



BIOS OF SPEAKERS

INTRODUCTION



Charlotte Valeur, Denmark/U.K.

Charlotte Valeur has over 35 years of experience in finance, primarily as an investment banker in Denmark and the UK. She is an experienced FTSE Chair, Non-Executive Director, and corporate governance expert, serving on a variety of boards – as well as delivering training and advising boards in corporate governance through her company Global Governance Group. Charlotte has been a director of eight public companies, including three appointments as the Chair. She has taken part in a complete restructuring of NTR Plc, the sale of REG Plc to BlackRock, and, as Chair, overseen an \$8bn Merger of Kennedy Wilson Europe Real Estate Plc with its U.S. NYSE listed parent. Charlotte also has board experience with a range of unlisted companies, including international engineering firm Laing O’Rourke, BT Pension Fund, Chair of Institute of Directors U.K., Founder, and Chair of Board Apprentice, and Founder & Global Chair of the Institute of Neurodiversity ION.



Silvan Ruthenberg, Germany (MC)

With over 15 years of global professional experience, Silvan Ruthenberg is the current Global Lead of the Institute of Neurodiversity ION. Headquartered in Geneva, ION is the currently largest, most globally represented and diverse and inclusive neurodiversity NGO in the world. Silvan is also the Growth Lead of FitBoard, a female-founded, new generation board governance solution combining decades of expert boardroom knowledge and technology. Prior that, Silvan spent over a decade as freelance business consultant, communications and language expert and meditation coach, and had a stint in investment banking – while also having worked for large brands like SWISS, getAbstract and LinkedIn.

AFRICA



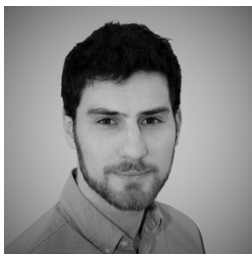
Claire Fourie, South Africa

Claire is a Counselling Psychologist and Senior Clinician at the Neurodiversity Centre (NDC), based in Cape Town, South Africa. She is a PhD candidate at the University of Cape Town (UCT) in the Department of Pediatrics and Child Health, investigating the sex-based phenotypic differences between boys and girls with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). For her PhD, Claire has a fellowship under Professor Kirsty Donald, and has worked on the NeuroDEV study - investigating the genetics of child development. Claire is a co-author of the published book *Flow: The Book About Menstruation*. Special interests and areas of expertise include: neurodevelopmental conditions, Autism Spectrum Conditions, neurodiversity, challenging gender phenotypes, gender diversity and sexuality, women and girls with neurodiversity, research and more. Prior work has included working as a school psychologist, lecturer, research supervisor, private practice and as a research assistant. She is the Executive Director for the South African NPO - Neurodiversity Foundation.



Karen Jeynes, South Africa

Karen Jeynes has worked extensively as a writer for stage and screen, most recently as the writer, co-director and creative producer of the comedy series *The Morning After*, and drama series *Recipes for Love and Murder*. Other productions she has developed and overseen with creative partner Thierry Cassuto at Both Worlds are *Point of Order*, *Comedy Central News*, and *Parlement Parlement*, and the documentary *Africa and I*, as well as working as the head writer for *ZANews: Puppet Nation*. She is also in demand as a script consultant, editor and advisor for TV, film and theatre work, working with local and international production companies and broadcasters, as well as individual writers. She is currently busy with her PhD on autistic representation on South African television through the University of Pretoria, and lobbying for the South African industry to reimagine the way it views disability representation on and behind the screen.



Raphael Smith, South Africa

Raphael graduated top of his class with a BSc(Eng) in Aeronautical Engineering and completed a MSc(Med) in Biomedical Engineering with distinction. He is co-founding director of BMEC Technologies, a bespoke engineering consultancy specializing in medtech, agritech and multi-disciplinary innovation. His work includes the invention of technology-based devices for the neurodiverse community including "Timeline", a transformative LED hourglass redefining the neurodiverse communities' relationship with time and "clickStick" a patented multi-sensory fidget aid. He is dad to a young child and has a special interest in identifying and implementing child-led accommodations.



David Olatunbosun Akerele, Nigeria

David was born on 28 June 1989 with Down syndrome, cerebral palsy and autism. David had developmental delays at every milestone and began talking at the age of 14. His vision at night is limited. David graduated from Peter King College of Music. He is married and a member of the staff of Lady Atinuke Oyindamola Memorial Home.



Elsie Rose Akerele, Nigeria

For 17 years, Elsie has been a mother to many autistic children and adults at Lady Atinuke Oyindamola Memorial Home, an orphanage for abandoned children with Intellectual challenges in Badagry, Lagos State, in Nigeria.



Eloise Rennie, South Africa

Hailing from Grahamstown, South Africa, Eloise is an anthropologist currently pursuing her Master’s degree at Rhodes University. Her research delves into the intricate realm of anthropology with a particular focus on the lived experiences of autistic individuals. This deep passion was ignited by her own journey of self-discovery. Diagnosed with autism at 25, Eloise embarked on a transformative path, transitioning from a mere interest to a dedicated researcher in the realm of neurodiversity. Her honours research, initially a third-year research methods project, blossomed into a profound exploration culminating in her thesis, “Actually Autistic: Re-negotiating self-identity after late diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder,” completed in 2022. Through her ongoing work, Eloise strives to illuminate the nuanced narrative and to empower individuals within the autism community by fostering awareness and acceptance in wider society.



Demilade Onafalujo, Nigeria

I am Demilade Onafalujo, a male with intellectual disabilities and on the autism spectrum, born on 14th September 1987 at LUTH, Idi-Araba Lagos, Nigeria. I have undergone several therapies, including speech, psychological, psychiatric, and behavioral therapies. I attended AOCED staff School in Ijanikin, Lagos, and later attended FGC, Ijanikin, but did not have an appropriate teacher. My highest education attainment is West African School Certificate (WAEC). I have skills in computers, music, pottery, and arts. Presently, I work at the venture section of NFLV, Ajara Badagry, Lagos, Nigeria, as an office assistant. I have the ability to perform my daily living activities. I am time conscious, honest and a lover of God.



Alia Booley, South Africa

Alia is a devoted mother navigating the journey of raising two remarkable autistic sons. Graduating cum laude with a Bachelor of Commerce in Management and Information Systems. Alia boasts over two decades of experience in IT. As an autistic individual herself, she is a passionate advocate for neurodiversity, creating awareness within her community. Playing crucial roles in team collaboration, managing IT projects, and serving as a scrum master, she also founded HerCareerJourney, an organization that empowers women through purposeful events. Currently penning her autism journey in a book set to be published this year, she also serves as a Workplace Buddy and Mentor for those on the autism spectrum.

ASIA



Joel Godi, India

Joel Godi, a seasoned social psychologist and learning and development (L&D) professional with over 25 years of dedicated experience, brings a unique perspective to his work as an individual living with both Autism (AuDHDer) and ADHD. Since establishing Neurogifted in 2015, Joel has been at the forefront of the global effort to promote the neurodiversity movement. As a renowned neurodiversity activist, consultant, and speaker, Joel is passionate about fostering inclusive environments that unlock the full potential of every individual. He firmly

believes that embracing neurodiversity isn't just a matter of social justice but also a key driver of economic success. Through his extensive collaborations worldwide, Joel advocates for neuroinclusion in all spheres, emphasizing the importance of creating a more equitable and just society. With his expertise and dedication, Joel Godi inspires audiences to embrace diversity and harness its power for positive change.



Dr. Mordi Ben-Hamou, Israel

Dr. Mordi Ben-Hamou is an Israeli autistic, educated in France, and graduated from Sorbonne in Paris. He works as a researcher at the Azrieli National Center for Autism and Neurodevelopment Research. Mordi is also the author of the Israeli bestseller "[Autism, Falafel, and Rock & Roll](#)" (translated into English) and an activist for autistics and their families. He provides knowledge about autism through his lectures and Facebook page (visited each half year by half a million visitors).



Faiza Rahman, Pakistan

Faiza Rahman is the Founder and CEO of Neurodiversity Pakistan. She is a late-diagnosed AuDHD (Autism + ADHD). She is born and raised in Pakistan and has an IT & telecom and business management background. Through her own lived experience, she realized that autistic adults do not receive adequate support. With her advocacy work for neurodivergent adults in Pakistan, she created a safe place for people with neurodevelopmental conditions. Faiza is involved with various research projects for medical professional training, higher and further education system policy development and implementation, job readiness, and job placement

for autistic and other neurodivergent people. She is also a country lead for ION Pakistan.

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/faizarahman/>

<https://ndpakistan.org/>



June Durkee, China

June Durkee is in her second year of graduate school at her alma mater, Mercyhurst University, located in Erie, Pennsylvania, in the U.S., and is pursuing a Master's degree in Organizational Leadership while also serving as a Graduate Employee in the Learning Support Services Department. Having earned her Bachelor's in Hospitality Management with a concentration in Events, June began to realize her passion for event planning and sports entertainment as her ideal career path. Besides athletics, June has been active in multiple organizations and held leadership roles through Lab and Mercyhurst - - as a Lab Alumni

Representative, a Mercyhurst Student Ambassador, a CREATE Junior Counselor, and a Senior Class Gift Committee Member. Last summer, June worked as a meetings and events Intern as part of the Cornell Hospitality Internship Program in New York. She is well on her way to a career in sports event planning.



Alice Yip Wai Ping, Hong Kong, China

Alice Yip Wai Ping is a pianist and advanced piano teacher whose journey exemplifies the transformative power of music. Diagnosed with autism at a young age, Alice found solace and purpose in playing the piano, which became a guiding light through her unique challenges. Despite facing obstacles, she graduated from the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama. Alice's musical prowess has earned her numerous accolades, including First Prizes in prestigious competitions like the Piano House Competition, the New York Victory International Music Competition and performances at renowned venues such as Carnegie Hall. Just this month, March 2024, she was awarded the 2nd Prize at the New York International Music Competition and invited to perform at New York Lincoln Hall (Bruno Walter Auditorium). Alongside her performing career, Alice is deeply committed to using music as a tool for social impact, providing music education to individuals with autism through her involvement with the Heep Hong Society.

OCEANIA



Matija Squire, Australia (Oceania Organising Committee)

Tia is a dynamic professional whose career spans hospitality, education, and leadership roles. As a lecturer in languages and entrepreneurship, she transitioned into being a founder, consultant, and mentor. Notably, Tia served as the youngest female director on a long-standing board, and spearheaded STEM curriculum launches in the U.S. A passionate advocate for diversity and inclusion, especially after her AuDHD diagnosis, Tia's current endeavor is with Untapped Talent. Here, she dedicates her expertise in motivational theory to assist neurodivergent individuals and organizations in accessing untapped potential. Tia is a firm believer in empowering others, ensuring that everyone gets the chance to shine in the right environment. Her commitment to workplace well-being and neurodiversity is evident in her active engagement on LinkedIn, where she shares valuable insights.



Rebecca McCash, Australia

Rebecca McCash is the AuDHD founder and CEO of FutureTech Australia, a social enterprise with the mission of inspiring the neurodivergent minds of the future. FutureTech offers STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts & math) based social and learning opportunities that are designed and delivered by neurodivergent people. Rebecca is an Inclusion Consultant for Aspect's Autism Friendly Team, member of Catalyst 2030, SECNA and the Australian National Autism Strategy Oversight Council's Economic Inclusion Working Group. Rebecca has worked in the disability sector for almost a decade and has a passion for genuine co-design, creating learning environments that spark curiosity, penguins, and challenging the status quo to 'build a better future for everyone'.



Aaron Jackson, Australia

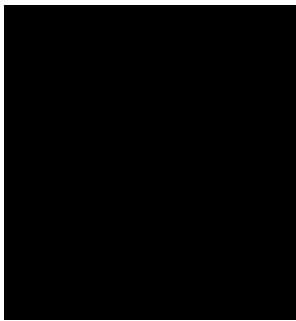
Aaron is a Technology Leader working in Financial Services and merges a background in financial modelling and data engineering with a passionate commitment to DEI and neuro-inclusivity. Living with Autism and ADHD, Aaron leverages their unique perspective to drive inclusive practices in all aspects of life. Aaron is a proud father of an autistic daughter, who has taught him more about himself than any other person. Aaron dreams of a world where our unique qualities are celebrated equally.



Hayden McDonald, Australia

“Aviation has been part of my life ever since I was young to the point that I decided I wanted to fly for the Royal Flying Doctor Service on the very last day of high school. When my medical was denied from the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA), I took it upon myself to make Australia’s AVMED System more inclusive, more flexible and more modern that fits today’s model through social media, YouTube and a solo circumnavigation around Australia. I stand for a more neurodiverse friendly future with true inclusion in mind that creates true change to

the community that is autistic friendly and provides a safe environment for the autistic community so our voices can be heard.”



Tori Haar, Australia

Tori Haar (she/her) is an Autistic woman living on Wiradjuri country in regional Victoria, Australia. She works for Reframing Autism an autistic-led charity focused on community education and creating opportunities for autistic people to share their insights. Tori has been active in the autistic community since officially finding out she was part of it in 2013. She has combined her personal experience with her professional career since 2016 working in both the not-for-profit and higher education sectors. Tori received a Westpac Social Change Fellowship in 2019 to recognise and further her work around leadership and capacity building for autistic people.



Aisling Smith, Australia (Oceania Organising Committee)

Ash has 15 years of experience in personal and professional development training programs. Originally from Ireland, she has lived in various countries, including New York and China, before settling in Melbourne, Australia, with her husband and their autistic son, Daniel. Aisling brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise to her work. Discovering her own ADHD and autism has become the driving force behind her mission. Aisling delivers training, talks, and programs to government and corporate entities on the importance of neurodiversity in the workplace and inclusion.

With thanks to:



Patrick Brown, Australia (Oceania Project Coordinator)

Patrick's journey is a testament to resilience and advocacy. With a background in computer science and having worked with like-minded individuals, Patrick has demonstrated his ability to thrive as a neuro-divergent professional when he first accepted a position as Chair for Sharing Best Practice, hosting one of Australia's largest independent conferences for teachers seeking best-practices in education, which is now led by his four mentors. Today, Patrick is studying to enter a career in cybersecurity and to use his divergent thinking as an advantage. Patrick aims to collaborate with and support neurodiverse individuals across various sectors,

continuing to be a crusader for the unheard and hidden.

EUROPE



Simone Favarin, Italy

Simone is the founder and President of Aspergeronline.org, an association that promotes the knowledge and inclusion of neurodivergent individuals. He is an autistic, award-winning designer and advocate.

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/phate/>



Tineke Rensen, the Netherlands

Tineke works with ambitious businesswomen and helps them elevate their businesses and quantum jump to next levels, so they will make the impact they desire. She has transitioned from a hardcore masculine and successful businesswoman to a spiritual and feminine business mentor with 34 years of business background, now helping women to harmonize these two natural forces. Tineke built an international business club for high-end businesswomen, who could not find peers in the average female networks. With her book "Maximum Business Growth for Women" she distinguishes herself as an expert

in female entrepreneurship. She also was a sports athlete, competing at world level. Now, she is a long-distance swimmer.



Dr. Patrick Druggan, Scotland

Patrick grew up in Glasgow and went to university there. His father was a labourer and his mother worked in a biscuit factory. He was given corporal punishment almost daily at school from the age of six until the age of 14. He was "lazy" because he couldn't read, also disruptive, and would point correct teachers' errors. Patrick was diagnosed with dyslexia at the age of 32 when he started his part-time Ph.D., which focused on something he invented, and he submitted four patents from his doctoral studies. He was diagnosed as having ADHD and being autistic in his fifties.



Matthew Punter, U.K.

Matthew Punter, a first-year psychology PhD student at the University of Bath, U.K., focuses on digital solutions for the autism employment gap with funding from the Centre for People-Led Digitalisation. Overcoming his label as the "Worst Kid from Leicester," Matthew returned to education at 17 after a decade-long hiatus, quickly mastered basic literacy, and self-studied for university entry, earning offers from Cambridge and Bath. Matthew now embraces the extremity of his neurodiverse experience to demonstrate that differences are not dysfunctional, so that those on the spectrum can be seen for their potential

rather than their challenges.



Pierre Marcantonio, France

Pierre Marcantonio is a French autistic person born in Narbonne. He is a board member of ION - Institute of Neurodiversity in France. Patrick graduated in animated cinema in 2015 in Lyon and has worked for eight years in animated series in Angoulême. Despite his placement in a day hospital and in a psychoanalytic medico-social center as a child, which could have compromised his future, he attended school, middle school and high school with a certificate and a baccalaureate in his pocket. Diagnosed late at the age of 23, Patrick has dedicated his life to activism since 2018 through countless associations at the national and

international level. A fervent supporter of neurodiversity and deinstitutionalization, he fights tirelessly for dignity and acceptance of neurominorities.



Jan Gawroński, Poland

An 18-year-old self-advocate on the autism spectrum, Jan is one of Poland's leading rights activists and campaigners. He is the founder of the first Polish Conscious Youth Club that brings together young neurodiverse people, and a member of the Autism Team Foundation, the "We Want All of Life" civic initiative and the "Our Ombudsman" Initiative, which cooperates with the Polish Commissioner for Human Rights. Since December 2023, Jan has served as the Social Deputy to the Ombudswoman for Children's Rights. During the 2018 disability activists' strike at the Sejm, Jan appealed to the government to support

persons with disabilities. He also authored the memorable "Letter to the Minister", the turning point of the 2019 campaign for small self-help homes for people with autism and multiple disabilities. Best known for his multiple successful interventions against rights violations, Jan has co-created several impactful social campaigns aimed at supporting persons on the autism spectrum, promoting self-advocacy, inclusion and respect for neurodiverse people's dignity.

NORTH AMERICA



Dr. Maureen Dunne, United States

Dr. Dunne is a cognitive scientist, global keynote speaker, neurodiversity expert, board director, and neurodivergent leader who has driven systems change in business, education, and public policy. An elected official, she is the former President of the Illinois Community College Trustees Association, the third largest community college system in the United States, serving over 700,000 students. She serves on the national board for community college trustees, helping to drive policy change for over 12 million students in the United States and beyond. A Rhodes Scholar and organizational change expert with over two decades of

experience, her work has been featured in Forbes, Bloomberg, and MIT Sloan Management Review. She was also a featured speaker at The Atlantic Festival on Neurodiversity Inclusion. She received a doctorate from the University of Oxford and is the author of *The Neurodiversity Edge*.



Lara Schaeffer, United States

Lara Schaeffer is a late-diagnosed autistic individual and the founder of Autism Discovery. There, she has innovated Guided Self-Assessment for Adults in response to the many problems with standard autism assessment, including cost, access, wait times, and inherent bias. Lara also mentors late-diagnosed autistic teenagers and adults. Lara's autism was diagnosed when she was 47 years old after her daughter was diagnosed as a teenager. Since then, she has become a staunch advocate for autism awareness, a supporter of fellow late-identified autistic individuals, and a proponent of self-diagnosis/identification. Lara

advocates through her on-line blogs and an active public speaking schedule.



Bridgette Hamstead, MS, United States

Bridgette Hamstead, MS is an award-winning neurodiversity consultant, educator, and advocate who passionately champions the celebration, support, and inclusion of neurodivergent individuals. With her own experiences as an autistic and ADHD individual and a parent to neurodivergent children, Bridgette understands the challenges of navigating an often neurotypical-centric world, while also recognizing the resilience and strength within the neurodiverse community. As the driving force behind Fish in a Tree, a non-profit neurodiversity

community center in the U.S., she orchestrates a hub of tailored programming and services, fostering belonging and community for neurodivergent individuals of all ages and backgrounds. Her commitment extends to consultation, fostering community partnerships, and equipping organizations, educators, healthcare providers, therapeutic and other service providers, and employers with neuro-inclusive tools. Bridgette's vision of a neuro-inclusive society, where the unique perspectives and strengths of neurodivergent individuals are embraced, fuels her tireless work to create a more equitable and vibrant future.



Robert Schmus, MSW, LCSW, United States

Robert Schmus serves as a mental health professional, as well as an autistic self-advocate. In his practice, Robert supports the neurodiverse community, including autistic individuals, using a variety of therapeutic interventions. His experience as a clinical professional on the autism spectrum places him in a unique role. As a self-advocate, Robert has experience educating communities on topics relating to the autistic and neurodiverse communities, such as employment, relationships, mental health, independence, and self-advocacy. He has done this through podcast interviews and speaking at conferences. Such examples include being a keynote speaker at the 44th Annual Philadelphia Regional Developmental Disabilities Conference at the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia in October 2022, as well as conducting a workshop on social networking at the Massachusetts Advocates Standing Strong (MASS) 25th Gala and Self Advocacy Conference in May 2023. He and a colleague have created a group called Schmus & St. Clair (www.schmusstclair.com) where they offer such services.



Sydney Elaine Butler, Canada

Sydney Elaine Butler is the founder of Accessible Creates, and a speaker, HR/DEIA consultant, neurodiversity coach and facilitator. Sydney’s understanding is that their professional purpose must be to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to be successful regardless of barriers and that they must as a professional remove these barriers. Sydney conducts training and consulting for other companies on how to be more accessible and inclusive from a human approach and how to recruit and retain more diverse individuals through the lens of human resources, as well as other areas of DEI in an authentic manner at the company they founded called Accessible Creates.



Alexandria Fisher, Canada

Alexandria Fisher is autistic with ADHD. She was diagnosed later in life and has had to advocate for awareness and accommodations to create conditions for success. Alexandria held several roles at the Government of Alberta, where she co-founded and was the inaugural Co-Chair of the Disability Employee Resources Group. With her current employer, she is a member of the Disability Employee Resource Group. Alexandria is currently the Senior Specialist, Progress and Innovation at the UN-backed Principles for Responsible Investment (PRI). In addition, she holds a Master of Science in Environment and Development from the London School of Economics and Political Science and a Bachelor of Environmental Studies from the University of Waterloo.

THE CARIBBEAN



Manuel Sánchez Peña, the Dominican Republic

Formally identified as autistic in 2016, Manuel graduated with a bachelor's in economics from Instituto Tecnológico de Santo Domingo. Manuel is deeply interested in public policy and economic development, as well as social issues, autism, and disability. At the age of 19, he became the first social media advocate from the Dominican Republic that identifies with the neurodiversity movement and has been a catalyst in promoting the neurodiversity paradigm in the Dominican Republic. Although he is not involved in activism work anymore,

look out for news about Manuel, as he is currently in talks to publish a paper.

LATIN AMERICA



Auradelia Negrette, Colombia

"I am Auradelia Negrette, a lawyer from Colombia. I have dedicated much of my life to learning about legal and social matters. At the age of 32, I have worked as a legal advisor for different public and private entities in my country on issues of state contracting, administrative and environmental law, and from research as a university professor. My career and professional life allowed me to face various socialization and personal development challenges. My diagnosis came when I was almost 31 years old, after more than ten years of dealing with depression, generalized anxiety, social anxiety, agoraphobia, and an endless number of

mental illnesses that, although they exist, are part of the maladaptation process due to a late Autism Spectrum Disorder diagnosis."

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/anegrettes/>



Andrea Palacios, Panama

Andrea Palacios is a Panamanian psychologist, researcher and entrepreneur. Her focus is in the social psychology field, mostly in inclusion and social rehabilitation, working with young adults with autism to encourage them to gain essential skills of daily life and with juveniles to ensure the development of emotional intelligence and soft skills. A finalist of the 2022 Community Solutions Program in the U.S., Andrea is currently creating classes, programs and workshops to promote daily living skills in adults with autism and raise awareness on the subject. She is also developing in the field of Holistic

psychology, helping all living beings in the search for self-knowledge.



Sarah Fernn, Brazil

Sarah Fernn is a neurodivergent entrepreneur and social impact leader from Latin America (São Paulo - Brazil) from a business and technology background. She is the founder of Stardust Zone, a pioneering start-up championing inclusion and employability in the STEAM field for neurodivergents. Using her neurodivergent traits as a fuel for innovation, she embarked on her entrepreneurial journey at 21 and has a steadfast passion for the potential of technology and accessibility.

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/sarahfern/>



Carolina Durán Negrete, Colombia

Carolina Durán Negrete (Cartagena de Indias, 1977) studied law at the University of Cartagena and is an international specialist in transport law at the Universidad Externado de Colombia. She holds a master's degree in transport law and management from the Jaume I University. Carolina published the books "Analysis of the legal nature of UberBLACK in Colombia: Comparative study" (October 2019) and "Intelligent Systems for transportation, a guide without traffic jams" (October 2023). She has advised on ITS issues with different territorial entities, the National University of Colombia and the Ministry of Transport of Colombia.



Tatiana Lee, Colombia

Tatiana Lee Amaya is a political scientist who graduated from Los Andes University in Bogota, Colombia. She has varied work experience across different industries, geographies, organizations, and functions. Tatiana has worked on issues related to public health, immigration, education, and international development. Currently, she is completing a Human Resources Management certification after which she intends to continue her career in this field.



Jessica Sánchez, Peru

Jessica Sánchez Vargas is a Peruvian business leader with an undergraduate degree in management and a graduate certificate in community relations. She has pursued various professional roles, such as marketing, public relations, and business consulting. Jessica has worked for more than 10 years in the non-profit sector in pursuit of her passion for people's human rights. She is the Executive Director of MySmallHelp Peru, a non-profit that supports people with disabilities, and neurodiverse and rural communities. MSH Peru focuses on the education, well-being, and inclusion of vulnerable populations.

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Lethicia Di Blasio, Brazil

Lethicia Di Blasio is a young Brazilian woman who, despite the learning challenges of her childhood, won a full scholarship to one of the best law universities in São Paulo. She participated in initiatives like Girls Think Big” to provide low-income girls with educational opportunities and was selected by the Next Generation of Lawyers program, which selects promising young law students for an immersion program in the United States, with training from major Brazilian and American law firms. Her dream is to advocate internationally for human rights and demonstrate

how autistic women can develop incredible projects and become great leaders.

The 2024 UN World Autism Awareness Day observance is organized by the United Nations Department of Global Communications, in close collaboration with the Institute of Neurodiversity (ION). ION is a neurominority-founded and led, volunteer-run inclusive global membership organization headquartered in Switzerland. With a presence currently in 23 countries globally, it is the world’s largest, most globally represented, and diverse neurodiversity initiative. Its purpose is to represent and empower neurominorities, fostering acceptance, appreciation, education, and advocating for equal opportunities and human rights.

The event is co-sponsored by the Permanent Missions of Italy and Poland to the United Nations, with support provided by the Group for Autism, Insurance, Investment and Neurodiversity (GAIN).