policy and management in Budapest and Manchester as well as social sciences in Bordeaux (IEP) and Stuttgart.



Dr. Zodwa Dlamini (South Africa) 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 valued at \$5 Billion that is currently being implemented in Lesotho. The LHWP is a binational project between the government of the Republic South Africa and the Kingdom of Lesotho responsible for delivering water from the highlands of Lesotho to South Africa, and utilising the water delivery system to generate 72MW hydro-electric power for the Kingdom of Lesotho at 'Muela Hydropower Station. LHWP was Africa's largest water transfer scheme prior to the construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD). Dr. Dlamini 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. Dlamini is currently an independent consultant currently supporting the development of the Women in Water Diplomacy Network in the Orange-Senqu. Zodwa is a founding member of the Women in Water Diplomacy Network in the Nile (2017) and has served as a member of the Network's Leadership Council since 2021.

