



# 4 DECEMBER 2023 UfM TRADE AND INVESTMENT FORUM BRUSSELS, BELGIUM



## Biographies of Speakers and Panelists

### Keynote Speakers:



**H.E Nasser Kamel**  
*Secretary General  
Union for the Mediterranean (UfM)*

*A career diplomat for the Egyptian government, Nasser Kamel held the position of Ambassador of Egypt to the United Kingdom from 2014 to 2018. He was also Ambassador to France in the period 2006-2012, during which he took part in the drafting of the Joint Declaration of the 2008 Paris Summit that marked the launch of the Union for the Mediterranean. Furthermore, between 2012 and 2014, he was Assistant Minister for Arab and Middle Eastern Affairs. From 2004 to 2006, he was the Director of Egypt's Public Information Service. Prior to this position he served in various embassies, including Washington (1984-1988), Lisbon (1990-1994), Tunis (1994-1998), Brussels (1999-2001) and Paris (2001-2004).*



**H.E Valdis Dombrovskis**  
*Executive Vice-President and Commissioner for Trade  
An Economy that Works for People  
European Commission*

*H.E. Valdis Dombrovskis currently holds the position of Executive Vice-President of 'An Economy that Works for People' and Commissioner for Trade at the European Commission. With a career spanning key roles such as Prime Minister of Latvia, Finance Minister, and Member of the European Parliament, he brings a wealth of experience in shaping economic policies. Notably, his leadership as EC Vice-President for the Euro and Social Dialogue, coupled with responsibilities for Financial Stability and Capital Markets Union, underscores his commitment to fostering economic growth and stability in both national and European contexts.*



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**Mr. Leopoldo Rubinacci**  
*Deputy Director General  
European Commission, DG TRADE*

*Leopoldo Rubinacci currently serves as the Deputy Director General in the Directorate-General for Trade of the European Commission. In this role, he is responsible for overseeing EU trade relations with the Americas and neighboring countries to the EU, as well as handling trade aspects related to agriculture, food safety, trade in goods (including raw materials and energy), regulatory cooperation, and trade aspects of public procurement.*

*Mr. Rubinacci joined the European Commission in 1995, initially in what is now known as DG Environment, before transitioning to DG Trade in 1997, where he held various positions. From 2015 to 2020, he served as the Director for Trade Defence, and subsequently took on the role of Resources Director between 2020 and 2022.*



**Ms. Ines Rocha**  
*Managing Director of Impact & Partnerships  
European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)*

*Ines currently serves as the Managing Director for Impact and Partnerships at the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). With over 20 years of experience in the financial industry and capital markets, she brings a wealth of expertise to her role. In her previous positions, Ines worked as a senior banker in the Financial Institutions team at EBRD, focusing on structured products and capital market investments in both bank and non-bank financial institutions across the EBRD's Countries of Operations. She later assumed the role of Director of Financial Products in the SME F&D team. Before joining EBRD, Ines worked in the Equity Capital Markets division of UBS Investment Bank in London, where her responsibilities covered the EMEA region. Prior to her international roles, she contributed to the Central Bank of Portugal, concentrating on ECB/Eurosystem matters.*



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**Mr. Antón Leis García**

Director

*The Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID)*

*Antón Leis García has an extensive career in the field of international development and multilateral affairs both in international organisations and the Spanish government. Prior to his appointment as AECID Director, he held several positions at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) both in the Global Relations Secretariat and the Office of the Secretary-General. Most recently, Mr. Leis García was Counsellor to the OECD Secretary-General, with the rank of Head of Division.*

*From 2018 to 2020 he was Senior Advisor at the General Secretariat for International Affairs, EU, G20 and Global Security of the Cabinet of the Spanish Prime Minister, where he coordinated the participation of Spain in the G20 and was responsible for other multilateral dossiers. He also worked as an advisor to the Secretary of State for International Co-operation.*



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## Panellists:



### **Mr. Léon Delvaux**

*Director for Neighbouring Countries, Industry, Goods, Regulatory Cooperation and Public Procurement  
EU Commission, DG TRADE*

*Léon Delvaux is currently the Acting Director of Directorate E in the European Commission's DG TRADE. Before this role, he served as a Member of the Cabinet of the President of the European Commission, advising on matters related to the development and implementation of trade policy. Prior to joining the Commission, Delvaux had a distinguished diplomatic career in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Luxembourg, holding positions such as Ambassador to Kosovo and Montenegro and Counsellor to the Permanent Representation of Luxembourg to the European Union in Brussels. In the latter role, he coordinated activities, including Coreper I and subsequently Coreper II, and represented Luxembourg in the Intergovernmental Conference leading to the Lisbon Treaty.*



### **Mr. Bernd Lange**

*Chair  
International Trade Committee, European Parliament*

*Bernd Lange has been the Chair of the Conference of Committee Chairs (CCC) in the European Parliament since 2022. He is a Member of the COVID-19 Vaccines Contact Group and chairs the Fair-Trade Working Group since 2019, concurrently serving in the Delegation for relations with Southeast Asia and ASEAN. As the Chairman of the Committee on International Trade since 2014, he focuses on EU-USA trade relations. Bernd Lange, a former Trade Policy Spokesman for the Socialist Group, has been an MEP since 2009, actively contributing to key committees. Prior roles include heading the "economic, environmental, and Europe" unit of the German Trade Union Confederation (DGB) from 2005-2009. As an MEP from Lower Saxony (1994-2004), he received notable awards, including the Automobile Association Award (1998), Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany (2001, 2018 - first class), EU Parliamentarian of the Year (2012), and Fair Politician of the Year (2012/13).*

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## **Mr. Yahya Elwathik Bellah Ahmed**

*First Undersecretary of State*

*Head of the Egyptian Commercial Service, Ministry of Trade and Industry  
Egypt*

*Yahya Elwathik Bellah Ahmed has more than 27 years of international career experience working in several countries including Australia, Canada, Spain, Belgium, and Egypt in the field of Business Development and Economic Development. Prior to his current position, he was Minister Plenipotentiary, Director of the Trade Mission of Egypt at the Embassy of Egypt to the EU, Belgium, and Luxembourg. He also served as Commercial Counsellor and Director of Africa and COMESA Department in Cairo and was a Consultant of Economic Development Programs and Strategic Initiatives in Canada. Between 2008 and 2010 he was the First Secretary of ECS and served as Consul of Economic and Commercial Affairs in Montreal between 2004-2008.*



## **Ms. Şahika Aşkiner**

*Vice President of Italian Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Izmir and  
President of Egikad (Aegean Businesswomen Association).*

*Türkiye*

*Ms. Şahika is a distinguished textile entrepreneur. Founder of Özsimgе Textile since 1992, she specializes in ready-made garments for top European brands, emphasizing gender diversity with 80% female employees. A trailblazer, Ms. Aşkiner also established Libra Textile (1992-1998) and co-founded Vela Textile Ltd. (2005-2020), importing, and distributing Slam SPA sailing wear in Turkey. Her enduring influence extends to successful flagship stores along the Aegean coast and a 12-year partnership with major Turkish department stores. As the president of Aegean Businesswomen Association, Ms. Sahika has represented Egikad in three EU Projects to help women improve their management, financial, marketing, and digital skills as well as helping them to be more aware of their creativity to become entrepreneurs in their own countries. In all these EU projects international partners were mostly from the Mediterranean zone.*



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**Mr. Matthias Knappe**

*Head of Fibres, Textiles and Clothing Unit, Sector and Enterprise Competitiveness.  
International Trade Centre (ITC).*

*Matthias Knappe has over 30 years of diversified professional experience in international trade and development. He has worked at the enterprise, institutional and governmental levels. Matthias is presently leading the fibres, textiles, and clothing programme of the International Trade Centre. Over the last 20 years, he has been working with the T&C sector around the world to increase its export competitiveness. Understanding the needs of the market, he designed ITC's Global Textiles and Clothing programme and created the ITC African Cotton Development Initiative. He holds two master's degrees, in economics and development economics.*



**Dr. Regine Qualmann**

*Head of Department North Africa  
GIZ*

*Regine Qualmann is currently Director of the North Africa Division at Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). Formerly, she served as Country Director for GIZ in Tanzania and held various managing positions in GIZ's Sector Department. Before joining GIZ, she worked as an adviser to the SADC Secretariat in Botswana and was a Research Fellow at the German Development Institute.*

*Ms. Qualmann is an economist with a master's degree from Tübingen and a PhD from the University of Leipzig. Her professional interests are in Private Sector Development, Employment Promotion and achieving a Green Economy, and her geographical focus has been on the African continent.*





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**Ms Ingrid SCHWAIGER**

*Deputy Head of Unit*

*Directorate General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations,  
European Commission*

*Ms. Ingrid Schwaiger is the Deputy Head of Regional Co-operation in the Southern Neighbourhood, DG NEAR (Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations) of the European Union, in Brussels. An economist by training, she has worked in the European Commission for more than 25 years, focusing on external relations. She has dealt with different economic and political issues, development cooperation, financial instruments as well as geographic responsibilities in the Eastern Partnership and the Southern Neighbourhood, including in the EU Delegation in Algeria. In particular, she promotes “an economy that works for people”, a policy priority of the European Commission which focuses on the positive impact of economy on the wider society, promoting concepts, such as social entrepreneurship, women economic empowerment, financial inclusion and impact finance. Together with 5 EU Member States, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and the European Investment Bank, she was instrumental in the launch of the regional Team Europe Initiative on “Job creation through trade and investment” in the Southern Neighbourhood.*



**Mr. Ramy Boujawdeh**

*Chief Operating Officer*

*Berytech, Lebanon.*

*Ramy Boujawdeh, Berytech's Chief Operating Officer since 2014, leads initiatives in entrepreneurship and innovation, with a focus on supporting SMEs. He has particularly emphasized industry verticals like Agri-Food and Cleantech Innovations across the MENA region. Ramy is dedicated to promoting the circular economy, addressing climate change, and fostering citizen engagement. Besides his role at Berytech, he actively supports various social causes in Lebanon, including education, sustainability, agriculture, environment, gender equity, and economic development. Ramy holds positions such as Vice President of the NGO Rural Entrepreneurs, External Advisor for the Faculty of Agriculture and Food Science at the American University of Beirut, and Council Member at the Order of Engineers and Architects. Additionally, he serves as a Board member representing Non-EU Members, including Lebanon, in the European Business & Innovation Centers Network (EBN).*



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**Mr. Mohamed Magdy**

*Executive Director  
Esperanza, Egypt.*

*A Supply Chain Consultant with 24 years of experience in the Textile & readymade garments field. This long Journey started by obtaining the bachelor Engineering Degree in Textiles, then a significant career in Merchandising in reputed Garment Manufacturers in Egypt, in addition to successful journey as a senior in Macy's Egypt office. Magdy has a proven record of accomplishment of accelerating revenue growth, cost savings and market development. Proven ability to drive corporates to revenue growth with a high customer comfort level.*



**Mr. Sangheon Lee**

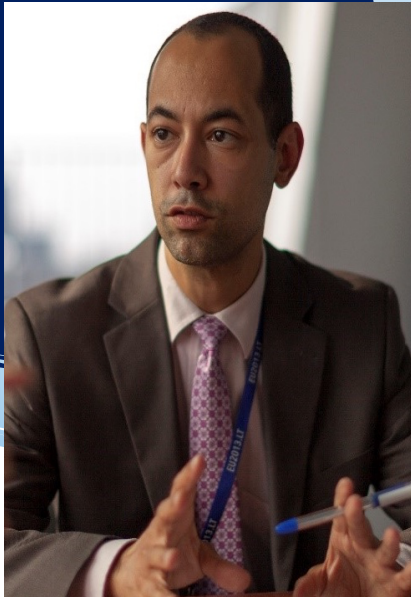
*Director of Employment Department  
International Labour Organization*

*Sangheon LEE is the Director of the Employment, Job Creation and Livelihoods Department (EMPLOYMENT), which leads the ILO's action for promoting full and productive employment by developing integrated employment, development, and skills policies. He is currently leading the ILO's work in monitoring the labour market impacts of multiple crises (ILO Monitor on the World of Work) Prior to becoming the Director of EMPLOYMENT, he was the Special Adviser to the Deputy Director-General for Policy on Economic and Social Issues (2014-18), and an acting director for Research Department (17-18).*





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**Mr. David Dion**

Acting Director

Directorate for international Affairs, EU Commission, DG EMPL

*Mr Dion is Acting Director for Labour Mobility and International Affairs and Head of the Social Security Coordination Unit of the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion of the European Commission. Previously, he had been: the Head of the Task Force for the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan; the Head of the Social Dialogue Unit; and the Head of the unit responsible for general coordination, strategic planning and inter-institutional relations. Between 2008 and 2012, he was the policy assistant to three successive Directors-General of DG EMPL. He holds a master and a doctoral degree in economics prepared at the universities of Paris Dauphine (France) and Mannheim (Germany), as well as a master's degree in legal and political sciences from the University of Paris Descartes, and has produced several academic publications, including a book on European economic integration. He is a French national.*



**Ms. Lamia Chaffai**

Chief Executive Officer

Education for Employment EFE, Tunisia

*With over 25 years of experience in social impact, politics, technology, and e-commerce in Tunisia, Lamia Chaffai is the founding CEO of Education for Employment-Tunisia (EFE-Tunisie). EFE-Tunisie, established post the Tunisian Revolution in 2012, is a leading civil society organization addressing youth unemployment. Lamia also served as a Senior Advisor for the Tunisian Ministry of Employment, overseeing Information Technology projects. Her background includes roles as Secretary of State for Information Technology and CEO at the Tunisian Internet Agency and the National Digital Certification Agency. Lamia holds an Executive MBA from South Mediterranean University (SMU) and degrees from Université de Technologie de Compiègne and the National Engineering School of Monastir.*



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**Mr. Ghaleb Hijazi**

*General Manager*

*Business Development Centre (BDC), Jordan.*

*Ghaleb Hijazi is a senior manager with strong leadership, business growth, planning, and communication skills. He currently serves as the General Manager at the Business Development Center (BDC), a regional organization working in the field of youth development programs, poverty alleviation, and more. Ghaleb has a background in business administration, HR management, and marketing, and he collaboratively worked with global enterprises including World Bank, European Union (EU), UKAID, ILO, ITC, Prince's Trust, Global Affairs Canada, and French Development Agency (AFD), plus United Nations agencies such as UNICEF and UNDP.*



**Ms. Natasha Walker**

*Facilitator, Process Consultant*

*Natasha is an expert on communication, focussing since 1995 on designing and facilitating complex dialogue processes. She enables effective strategy implementation, sustainable change, and smart organisational development all over the world (and online!). She designs and facilitates long-term change and large-scale participation processes and is also a leading moderator of exclusive high-level discussions and workshops with and for corporate boards and governments. Natasha also advises decision makers and scientific institutions on civic and stakeholder engagement across the globe. Her work has allowed her to build up extensive knowledge and expertise in specific topics such as sustainable development. She studied English Literature and Modern Languages (German) at Oxford University and at the University of Göttingen. She lives in Heidelberg with her family and dog.*



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**Dr. Abdelkader El Khissassi**

*Deputy Secretary General  
UfM Secretariat*

*Dr. Abdelkader El Khissassi is the Deputy Secretary General of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), in charge of Economic Development and Employment since July 2021. He is a Moroccan Diplomat who previously served as a Senior Advisor at the UfM Secretariat in Barcelona and held various diplomatic positions in the Kingdom of Morocco's embassies in Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso. He also served as a Political Advisor at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Rabat. Dr. El Khissassi holds a Doctorate degree in Contemporary History of International Relations from the University of Strasbourg and has authored several publications on international relations, economy, history, and literature.*