

# **Water Security, Gender Equality, and Youth Inclusion for a Sustainable Future in the Arab World**

**CIHEAM and ARAB WATER COUNCIL***18 November 2024**12:50 - 13:50 (CET, BAKU TIME +3H)**(ONLINE) Interactive working sessions-developing concrete solutions*

## **Bios of the speakers**



Dr Bilal Derardja, consultant and researcher at the CIHEAM-Bari. He is a hydraulic engineer with a MSc in Land and Water Resources Management and a PhD in Risk and Environmental, Territorial and Building Development. Dr Derardja has worked on several regional water-related projects in the Mediterranean countries, focusing primarily on pressurized irrigation systems design and performance analysis, water conjunctive use, and irrigation modernization assessment. Within these projects, he has developed numerous models and stand-alone software using both direct programming and machine learning. Additionally, Dr Derardja is actively involved in remote sensing for water-related issues, particularly for precision agriculture. He also supervises master's students at CIHEAM Bari working on the above topics.



Manel Hedhli, engineer in Rural Economics with MSC in Business Economics and Management from CIHEAM-Chania. Manel is a consultant in gender equality and women empowerment. She has worked on different development projects supporting rural women and their economic empowerment in Tunisia, Circular economy, Climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies and policies. Manel is a member of the National Steering Committee for the United Nations Decade for Family Farming in Tunisia (UNFFF 2019-2028). She dedicated her research at CIHEAM-Chania to gender empowerment and Climate change adaptation.

**COP29 - UNFCCC***11-22 November 2024, Baku, Azerbaijan*

Doha Zamel is currently an external Water Expert working for the Union for the Mediterranean and AECID. She worked with international and regional organizations which are active on water and IWRM activities. She is a fee-paid Expert Within the European Commission and a co-editor of the Gateway to the future of the Mediterranean of a publication regarding the Water-Energy-Food-Environment Nexus in the Mediterranean.

She Worked with the GWP-Med to assist the advance of the development of the UfM Water Agenda. Doha served as a country assistant in the field of water management at the Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC) based in Hungary in the WATER PORT project. She was involved in dialogue activities and providing support to actions related to

integrated water resources management and climate change adaptation. She has been involved in the BeWater project within the National Institute for Research, Rural Engineering and Forestry (INRGREF) in Tunis. She has a hydraulic engineering degree from the National Institute of Agronomy of Tunis (INAT).



Dr. Manal Benani is the Youth and Culture Manager at the Africa Europe Foundation, where she champions youth engagement in policy-making and cultural initiatives. With a robust background in medicine and diplomacy, Dr. Benani has dedicated her career to empowering young voices across Africa and Europe. Her expertise is underscored by her participation as a moderator at significant international events, including the UN Water Conference and the Action Days of the Summit of the Future, showcasing her commitment to facilitating dialogue on critical global issues, particularly those impacting youth and sustainable development.

In addition to her role at the Africa Europe Foundation, Dr. Benani has extensive experience in training debate and public speaking through the Young Mediterranean Voices Program. She has contributed to climate action initiatives and is a researcher for the upcoming "Youth and Democracy in the Climate Crisis Knowledge" book by the Council of Europe. As a co-founder of Sustainable Cooperation for Peace and Security, Dr. Benani actively collaborates with organizations such as SEforALL, UFM, and the British Council, driving holistic change and fostering collaboration among diverse stakeholders. Her journey reflects her pivotal role in advancing climate and energy action on a global scale while addressing critical challenges in Africa.

## COP29 - UNFCCC

11-22 November 2024, Baku, Azerbaijan

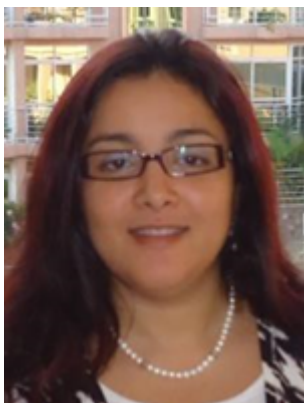


Dr. Aymen Sawassi is an accomplished hydraulic and environmental engineer with extensive expertise in sustainable water resources management and environmental modeling. He holds a Ph.D. in Environment, Resources, and Sustainable Development from the Parthenope University of Naples, where his research focused on designing adaptive irrigation systems to address uncertainty and enhance resilience. Dr. Sawassi has a dynamic professional background spanning academia, research, and consulting. He has contributed to international projects in Africa, Europe, and North America, tackling challenges in hydraulic modeling, GIS, surface water hydrology, and crop growth simulation. A skilled programmer, he integrates tools like DSSAT and SWAT at the source code level to

improve model interoperability and simulation accuracy for agricultural and environmental applications. Dr. Sawassi is a Water Resources Management and Modeling Expert at the Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Bari. His work includes enhancing agroforestry simulations, capacity building, teaching master's courses, and developing hydrological models to support decision-making. He has also consulted on water management projects for SARI Group, delivering innovative, sustainable solutions across Africa. An award-winning scholar, Dr. Sawassi is recognized for his impactful research, including publications on irrigation resilience, water banking strategies, and land consolidation. He is fluent in Arabic, French, English, and Italian and active in global organizations like ASCE and Amnesty International. Driven by a commitment to sustainability, he leverages his technical expertise to develop adaptive strategies for managing water and environmental systems in a rapidly changing world.



Luca Tancredi is a Junior Research Fellow at Sustainable Cooperation for Peace and Security, a peace and security organization operating globally to strengthen youth capacity in peace building and fostering cooperation. With a strong academic background in International Relations and Crisis and Security Management, his work focuses on youth involvement in peace and security initiatives, cyber peacebuilding, and disinformation analysis. Luca is passionate about empowering young people to play active roles in fostering sustainable peace and addressing global security challenges and has contributed to several research initiatives on that.



Amel M. Azab, from Egypt, graduated in 1996 from Irrigation and Hydraulics Department, Faculty of Engineering, Cairo University. MSc. holder from Same Faculty in Water Resources Management and was awarded her PhD Degree in Surface water quality management from TU-Delft and UNESCO-IHE, the Netherlands in January 2012. Her major research field is surface water quality, wetlands and ecosystems management. She started her career in 1997 as a staff member of Water Resources Research Institute NWRC-MWRI, Egypt; in 2000 she joined the Hydraulics Research Institute, as research assistant and senior technical officer of the Nile Basin Capacity Building Network (NBCBN), since 2009 she joined UNESCO-IHE, Delft, the Netherlands as the manager of the NBCBN regional network until 2019. Since 2019

**COP29 - UNFCCC**

*11-22 November 2024, Baku, Azerbaijan*

she is the chief of board of trustees and the executive director of NBCBN regional network foundation, which is registered under the Egyptian Government and a member network of CapNet-UNDP. Dr. Azab is also a member of the Steering Committee of DUPC3 funding program-Water and Development Partnership Programme, IHE-Delft of the Netherlands. She Joined the Arab Water Council (AWC) in 2018 as an expert in water resources management, thematic networks establishment and capacity development, and in 2021 she became the coordinator of the SDG Climate Facility Project, in addition to other research projects under the AWC water, food, energy and ecosystems Nexus pillar, and she is representing AWC as the Cochair of the Arab-GEWE-UNDRR group on gender empowerment and equity under climate impacts, and currently Ms. Azab is the Deputy Technical Director of AWC. She has more than 20 years of experience in regional and international cooperation, capacity development and knowledge sharing programs, coordination and management of several collaborative research and training programs in water related fields including; Water Quality Management, wetlands, ecosystems economic valuation and management, water scarcity, climate change adaptation and resilience, transboundary and integrated river basin management, in addition to research activities focusing on gender equity and Women empowerment in the Water Sector.