



**INTRODUCTION TO THE 79<sup>TH</sup>  
WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY:  
*CAN GLOBAL HEALTH MAKE PROGRESS AMID  
RUPTURE?***

**Biographies of Speakers**

**17 May 2026**

Auditorium Ivan Pictet, Geneva Graduate Institute, Maison de la paix

## Professor Suerie Moon

Co-Director, Global Health Centre, Geneva Graduate Institute



Professor Moon seeks to combine academically rigorous research and analysis with policy relevance and impact. Her work is broadly concerned with the intersection of global governance and public health. Her theoretical contributions to the field include conceptualizing the global health system, defining the functions the system must perform to adequately protect public health, global public goods for health, and identifying the types of governance gaps and power disparities that contribute to health inequity. She has developed specialized policy expertise on how to achieve more globally equitable innovation and access to medicines; strengthen the global governance of outbreak preparedness and response; make trade, investment and intellectual property rules more health-sensitive; and address perennial weaknesses in development assistance for health. Her current research projects focus on the international sharing of outbreak-prone pathogens and related benefits, and new business models of pharmaceutical R&D. She also directs the Knowledge Network on Innovation and Access to Medicines, a project that aims to maximize the contributions of research and analysis to strengthening the pharmaceutical innovation system, a topic she has researched for over twenty years.

Prior to joining the Graduate Institute in 2016, she was Lecturer on Global Health at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. She was Study Director of the Harvard-LSHTM Independent Panel on the Global Response to Ebola, head of Harvard's research team on the Lancet Commission on Global Governance for Health, and co-directed the Project on Innovation and Access to Technologies for Sustainable Development at the Kennedy School of Government. She also co-founded and led the Forum on Global Governance for Health, a focal point at the university for research, debate and strategic convening on issues at the intersection of global governance and health. She has continued to teach and advise doctoral students as adjunct Lecturer at the Harvard Chan School.

Her work has been published in leading academic journals and covered in mainstream media. Professor Moon speaks regularly at academic conferences, government and intergovernmental meetings, legislative hearings, and civil society convenings. She has served on a number of expert advisory bodies and boards, including most recently as Secretary of the Board of Directors of the Drugs for Neglected Diseases initiative, WHO Fair Pricing Forum Advisory Group, Expert Advisory Group to the UN Secretary General's High-Level Panel on Access to Medicines, Proposal Review Committee of UNITAID, and US National Academies of Medicine Forum on Antimicrobial Threats. She is currently the Principal Investigator on three research projects, and the recipient of a PRIMA grant from the Swiss National Science Foundation. She received a BA in history from Yale, an MPA in international relations from Princeton, and PhD in public policy from the Harvard Kennedy School of Government.

## **Professor Gian Luca Burci**

Adjunct Professor of International Law, Geneva Graduate Institute



Gian Luca Burci is Senior visiting professor of international law at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva since 2012. He is also the Director of the joint LLM on Global Health Law and Governance between the Graduate Institute and Georgetown Law School, as well as Academic Adviser in the Global Health Centre of the Graduate Institute. Since 2016, Prof. Burci is Visiting Professor and Senior Scholar at the O'Neill Center on National and Global Health Law, Georgetown University School of Law.

Before his appointment at the Graduate Institute, Gian Luca Burci served in the Legal Office of the World Health Organization from 1998 to 2016 and was its Legal Counsel from 2005 to 2016. Professor Burci previously worked in the Department of International Cooperation of the International Atomic Energy Agency (1998-1999) and the Office of the Legal Counsel of the United Nations, where he was designated focal point for UN economic sanctions (1989-1998). During his service in WHO, he was involved in the negotiation and implementation of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, the revision and implementation of the International Health Regulations, WHO's response to the 2009-2010 H1N1 influenza pandemic and the 2014-2016 Ebola outbreak as well as the institutional aspects of WHO reform.

Prof. Burci holds a postgraduate degree in law from the University of Genova, Italy. His areas of expertise are public international law, the law and practice of international organizations as well as global health governance and law. His courses at the Graduate Institute include the law and practice of international organizations, international legal advising and advocacy, and global health law. Prof. Burci is the co-author of the leading English book on WHO, editor of the first research collection on global health law, co-editor of the first research handbook on global health law and author of numerous articles and book chapters. He is a member of the editorial board of the *International Organization Law Review* and the co-founder of the Interest Group on International Health Law of the European Society of International Law.

## **Magda Robalo**

Co-chair, UHC2030 Steering Committee and President and Co-founder, Institute for Global Health and Development (IGHD)



Dr Magda Robalo is a distinguished global health leader, medical doctor, with over thirty years of experience across public health, infectious diseases, ethics, governance, and gender equality. Her career spans national ministerial leadership, senior executive roles within the World Health Organization (WHO), and global governance of major

multilateral health financing and policy platforms. She is widely recognised as an experienced diplomat and for her strategic leadership, political acumen, and ability to build effective partnerships across governments, international institutions, civil society, and communities.

She currently serves as President and Co-founder of the Institute for Global Health and Development (IGHD), a not-for-profit foundation focused on equitable access to quality health care, pro-equity governance, and gender equality. In parallel, she is Co-chair of the UHC2030 Steering Committee, a Global Ambassador for the G20 and G7 Health and Development Partnership, and a member of the Accra Reset High Level Panel, contributing to global advocacy for universal health coverage, health sovereignty and health security.

Previously, Dr Magda Robalo held prominent leadership roles including Minister of Public Health of Guinea-Bissau and High Commissioner for COVID-19, where she led the national pandemic response, mobilised significant financial resources, strengthened surveillance and laboratory systems, and coordinated whole-of-government and partner engagement under highly constrained conditions.

Her international career includes more than two decades with WHO's Regional Office for Africa, where she served as Director of the Communicable Diseases Cluster, WHO Representative in multiple countries, and Malaria Regional Advisor. In these roles, she led large, multicultural teams, managed substantial financial portfolios, shaped regional strategies aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals, and advanced major initiatives in HIV, Hepatitis, tuberculosis, malaria, neglected tropical diseases, climate change and health, maternal and child health, and epidemic preparedness and response.

Dr Magda Robalo has also played a central role in global health governance, serving as Chair and Vice-Chair of the Ethics and Governance Committee of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, and as Alternate Board Member for West and Central Africa. Her work has emphasised integrity, accountability, ethical leadership, and inclusive organisational culture.

She holds an MBChB, a postgraduate certificate in Public Health and Tropical Medicine, and a Master of Science in Epidemiology. She is a Distinguished Fellow of the Africa Academy for Public Health, a Commissioner of the Lancet Global Health Commission on People-Centred Care for UHC, and a recipient of the 2023 Women in Global Health Award.

## Hanan Balkhy

WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean



Dr Hanan Balkhy was appointed WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean by the WHO Executive Board in January 2024. She took office on 1 February 2024.

Dr Balkhy has set 5 priorities for her tenure as Regional Director: make health care more accessible to all, especially hard-to-reach populations; expand country capacities to tackle emergency health demands of the climate crisis, pandemics, conflicts and other disasters; strengthen public health for disease prevention and health promotion; expand partnerships for financing, and to share knowledge and skills; and strengthen WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean and country office capacities to boost cooperation and better influence global health.

Dr Balkhy was previously Assistant Director-General for Antimicrobial Resistance at WHO headquarters. Prior to this, she was Executive Director for Infection Prevention and Control, Ministry of National Guard, Saudi Arabia. She led the Gulf Cooperation Council Centre for Infection Control and the WHO Collaborating Centre for Infection Prevention and Control and Antimicrobial Resistance, Saudi Arabia.

A graduate of King Abdulaziz University, Saudi Arabia, Dr Balkhy completed her paediatric residency at Massachusetts General Hospital, United States of America. She later completed a paediatric infectious diseases fellowship with the Cleveland Clinic Foundation and Case Western Reserve University, USA.

## John-Arne Røttingen

Chief Executive Officer, Wellcome



John-Arne joined Wellcome as Chief Executive Officer (CEO) in January 2024 and leads the charitable foundation's mission to support science to solve the urgent health challenges facing everyone.

John-Arne has held many international roles in health and research, including most recently as Ambassador for Global Health at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Norway. Prior to this, he was founding CEO of CEPI (Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations), which Wellcome helped to launch, and has been the Chief Executive of the Research Council of Norway.

He has held academic positions at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health and the University of Oslo. He is a member of the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters and the US National Academy of Medicine.

John-Arne trained in medicine and science, receiving his MD and PhD from the University of Oslo. He also has an MSc from the University of Oxford and MPA from Harvard University. His research has spanned basic science, epidemiology, clinical trials, health services research and global health policy, governance and financing. He has led the steering groups for the Ebola vaccine trial in Guinea and the Covid-19 WHO Solidarity Trial, and the Lancet Series on access and sustainable effectiveness of antimicrobials.

He has held many national and international board and advisory board roles, including board member of Science Europe and chair of the Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research, and was a board member of Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, PATH, Global Antibiotic Research and Development Partnership (GARDP) and Medicines Patent Pool (MPP).

He has served on expert and advisory bodies at the WHO and in global health, including more recently as chair of the ACT-Accelerator Financial and Resource Mobilization Working Group and a member of the G20 High Level Independent Panel on Financing the Global Commons for Pandemic Preparedness and Response. He served on the Standing Committee on Science of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research and on the Science and Research Committee of the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) and was co-chair of the Future of Global Health Initiatives.

### **Mencia Manso de Zuñiga** Global Health Ambassador, Spain



A diplomat and former journalist, Mencía Manso was appointed Spain's Ambassador at large for Global Health in October 2025. She has devoted much of her international career to multilateral and horizontal affairs, with a focus on the African continent, occupying different leadership and advisory positions at the Spanish Foreign Ministry and the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation. Among other things she has contributed to define and set in motion the regional cooperation program with West Africa and coordinated concertation mechanisms geared to maximising the impact of Spain's Africa policy. Abroad she has led the consular, cultural and scientific diplomacy sections at the embassies of Spain to Norway and Vietnam and, more recently, was Deputy Head of Mission at the Embassy of Spain to Finland. Prior to joining the civil service, she worked for the English edition of El País/International Herald Tribune. She has a BA in History and a master's in International Affairs from SAIS Johns Hopkins University.

## **Yik-Ying (YY) Teo**

Dean of the Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health, the National University of Singapore



Professor Yik-Ying Teo is the Dean of the Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health at the National University of Singapore. He is also Vice President (Global Health) overseeing the University's Office of Global Health.

Prior to his Deanship, he was the Founding Director of the School's Centre for Health Services and Policy Research (CHSPR) and also served as the Director of the former Centre for Infectious Disease Epidemiology and Research (CIDER) from 2015 to 2017.

He is presently a governing board member of the Regional Centre for Tropical Medicine and Public Health Network for Southeast Asia, and a member of the Accra Reset High-Level Panel on Reform of Global Health Architecture and Governance.

## **Cecilia Mundaca Shah**

Vice President for Global Health Strategy, United Nations Foundation



Dr Cecilia Mundaca Shah, Vice President of Global Health Strategy, is a recognized global health expert with extensive experience in health security, pandemic preparedness, and international health policy. With a career spanning leadership roles at the United Nations Foundation, National Academy of Medicine (NAM), and the G20 High-Level Independent Panel on Financing the Global Commons for Pandemic Preparedness and Response, she has been instrumental in shaping strategies for global health security, infectious disease surveillance, health systems strengthening, and the integration of displaced populations into global malaria programs.

At the UN Foundation, Dr Shah leads policy and advocacy efforts across key global health priorities, including pandemic preparedness, antimicrobial resistance, immunization, and migrant health. She oversees high-level partnerships with UN organizations and global health initiatives, providing strategic leadership to advance global health goals. Previously, Dr Shah directed key international initiatives at the NAM, including the Global Roadmap for Healthy Longevity, and served as special advisor to the NAM President during the COVID-19 pandemic. She has played a pivotal role in securing multi-million-dollar funding to support global health initiatives and foster cross-sector collaborations. An accomplished speaker and writer, she has contributed to numerous policy publications and has represented her organizations at major global convenings. She is committed to fostering collective action in global health,

strengthening partnerships across sectors, and driving impactful solutions that promote health equity worldwide.

Dr Shah holds a Doctor of Public Health (DrPH) and Master of Public Health (MPH) from the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, as well as a Medical Doctor (MD) degree from Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos in Peru.