

THE MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

PRESENTS

SIDE EVENT 65TH SESSION - COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

**WIDOWHOOD, EMPOWERMENT, AND
THE
PATH TO PUBLIC LIFE**

Distinguished Guest Speakers

Hon Minister Manty Tarawalli - Sierra Leone

Hon Minister Prof Margaret Kobia- Kenya

Hon Minister Williametta Saydee-Tarr - Liberia

Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka -UNWomen

and **Global Goodwill Ambassador for**

Widows in Peace and Security - Ambassador Alie Kabba

Ambassador Mohamed Edrees- Egypt

Mary Ellen Iskenderian - Women's World Banking

Heather Ibrahim-Leathers - Global Fund for Widows



March 19, 2021 | 11 -1PM ET Register www.globalfundforwidows.org

“Widowhood, Empowerment, & the Path to Public Life”

Agenda - CSW65 Side Event on Widowhood

March 19, 11:00am | Registration link: www.globalfundforwidows.org

Hosted by

Global Goodwill Ambassador for Widows in Peace and Security,
Permanent Representative of the Mission of Sierra Leone to the United Nations
Ambassador Alie Kabba

Moderator: Global Fund for Widows – Heather Ibrahim-Leathers

- 11:00-11:10 Opening Address
Ambassador Alie Kabba – Permanent Representative of Sierra Leone to the United Nations | Global Goodwill Ambassador for Widows in Peace and Security
- 11:10-11:20 Keynote Address
The Honorable Manty Tarawalli
Minister for Gender and Children’s Affairs – Sierra Leone
- 11:20-11:30 Cornerstone Address
The Honorable Williametta Piso Saydee-Tarr, MA, BA, AS
Minister of Gender, Children, and Social Protection – Liberia
- 11:30- 11:40 Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka – Executive Director of UN Women,
Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations – South Africa
- 11:40-11:50 Ambassador Mohamed Edrees
Permanent Representative of Egypt to the United Nations
- 11:50-12:00 Mary Ellen Iskendarien - CEO, Women’s World Banking
- 12:00-12:05 Heather Ibrahim-Leathers - President, Global Fund for Widows
- 12:05-12:10 Dianah Kamande,- Founder, Come Together Widows and Orphans Organization
- 12:10-12:20 Capstone Address
Minister for Public Service, Youth, and Gender– Kenya
The Honorable Professor Margaret Kobia, PhD, MGH
- 12:20-1:00 Open discussion and Q&A

Speaker Biographies (In order of presentation)

Heather Ibrahim-Leathers – Global Fund for Widows - Moderator

As President and Founder of the Global Fund for Widows, Ms. Ibrahim-Leathers has raised millions of dollars towards the little known and overlooked root source of global poverty: Widowhood. In addition to economically empowering 20,000 widows in the developing world, Ms. Ibrahim-Leathers has innovated a financial inclusion platform that is bringing banks to the world's poorest and most vulnerable. For this groundbreaking work, Ms. Ibrahim-Leathers has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2021, and has been awarded the Business Council for Peace Women Forward – Financial Catalyst award in 2020. Global Fund for Widows' impact extends to Egypt, India, Tanzania, Kenya, Nigeria, Malawi, Bolivia, and the Dominican Republic.

In March 2020, Ms. Ibrahim-Leathers launched a global emergency response to address severe COVID-19 related food shortages, food insecurity, and various related repercussions including human trafficking, by providing 5.3 million meals to starving widows. Committed to sustainability, Ms. Ibrahim-Leathers is also gifting widows with capital to launch agribusinesses during COVID-19 such as chicken farms and ghee production kits.

In addition to accomplishments in the field, Ms. Ibrahim-Leathers has met with various policy makers through her advocacy at the UN Security Council, the Human Rights Council, the US Congress and Department of State, and the House of Lords. Because of the far-reaching impact that widowhood has on developing society and economies, Ms. Ibrahim-Leathers has been acknowledged by the Egyptian government as successfully "combatting terrorism at its source, by sustaining families." Ms. Ibrahim-Leathers has published extensively on the inextricable link between inheritance rights, human rights, poverty, and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, and advises governments on mechanisms for financing development.

Ambassador Dr. Alie Kabba

Permanent Representative to the Mission of Sierra Leone to the United Nations

Global Goodwill Ambassador for Widows in Peace and Security

The new Permanent Representative of Sierra Leone to the United Nations, H.E. Mr. Alie Kabba, presented his credentials to H.E. Mr. António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations on September 5, 2019.

Prior to his latest appointment, Dr. Kabba was the Minister of Foreign Affairs & International Cooperation of the Government of Sierra Leone from June 2018 – May 2019. He Embarked on a robust drive to build bridges of cooperation in the international system by establishing strategic partnerships with special focus on economic diplomacy; strengthened and deepened bilateral and multilateral ties with traditional and non-traditional partners; and expanded Sierra Leone's global footprints within a durable framework for cooperation.

2007 – 2017 he was the Executive Director of United African Organization in Chicago where he provided overall strategic policy direction in fiscal and programmatic domains; strengthened organizational capacity in legislative advocacy at State and Federal levels; and developed partnership and collaboration framework with government agencies, civil rights organizations and academic institutions.

1997 – 2007 Dr. Kabba was the Public Service Administrator in the State of Illinois where he Coordinated policy and strategic planning and development; provided technical and management assistance to 35 Local Administering Agencies (LAAs); and established policies and protocols governing fiscal operations.

1991-1997 Dr. Kabba was Research Associate/Instructor at the Department of African American Studies & Department of Political Science at the University of Illinois in Chicago, where he taught undergraduate courses in the Departments of African American Studies and Political Science; conducted research in public policy analysis; and designed quantitative and qualitative survey instruments for field research.

He is a recipient of several awards in recognition of his distinguished leadership roles in multiple civic arenas. His multidisciplinary background in history, philosophy, political science and public policy analysis has shaped his strategic thinking and direction throughout his career in public service

Born on 24 September 1961, his childhood experience laid a strong foundation for his deep sense of patriotism and commitment to public service, as well as the enduring values of inclusion, tolerance and faith.

Hon. Manty Tarawalli

Minister for Gender and Children Affairs – Republic of Sierra Leone

Honorable Manty Tarawalli has a unique 20 years background in leadership, strategic problem solving and project management on multi-million dollar development projects across continents as well as over 10 years of public health experience which together reflects distinguished professionalism demonstrated both nationally and internationally.

Hon. Manty is a champion of women's empowerment with extensive contributions to women's health and economic empowerment. From the UK, Sierra Leone, to Zambia to Zimbabwe, the Honorable Minister has a track-record of building capacity and sharing lessons across partners and governments on health systems strengthening and women's economic empowerment.

Hon. Manty has made distinctive contributions to the discussions on advancing project management through quality authorship where she offers critical perspective on the principles of project management in the development sector.

The Honorable Minister is PRINCE2 qualified and holds an MSc in Project Management and Leadership from the UK.

Hon. W.E. Saydee-Tarr

Minister of Gender, Children, and Social Protection – Republic of Liberia

Mrs. Williametta E. Saydee-Tarr is the Minister of Gender, Children and Social Protection of the Republic of Liberia. She is an experienced Social Policy, Communications, Business, and Non-profit professional with over seventeen years of senior managerial proficiency. A consummate well-rounded professional, Minister Tarr is very passionate about the rights and well-being of the underprivileged, the youths of Liberia, and the most vulnerable members of the society.

Minister Tarr started her public service duty with the Liberia National Police Force, and then moved on to the then Liberia Telecommunications Corporation (LTC), before traveling to the USA to complete her college education. Between 2005 and 2011, she returned to Liberia as a female actively involved in political participation. In 2012, she relocated to Liberia to serve as the founding Executive Director for the Gbowee Peace Foundation Africa (GPFA), where she effectively fundraised and coordinated worldwide scholarships for women and girls, raised awareness on issues of gender equality and equity, ensured capacity building and development of women and girls, forged and nurtured strategic partnerships. She successfully instituted the Foundation's granular level approach for local communities to keep safe during the EBOLA crisis, before moving away from being a civil society actor, into a full political life.

Minister Tarr, an ardent advocate for women's, children's, and youth's rights who enjoys working with diverse groups, is a self-motivated, results-oriented executive, who is presently leveraging these skills in a senior Government of Liberia Executive Cabinet environment as the Minister of Gender, Children and Social Protection. Since her appointment in 2018, she has delved into her work wholeheartedly to ensure that work implementation, staff/organizational growth and sustainability of impactful high performance – particularly in a fast-paced "Pro-poor Governance" Policy environment, can be sustained. With a background in Restorative Justice and Advocacy, she has unique abilities to marry the government's national international advocacy efforts, given her decade of work as an African community advocate in the Diaspora, with immigrant families and, similar work at home.

She holds a Master in Advocacy and Political Leadership degree from the University of Minnesota in Duluth, MN, a Bachelor of Arts degree in Communications Studies from the University of Saint Thomas in St. Paul, MN and, an Associate of Science degree in Business Management from the Minneapolis Community and Technical College. Minister Tarr is married to her sweetheart of 15 years and, is a very proud mother of 2 children.

Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka

UNWomen - Executive Director

Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka is United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women. She was [sworn into office on 19 August 2013](#) and brings a wealth of experience and expertise to this position, having devoted her career to issues of human rights, equality and social justice. Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka has worked in government and civil society, and with the private sector, and was actively involved in the struggle to end apartheid in her home country of South Africa.

From 2005 to 2008, she served as Deputy President of South Africa, overseeing programmes to combat poverty and bring the advantages of a growing economy to the poor, with a particular focus on women. Prior to this, she served as Minister of Minerals and Energy from 1999 to 2005 and Deputy Minister in the Department of Trade and Industry from 1996 to 1999. She was a Member of Parliament from 1994 to 1996 as part of South Africa's first democratic government.

Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka began her career as a teacher and gained international experience as a coordinator at the World YWCA in Geneva, where she established a global programme for young women. She is the founder of the Umlambo Foundation, which supports leadership and education. A longtime champion of women's rights, she is affiliated with several organizations devoted to education, women's empowerment and gender equality.

She has completed her PhD on education and technology at the University of Warwick, United Kingdom.

Ambassador Mohamed Edrees

Permanent Representative of the Mission of Egypt to the United Nations

Ambassador Mohamed Edrees has served as PR of the Mission of the Republic of Egypt to the United Nations since 2018. Prior to his appointment, Mr. Edrees was the Assistant Foreign Minister for African Affairs from 2015 to January 2018. He served as Ambassador of Egypt to Ethiopia, as well as his country's Permanent Representative to the African Union and to the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, from 2011 to 2015.

From 2010 to 2011, Mr. Edrees was Deputy Assistant Minister for Arab-Orient Affairs, while from 2007 to 2010, he was Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York. He previously served as Minister Plenipotentiary to the United Nations in New York from 2006 to 2007 and as Deputy Chief of Mission at Egypt's Embassy in Damascus, Syria, from 2001 to 2005.

Prior to his diplomatic service, he was a resident doctor within the Ministry of Health, and a practicing ear, nose, and throat surgeon.

Mr. Edrees holds a Master of Arts in political science from the University of London and a Bachelor of Science in medicine and surgery from Cairo University.

Born on 31 May 1960, he is married and has a son and a daughter.

Mary Ellen Iskenderian

Women's World Banking – CEO

Mary Ellen Iskenderian is President and CEO of Women's World Banking, the world's largest network of microfinance institutions and banks. Ms. Iskenderian leads the WWB global team, based in New York, in providing hands-on technical services and strategic support to more than 50 top-performing microfinance institutions and banks in 30 countries in Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Middle East. WWB's network members consistently rate among the top three microfinance institutions in their countries and more than 70% of their clients are poor women entrepreneurs.

Ms. Iskenderian, who joined WWB in 2006, brings more than 20 years of experience in building global financial systems throughout the developing world. Ms. Iskenderian has become a leading voice for women's leadership and participation in microfinance and a strong advocate for the role of capital markets in the sector. She has spoken widely on microfinance at Harvard, Yale, Wharton Business School and at numerous industry and banking forums. More recently, she spoke at the Singapore Conference on Savings, Assets and Financial Inclusion; the Inter-American Development Bank and FELABAN Seminar on Banking Regulation and Supervision in El Salvador and the ResponsAbility Microfinance Conference in Zurich, Switzerland. She is frequently quoted in the media, including *The Wall Street Journal*, *BBC News*, *Voice of America*, the *Miami Herald*, the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, *Dallas Morning News* and other major international outlets. She has also written many articles and op-eds, including "Private Banks Find Microfinance," a feature article which recently appeared in the premier issue of the *Americas Quarterly*, published by the Americas Society and the Council of the Americas.

Prior to WWB, Ms. Iskenderian worked for 17 years in senior management at the International Finance Corporation, the private sector arm of the World Bank, where her numerous leadership positions included Director of Partnership Development, Director of the Global Financial Markets Portfolio and Director of the South Asia Regional Department. Previously, she worked for the investment bank, Lehman Brothers.

Ms. Iskenderian currently sits on the advisory boards of the Dignity Fund and Kiva. Before joining WWB, she was a director on many corporate boards, including ShoreCap International, an important equity and loan fund for microfinance. She holds a Master's degree in Business Administration from the Yale School of Organization and Management and a Bachelor of Science degree in International Economics from the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service.

Dianah Kamande

Come Together Widows and Orphans Organization – Kenya

Dianah Kamande is a survivor of Gender Violence, specifically Domestic Violence that ushered her into widowhood in 2013, She is the founder of **Come Together Widows and Orphans Organization**. She is a trainer on Gender Violence and Widowhood Issues in Africa and beyond. She is a celebrated Widow, Gender Violence and Orphans rights champion. She is a mentor who has mentored many widows' leaders and her work has been replicated in all the 47 counties in Kenya, and other countries like Malawi, Tanzania, South Africa, Uganda, Rwanda, Zambia, Congo and Philippines. She is also the founder of Association of Survivors of Gender Based Violence. She serves as the chairlady of the Parents Association and Board Member of St. Charles Secondary Lwanga School, Muranga' County. Dianah holds a Diploma in Women in Leadership and Governance in Africa from Nairobi University, and is currently pursuing her Bachelor's Degree in Governance, Peace and Conflict Studies at African Nazarene University. Dianah is a mentor and sought for Public motivational speaker

She is award winner **Above and Beyond Awards** in Boston, USA. **Global Good Will Ambassadors** in Atlanta also awarded her the Humanitarian Category.

She was feted with **Head of States Commendation** during the Jamuhuri Day Celebrations in Kenya on 12th December 2018 by the President of Kenya H.E Uhuru Kenyatta, for she has championed for rights, given a voice to widows and victims of domestic violence. She has also amplified their voices to National and International spaces.

Hon Professor Margaret Kobia, OGW, CBS

Minister of Public Service, Youth and Gender – Republic of Kenya

Minister Kobia was nominated by President Uhuru Kenyatta as Cabinet Secretary for the Public Service, Youth and Gender Affairs in 2018. Prior to her current position, she served as the Chairperson of the Kenya Public Service Commission. She was elected as the Vice President and board member of the Commonwealth Association of Public Administration and Management (CAPAM), in October 2014. She is a fellow at the Kenya Institute of Management and at the Institute of Certified Public Secretaries of Kenya.

Professor Kobia has received a number of awards, including the "Order of Grand Warrior" (OGW), the order of "Chief of Burning Spear" (CBS) and the "Commonwealth Gordon Draper Award".

Professor Kobia co-sponsored the first UN Side Event on Widowhood at the Commission on the Status of Women in 2018, then quietly began changing 6 laws in Kenya to support and protect widows. In 2020, Minister Kobia instructed her government to partner with Global Fund for Widows and our implementing partner Come Together Widows and Orphans Organization to launch 30 Brookbanks to support 750 widows in rural Kenya. Minister Kobia has dedicated her Ministry to widows' empowerment in Kenya and beyond.