



**5<sup>TH</sup>**

# **SPACE4WOMEN** EXPERT MEETING

INTEGRATING WOMEN IN SPACE ACTIVITIES & SOLUTIONS

**27-29 NOVEMBER | 2024**

**BIOGRAPHIES**



**United Nations**  
Office for Outer Space Affairs



**KENYA SPACE AGENCY**  
*Possibilities beyond our skies*

## **AMEERA ALI**

### ***Canadian Space Agency (CSA)***

Ameera Ali is a Research Analyst on the Strategic Policy team at the Canadian Space Agency, where she focuses on advancing Gender-Based Analysis Plus. She helped orchestrate the 2023 UN/Canada Space4Women Expert Meeting and collaborated with UNOOSA to develop the first Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit for the space sector. Ameera is also Co-Chair of the CSA's Young Professional Network. She holds a Master's degree in International Affairs with a specialization in International Development Policy.

## **ANDREA KOCH-KRAFT**

### ***German Aerospace Center (DLR)***

Andrea was trained as a geographer in Canada (McGill & UoA) and Marburg University, Germany, where she received her doctorate in 1989. Since, she has worked as a scientific officer in research management at the German Advisory Council on Global Change (WBGU), the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG), The German Embassy in Ottawa and DLR Project Management Agency. 2017, she ran for Equal Opportunities Officer and was elected by DLR's female staff for a four-year term, re-elected in 2021. She reports directly to DLR's Executive Board.

## **ANGELA CORBARI**

### ***Studiomapp Srl***

Angela Corbari is the co-founder and COO of Studiomapp, an multi-awarded Italian startup leveraging artificial intelligence and satellite imagery analysis to build a safer and more sustainable future. Recognized by the United Nations' Space4Women program, she serves as a mentor, empowering women in STEM. Her work reflects a commitment to advancing technology for global impact, alongside inspiring women to thrive in both career and family life.

## **ANGELA VEITCH**

### ***Permanent Mission of Canada to the International Organizations in Vienna***

Angela Veitch is Canada's Deputy Permanent Representative to International Organizations in Vienna, Austria. An international lawyer and arms control specialist, Angela has served as Deputy Chair of a United Nations Group of Governmental Experts on the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty. Angela oversees the Canadian team responsible for all international organizations in Vienna, including the International Atomic Energy Agency, the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty Organization the UN Office on Drugs and Crime and the UN Office for Outer Space Affairs. Angela speaks English, French and Mandarin.

## **ANJANA VYAS**

### ***Lok Jagruti University***

Vyas's her journey embodies the transformative power of education of women in shaping the future of STEM education. Over four decades, she has left an indelible mark in education and capacity building. She is a Member of Academic Network of UN-GGIM; Chair, ICWG TC V/IV, ISPRS; Several National Committees of DST, Government of India. She has held key positions, as Dean, Executive Director, CAG, CEPT U. Her contribution credited numerous awards: ISPRS President's Citations Award, Excellence Award, Best Teacher, felicitated as FELLOW of ISRS & ISG. Her career exemplifies resilience, leadership, relentless pursuit of excellence, serving as a guiding light for aspiring scientists.

## **ANITA ANTWIWAA**

### *All Nations University*

Anita Antwiwaa, PhD in Electronics and Communications Engineering, is Dean of the School of Engineering at All Nations University, Ghana, and head of operations for the university's Space Systems Technology Lab, which launched GhanaSat-1. She serves on the GEO Program Board for Ghana, advocating for STEM and women in tech. Active in STEM outreach, she promotes space technology education in Ghanaian schools and is an AU/CIEFFA STEM Ambassador. Recognized among Africa's top 40 innovators in education, she has also mentored with UNOOSA's Space4Women Network from 2020-2023.

## **CAROLYN DEADERICK**

### *U.S. Space Command*

Carolyn Deaderick is the Combatant Command Gender Advisor at U.S. Space Command, specializing in Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) strategy. A retired Marine Corps Colonel with over 30 years of leadership experience, she previously served as Director of Human Capital for U.S. Strategic Command and was a Leadership and Ethics Chair at Marine Corps University. She advises the Charles F. Bolden Group, supporting global science and security leadership. Ms. Deaderick holds master's degrees in Global Leadership and Strategic Studies.

## **CATALINA SANCHEZ**

### *NewSpace Advisors*

Catalina Sánchez, a Costa Rican scientist-engineer, has made a global impact in STEM and gender empowerment. With a degree in Computer Engineering and a Master's in Astrophysics, she is the founder of Latin Women in Space and founder of SWISE Costa Rica. As a certified analog astronaut, her career blends research, science communication, and leadership. Her work inspires girls and women in STEM, positioning her as a role model in space exploration and science education across Latin America.

## **CATERINE VANGECI**

### *Whizz Education*

Catherine Wangeci is an Education Technology Implementation Specialist with 20 years' experience in initiating and managing complex multinational, multi-activity ICT-in-Education projects and programs in Africa. She is currently the Africa Territory Head of Whizz Education, a British EdTech Organisation leading the frontier of the use of adaptive technologies to democratize personalized learning even in the most marginalised communities. Prior to joining Whizz Education, Wangeci worked with the African Virtual University (AVU) for eleven years as a Manager of Education Projects in 21 African countries supported by the World Bank and the Africa Development Bank.

## **CESAR COSTA**

### *NewSpace Advisors*

Cesar Costa, MBA, is the CEO of NewSpace Advisors, with over 14 years of experience in IT, aerospace, and finance. He recently represented Uruguay at the 3rd Artemis Accords Heads of Agency Meeting and the IAF Global Space Leaders Summit during IAC 2024 in Milan. Passionate about enhancing Latin America's role in the space industry and promoting STEM education diversity, he supports initiatives like Woman Aero STEAM's 'Valquiria' Mars analog mission, engaging 15 women from 8 Latin American countries.

## **CHARLYNNE JEPKOSGEI**

### *Women in Space Kenya*

Charlynne Jepkosgei is a passionate geospatial engineer with over 7 years of experience in remote sensing and GIS. She is passionate about leveraging EO technologies to address food security and climate change. Also, dedicated to youth empowerment, particularly for girls, she founded Women in Space Kenya to empower more women into the space industry. Charlynne excels in collaborating with experts from diverse disciplines to design impactful interventions and drive meaningful change.

## **CLAIRE ELSS**

### *Cosmos for Humanity*

Claire Elss is a lawyer specializing in space and international law, and President of Cosmos for Humanity. She holds a double master's degree in NGO/IOG management and international law. As a founding member of the Space Women Alliance, she and her colleagues launched a platform featuring professional profiles of women in space. Claire is dedicated to promoting diversity and sustainability in the space sector, working actively to ensure that these values are respected in the space industry.

## **DIVIYA DEVANI**

### *BAE Systems*

Diviya Devani is a space systems engineer, known for leading complex projects, including Australia's largest private satellite and a world-first quantum sensing satellite. A TechWomen100 awardee and Rising Star 2022 in Science and Engineering, she is a passionate advocate for gender equality in STEM. Diviya is currently exploring brain-inspired computing for satellites and remains at the forefront of innovation in space technology.

## **ELISE STEPHENSON**

### *Australian National University*

Elise Stephenson is the Deputy Director of the Global Institute for Women's Leadership, Australian National University, founded and chaired by former prime minister Julia Gillard. She conducted the research behind the UN Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA)'s Landmark Study on Gender Equality in the Global Space Sector 2024. She was co-convenor behind Australia's first ever conference on gender equality and diversity in the space sector, Diversity at the Frontier: Gender Equality in Space.

## **ESTEL BLAY CARRERAS**

### *Hypatia Mars Association*

Estel Blay is the Scientist and Health and Safety Officer for Hypatia II, a Martian analog mission advancing space exploration and gender equity. As Program Manager at the Institute of Space Studies of Catalonia (IEEC), she also manages PhiLabNET Spain for ESA. With a PhD in Aerospace Engineering and extensive experience in STEM outreach, she is passionate about fostering diversity and driving innovation in the space sector.

## **FAITH NJOKI KARANJA**

### *University of Nairobi*

Faith Njoki Karanja is an Associate Professor in the Department of Geospatial and Space Technology, University of Nairobi. She has served as the first female chair of the department for two terms. Her research interests are in the application of Earth Observations and Machine Learning in studies namely food security, poverty reduction, urban and natural environment, climate change impacts as well as Gender, Diversity and Inclusion studies (Closing the Gender Gap in STEM).

## **FIKISWA MAJOLA**

### *Department of Science and Innovation (South Africa)*

Fikiswa is a dedicated professional with over a decade of experience in public service advancing national space strategies. With a chemical engineering degree from the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, she is in pursuit of a Masters in Space Studies. Fikiswa champions diversity in STEM and fosters global partnerships for inclusive space innovation, drawing on her background in science communication and diplomacy to inspire the next generation.

## **GEORGINA CHÁVEZ**

### *Universidad Católica Boliviana San Pablo*

Georgina Chávez is a biochemist currently working as Research Coordinator at the Universidad Católica Boliviana "San Pablo" in La Paz, where she also lectures on Cell and Molecular Biology. She is the supervisor of the "almost engineers" group, introducing students in the field of Space Biology. Her group has been awarded in the HyperGES call from UNOOSA. She volunteers with the Conecta Mentora initiative, guiding female STEM students in their transition from university to the professional world.

## **GIOVANNA ESTEFANIA RAMIREZ**

### *Scientific Corporation of the Aerospace Sector (Colombia)*

Giovanna Estefanía Ramírez Ruíz is an electronic engineer and aviation pilot, and serves as the president of the Aerospace and Electronic Systems Society (AESS-IEEE) for Latin America. She is an analog astronaut at the Polish Analog Astronaut Training Center (AATC), a mentor for the "Space for Women" program, and a former fellow of the Global Space Consortium of Japan. She has received specialized training in aerospace engineering across various countries and has worked with the Colombian Aerospace Force as an engineer and researcher in space projects.

## **HIRA FATIMA**

### *University of Karachi*

Hira Fatima is a passionate advocate for STEM education, diversity, equity, and empowerment in space science. She has earned recognition for securing major grants and leading impactful space education projects. Her initiatives focus on advancing gender equality, encouraging women to pursue STEM, and raising awareness about careers in the space sector. Hira holds key roles with IAU, AWB, LCO, ASTRO ACCEL, and RGZ-EMU, promoting space education and gender equity across Pakistan and beyond.

## **HYUN OK KIM**

### ***Korean Aerospace Research Institute (KARI)***

Hyun Ok Kim earned her Ph.D. in engineering from the Technical University of Berlin in 2007, specializing in Geoinformation and Remote Sensing. She works at the Korea Aerospace Research Institute, contributing to the International Charter: Space and Major Disasters and leading Earth observation system development for South Korea's space program. As Vice President of the Association of Korean Woman Scientists and Engineers, she advocates for women in science and promotes science education, publishing a book on satellite-based Earth observation in 2021.

## **ILARIA CINELLI**

### ***AIKO Srl***

Ilaria Cinelli, PhD, FAsMA, is a senior engineer in biomedical engineering and space exploration. She holds degrees from the University of Pisa and a doctorate from NUI Galway. Ilaria is a Fellow of the Aerospace Medical Association, a Mars Society Steering Committee member, and an IEEE AdCOM member. She is also a UN Space4Women mentor and was honoured as one of Europe's top 50 tech voices by the European Patent Office in 2023 for her contributions to healthcare and space exploration.

## **IRA SHARMA**

### ***Nepal Space Foundation***

Ira Sharma, 19 years old, is a satellite research fellow at Antarikchya Pratisthan Nepal (Nepal Space Foundation). She has been working to grow Nepal's emerging space sector from the root level by mentoring 1000+ students in satellite bootcamps. As Nepal's ambassador to ShakthiSat; a female-led global satellite project, she is bringing together 100 middle & high school girls for satellite training. As a teenager herself, she believes empowering young minds is vital to develop Nepal's workforce.

## **JEMIMA ENYONAM ABENA KWAKUYI**

### ***Xavier Space Solutions***

Jemima Enyonam Abena Kwakuyi is a Ghanaian feminist passionate about space science, astronomy, and climate change. With a BSc. in Electrical Electronics Engineering, she works as a Junior Electronics Engineer at Xavier Space Solutions, specializing in CANSATs and CubeSats. A dedicated volunteer, Jemima advocates for space science education and dreams of empowering more women to pursue careers in STEM.

## **JENNIFER G. BLANK**

### ***Blue Marble Space Institute of Science***

Jen Blank is a Senior Researcher with the Blue Marble Space Institute of Science and a Senior Research Astrobiologist at the NASA Ames Research Center in Silicon Valley. She has held operational roles as a science team member for NASA's Curiosity Rover, which is still active on Mars today. Jen leads multidisciplinary NASA science projects that integrate robotic operational activities in preparation for future planetary missions. In addition to mentoring students and future planetary explorers, she serves as an outreach communicator for NASA's Office of Public Affairs.

## **JOAN CHESONI**

### ***Kenya Space Agency Board of Directors***

Joan Chesoni is an experienced senior legal practitioner who has participated in regional and international thought leadership to advance the transformative force of well-drafted legislation and policy frameworks. Joan is an Advocate of the High Court of Kenya, currently serves as a Director on the Kenya Space Agency Board, and was a Space4Women Mentor in 2023. In 2023, Joan was invited to be a Board Member of the International Space University Board of Trustees.

## **JULIA MILTON**

### ***NASA JPL***

Julia is a lead for NASA's Disasters Program at JPL, developing and delivering remote sensing data to U.S. and international agencies for disaster response. She is also a systems engineer in JPL's Optical and Quantum Systems Engineering Group, working on optical telescope instruments and quantum sensors. She has contributed to projects including the Nancy Grace Roman Space Telescope and the Quantum Gravity Gradiometer. Julia holds a BSE from the University of Michigan and a PhD from MIT.

## **JULIE ANN BANATAO**

### ***Philippine Space Agency***

Julie Ann Banatao is a Chief Science Research Specialist at the Philippine Space Agency (PhilSA), where she heads the Spacecraft Electrical and Computing Systems Development Division. One of the pioneers in the Philippines' satellite development, she leads the agency's flagship MULA satellite project, driving initiatives to localize and expand upstream satellite technology nationwide. Dr. Banatao earned her PhD in Aerospace Engineering from Tohoku University, Japan, where she contributed to early Philippine satellite missions, laying groundwork for the country's space technology advancements.

## **KATARINA PAVLOVIC**

### ***Serbian Office for Space Sciences Research and Development***

Katarina Pavlovic, Associate Professor at the Faculty of Project and Innovation Management, has over 20 years of experience in academia, industry, and consultancy, bridging research with business strategies. As President of the Serbian Office for Space Sciences Research and Development, she promotes space tech accessibility for startups and envisions its role in Serbia's innovation landscape. A dedicated advocate for women in STEM, she mentors through international programs and participates in Horizon Europe, championing gender equality and leadership in tech and science.

## **LILY R. ASONGFAC**

### ***Youths for Sustainable Space Development***

Lily R. Asongfac, a telecommunications engineer and Strategic Partnerships Manager at Space Hero Ltd, drove a 1500% increase in partner engagement through strategic outreach. Her technical expertise was crucial in developing a nanosatellite mission for the Gabonese Space Agency. Passionate about youth engagement, she founded the Aerospace Baby Project and leads Cameroon's branch of the Space Generation Advisory Council, promoting STEM and space education. Her accolades include the Nebula Award, TechWomen Fellowship, and Space Foundation Teacher Liaison. Lily's leadership and mentorship make her a key figure in Africa's space industry, inspiring future space professionals.

## **MARA CECILIA FERNANDEZ MARCIAS**

### *Uruguayan Air Force*

Information technology professional with more than 10 years of experience in human resources management. In addition, she has a year of study focused on technology, during which she developed a project in JavaScript. Mara also completed an internship at the well-known information technology company, UKG, where she was part of the EPIC development team.

## **MARY ONGUKO**

### *Avanti*

Mary, an experienced MBA with over 15 years in satellite broadband, is the Regional Business Development Executive for East Africa at Avanti Communications. Her role centers on building telecom partnerships across Africa. Previously, she held key roles at top African telcos, including iSAT Africa and MTN Business Kenya. A founding board member of the Project Management Institute of Kenya, she mentors young women in tech through Akirachix and Safaricom's Technovation Challenge. Recognized as one of Africa's most influential women in digital transformation, Mary is committed to leading commercial growth with impactful leadership across Africa.

## **MERCY KAMAU**

### *Kenya Space Agency*

Mercy Kamau is the Director Corporate Services at the Kenya Space Agency. She is also a Colonel at the Kenya Airforce with over 20 years of professional experience. She was actively involved in the development of Kenya Space Agency Gender Mainstreaming Policy in 2020. She has a passion for inspiring and mentoring the future generations in particular young women and girls to pursue space/STEM related courses. This is envisioned to build long term human capacity for the Kenya Space Sector.

## **MINDY HOWARD**

### *Inner Space Training*

Mindy Howard is bringing Space a bit closer to Earth, to every girl from any socio-economic demographic in the world with dreams of becoming an astronaut! As founder & CEO of Cosmic Girls Foundation, she is empowering the female space generation by up-skilling girls worldwide with space education and training, following her dynamic career across 35 countries as an engineer, trainer and sustainability leader in the oil industry. She also created the first and only mental preparedness training program for commercial astronauts; "Inner Space Training".

## **NADIA SANCHEZ**

### *She Is Foundation*

Nadia is the founder and president of Fundación SHE IS, promoting economic empowerment, education, and social inclusion for women and girls across seven countries. Honored in 12+ nations and recognized by the World Bank (2017) and the White House (2015), she was also listed as one of the 100 most powerful women in 2023 and 2024 by Forbes Colombia and LATAM, and among the 75 new leaders by El País América. Her organization has benefited over 17,800 women and 1020 girls, she leads the SHE IS Global Forum, connecting 30,000 people worldwide. She also pioneered the Ella es Astronauta program with NASA.



## **NANDI MTETHWA**

### *DE Africa/RIIS*

Nandi is passionate about leveraging Earth Observation to address challenges across Africa. After securing 3rd place in the inaugural Africa Earth Observation Challenge, she now aids aspiring entrepreneurs as a pitch trainer, helping them refine their ideas to secure vital support. As a Management Consultant at RIIS, which builds EO ecosystems across the continent, and in her role at Digital Earth Africa, she actively supports initiatives that empower diverse groups focused on Diversity and Inclusion for EO users and startups.

## **NORA MCINTYRE**

### *Southampton Education School*

Nora McIntyre currently works at the Southampton Education School, University of Southampton. As the School's educational innovation specialist, Nora asks how best to improve teacher effectiveness in the use of educational technology among diverse global populations. Nora brings research expertise in educational technology, machine learning, social justice, and educational effectiveness and has published Guest Edited and reviewed major book proposals in the area of inequities and responsible AI in online learning. Nora led research for an international consortium on educational technology for international development, with demonstrable capability to garner diverse perspectives with contextual sensitivity for cohesive insights for academic and non-academic outputs.

## **NYAMBURA KAMAU**

### *Viwanda Africa Group*

Nyambura thrives on leveraging her aerospace engineering expertise to drive innovation across industries. She is a Senior Associate at Pyramidia Ventures, an Advisory Board Member at WildDrone (EU), and the founder of Viwanda Africa Group, where she leads organisations through the complexities of building new business ventures. Nyambura holds a degree in Aerospace Engineering from the University of Sheffield and a Postgraduate Certificate in Space Studies from the International Space University.

## **OLAYINKA FAGBEMIRO**

### *Nigerian Space Agency*

Olayinka Fagbemi, Chief Scientific Officer at the Nigerian Space Agency, has 17+ years in space science. She leads the Space Education Outreach Unit and founded AWB Nigeria to promote STEM education, focusing on girls and youth in displaced camps. Active in global space policy, Olayinka has earned multiple awards, including the IAF Young Professional Award. In 2024, she was named a Karman Fellow for her efforts in advancing space education and addressing inequalities.

## **RANIA TOUKEBRI**

### *Akkodis Aerospace and Defense*

As Senior Team Manager and Chief Architect, she takes part in groundbreaking European Space Agency projects, including the Jupiter Icy Moons Satellite, Lunar Gateway, and the Hera planetary defense mission. She collaborates with the University of Lübeck on neuro-based space systems for lunar missions and provides space security expertise, advising UN bodies, NATO, and the African Union. An international lecturer and TEDx speaker, she mentors through the UN's Space4Women program. Recognized by G100, she is featured as a top aerospace engineer in Africa and the Middle East across major media outlets.

## **RICHARD MARETT**

### *Whizz Education*

Richard has 20 years' experience working with schools and ministries of education around the globe, to raise standards in learning for students in mathematics at scale through the development and effective deployment of innovative ICT. Richard drives education programme design, implementation best practices and research & innovation, collaborating with implementation and infrastructure partners as well as research partners and universities, to further the frontiers of intelligent learning technologies, online virtual tutoring and capacity building to use ICT for learning. Richard graduated from Oxford University with a BA and MA in mathematics.

## **ROSSO KANE DIENG**

### *Senegal Space Agency*

Rosso is a seasoned professional in the fields of digital and space technologies and education. As the Director of Planning, Partnership, and Development at the Senegal Space Agency, she spearheads the development of partnership strategies aligned with the Agency's strategic objectives, drives project planning and fosters the growth of a vibrant local space ecosystem. Through her association, she provides access to technology and resources to underserved communities with a focus on young girls.

## **SHIMRIT MAMAN**

### *Ben-Gurion University*

Shimrit Maman is a senior scientist at Ben-Gurion University and directs the Earth and Planetary Image Facility (EPIF). Her research focuses on applying satellite technologies—remote sensing, GIS, OSINT—to disaster management, environmental challenges, and climate change. She leads BGUSAT, Israel's first research nanosatellite, and serves as a UN-SPIDER expert, heading Israel's Regional Support Office for disaster response. Dr. Maman is also vice chair of the IAF Earth Observations Committee.

## **SMITA FRANCIS**

### *Namibia University of Science and Technology*

Smita Francis is an award-winning researcher, recently recognized with the MOPGA Fellowship (2023) and the Mastercard Women SME Leaders Award (2024). She is the Director of the Namibia Institute of Space Science (NIST) at the Namibia University of Science and Technology and serves on the National Steering Committee on Space Science. She founded and chairs the Namibia Women in Engineering Association. She also serves as Section Editor for the Journal of Engineering Advancements and is an Honorary Fellow of the Academy of Engineering & Technology.

## **SUSAN MURABANA OWEN**

### *Travelling Telescope*

Susan, co-founder and CEO of The Travelling Telescope, promotes astronomy in Africa with portable telescopes, a mobile planetarium, and the bamboo-constructed Nairobi Planetarium. Her organization won the 2020 Europlanet Award and partners with the Airbus Foundation for youth outreach. Susan serves as a UN Space for Women mentor, founded the African Planetarium Association, and is a board member of the World Space Week. Featured on CNN and BBC, she is passionate about quality education and inspiring interest in astronomy.

## **UCHENNA ONWUAMAEGBU-UGWU**

### ***Edufun Technik***

Uchenna Onwuamaegbu-Ugwu, a STEM Education Systems Integration Expert at Edufun Technik and Harvard Scholar, designs actionable strategies to inspire women and girls into STEM, Climate, and Space Technology careers. Known for her TEDx talks and modular Mobile STEM labs, she advances women's participation in technology. Through design thinking and simulation, she scales hands-on STEM and Social-Emotional learning for underserved students, democratizing access and narrowing learning gaps.

## **VIVIANNE META**

### ***MD Locate IT***

Vivianne Meta is Managing Director at LocateIT Limited, specializing in GIS and Earth Observation. She leads geospatial projects in policy and development, and in 2023, joined the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's Geospatial Insights Advisory Board. As Kenya's representative for the African Aeronautics and Space Organisation, she also engages with the African Leadership Conference on Space Science. Named a top African space professional under 30, she's passionate about using geotechnologies for sustainable development and mentoring youth and women in space science.