

CTBTO Science and Technology Conference 2025
Bridging Worlds: Future Leadership for a Safer World
Panel – 75 minutes

Moderator Script

Entrance – INTRODUCTION:: 1:50pm

- Good afternoon, esteemed excellencies, delegates, colleagues and friends. Welcome to our special panel session. My name is Natalie Bonilla and I am so pleased to be with you here today at the crossroads of science and diplomacy.
- Somewhere right now, a young scientist is tuning an instrument to capture seismic waves. And somewhere else, a seasoned diplomat is preparing to negotiate peace.
- Their reality may seem worlds apart. [PAUSE] But in truth [PAUSE], they are part of the same story.
- And that is the story which leads us to progress through science and diplomacy. But progress is not only about treaties, technology, or negotiations.
- It is about **people**. It is about the next generation of innovators, scientists, and diplomats who will carry this mission forward. And it is about ensuring that the doors of opportunity are open wide - to all, including women and youth, and to those that have often been excluded from using their voices through leadership in both technical and diplomatic spaces.
- Today's conversation is more than just an exchange of ideas. It is a chance for intergenerational dialogue, for seasoned leaders and emerging professionals to hear one another and join in sharing ideas and aspirations.
- And to get us started, I am pleased to introduce our unique panel.

First, I have honor to introduce: **Her Excellency Ambassador Liberata Mulamula**, the African Union Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security. Her Excellency is a distinguished Tanzanian diplomat and stateswoman with over **35 years in foreign affairs, peacebuilding, and governance**. She has served as Minister for Foreign Affairs and East African Cooperation, as well as Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Executive Secretary of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR).

A seasoned negotiator, she played pivotal roles in regional peace processes and represented Tanzania globally. Renowned for championing women's leadership, peace, and regional integration, she continues to shape Africa's diplomatic and governance landscape with vision and dedication. Beyond her diplomatic career, Ambassador Mulamula is deeply committed to mentoring the next generation of women leaders in Africa and promoting inclusive leadership.

I am also pleased to introduce the Head of the CTBTO, Executive Secretary **Dr. Robert Floyd**. Earlier today, you heard his inspiring words at the High-Level Plenary, and now he joins us again as a panelist. **Prior to becoming Executive Secretary, Dr. Floyd served as Director-General of the Australian Safeguards and Non-Proliferation Office**, and with his strong background as both a scientist and research leader, he has long bridged the worlds of science and diplomacy. As an **International Gender Champion**, he has advanced gender equality in the disarmament field and, in 2022, launched the CTBTO Mentoring Programme for early-career women worldwide, which continues to grow in impact.

Now due to unforeseen circumstances, Dr. Najat Mokhtar, IAEA Deputy Director General and Head of the Department of Nuclear Sciences and Applications, is regrettably unable to join us today. We are, however, **delighted to welcome Prof. Dr. Tzanka Kokalova Wheldon**, Director of the Division of Physical and Chemical Sciences at the International Atomic Energy Agency, who has **graciously agreed** to step in and share her insights. Dr. Kokalova Wheldon brings over 28 years of **expertise in nuclear physics** and its diverse applications, with a distinguished career spanning research, innovation, and leadership. With a Doctorate in Experimental Nuclear Physics, her work has advanced the fundamental understanding of the nucleus, nuclear measurement techniques, positron imaging, medical isotope development, nuclear decommissioning, and waste management.

Before joining the IAEA, she has served as a full Professor at the University of Birmingham, as well as a member of the Helsinki Institute of Physics Scientific Advisory Board and as Chair of the UK Science and Technology Peer Review Panel, overseeing major projects in nuclear physics, accelerators, particle physics, and astronomy. Great to have you here.

Our next esteemed panelist has been part of both the CTBTO Research Fellowship and CTBTO Youth Group. She also participated in the IAEA Marie Skłodowska Curie Fellowship. **Ms. Anastasiia Kulikova** is a recent graduate in Science and Technology Policy from the Graduate School at KAIST in the Republic of Korea. As part of Ms. Kulikova's Master's research extension, she investigated the CTBTO Mentoring Programme's impact on women's career advancement and has worked on gender inclusion in nuclear diplomacy.

Our fifth panelist, **Ms. Tithmarinet Ky** is a second year Master's student at the IMT Atlantique in France. With a Bachelor's degree in nuclear engineering, Ms. Ky has served as **a research assistant** at the Cambodia University of Technology and Science and has studied at the National Research Nuclear University MEPhI in the Russian Federation. She has also taken part in the CTBTO Mentoring Programme

and the IAEA Marie Sklodowska Curie Fellowship, and is now part of the CTBTO Youth Group.

With this rich and intergenerational panel, let us dive right in. Looking at the many layers of dialogue and cooperation, let's start with the perspective of policy and the institutions that govern us.

2:00pm

Policy Collaboration - H.E. Ambassador Liberata Mulamula

So, turning to you Ambassador Mulamula, I'd like us to explore **how collaboration among institutions and governments can amplify women's contributions to peace, security, and scientific advancement**. Based on your extensive experience in policy and diplomacy, what are your experiences and thoughts on that?

■ Response from H.E. Ambassador Mulamula

Moderator Notes

Fascinating insights, Ambassador.

Policy is such a strong factor in which females' contributions should be embedded and supported.

Contributions are indeed possible when opportunities are present. And we have great examples of **when** such unique opportunities have been utilized.

2:05pm

Opportunities/Programmes - ANASTASIA

Ms. Kulikova, it is a pleasure to have you back at the SnT for the **third time**. We are also encouraged with your participation in the CTBTO Research Fellowship. Would you please tell us **How have you been leveraging the tools that CTBTO provided you toward your studies and career aspirations?**

■ Response from Anastasiia

Moderator Notes

Such impressive developments and inspiring programmes. It would be interesting to think about how these types of **initiatives could be replicated**. Outreach in this sense is so essential. And this brings **us** to realize the importance of initiatives that organizations can take to support the youth and especially women.

It actually leads us to consider what other mechanisms **are essential** for triggering and nurturing youth and female engagement; mechanisms like networks, for example.

2:10pm

Networks and Role of Leadership – Dr. Kokalova Wheldon

With that in mind, I'd like to turn to you Dr. Kokalova Wheldon. As someone who has navigated both science and leadership at the highest levels, what lessons can you share with us about the power of networks? And how can leaders within organizations harness these networks to inspire trust, empower new voices, and advance our collective mission of international peace and security?

- Response from Dr. Kokalova Wheldon

Moderator Notes

Thank you for those excellent insights. So interesting to hear about **how best** to empower the softer, less represented voices. And your experience shows the various opportunities that the youth can grasp and how leaders can support them.

But indeed, it is not always easy for young students in a number of cultural contexts **entering the STEM space** for their studies.

2:15pm

Challenges – MARINET Ky

Ms Ky, in this regard, **have you noticed any challenges in navigating your studies in STEM and what has helped you to stay true to your passion for the sciences?**

- Response from Marinet

Moderator Notes

Thank you for those inspiring words. It is so important to hear about your journey, which I am sure **resonates profoundly with our audience.**

[you spoke about leadership and mentorship and the support of our families, which I think it critical for allowing people for all backgrounds to strive towards their dreams.]

I know that often time young students may have support to finally study what they love and in your case, this was a scientific area, but then **retaining young females** within the sector to **further their career journey may also face some challenges**.

2:20pm

Empowerment to Leadership - Executive Secretary

In light of this, Dr Floyd, **As an international gender champion, a leader, and a known advocate for youth engagement, what advice do you have from your personal experience, and perhaps the experiences of those you have supported along the way, particularly for women, as they seek positions of leadership in the future?**

- Response from Dr. Floyd – now we want to hear from the audience.

Thank you, Dr. Floyd, your perspective is so important, considering your background in both science and diplomacy, which is a valuable model for those in this audience today – many of whom also navigate both spheres. And as you said, let us now hear from all of you (audience).

Q&A:: **2:25pm**

I will take questions first from the floor and then the online audience. For those here in person, please approach the microphone and state your name AND to whom your question is directed.

1. *From the perspective of a world leader, what are the biggest challenges and opportunities of intergenerational collaboration in science diplomacy? (Ambassador Mulamula)*
2. *What role does technology play in enabling intergenerational dialogue? Can it facilitate it or is there too large of a disconnect between generations? (Anastasiia Kulikova)*
3. *What has been your experience in managing a healthy work-life balance? (Dr. Tzanka Kokalova Wheldon)*
4. *We often focus on the narrative that females need to be the focus of our mentoring approach. But I think young boys and men need to be part of this conversation. What*

role can men play in ensuring females feel ready and supported to enter technical fields and later serve as leaders? (Dr. Floyd)

5. *What would you like to see from your leaders in order to facilitate more youth, especially women, into the science and technology fields? (Marinet Ky)*

Closing:: 2:45pm

We have heard today about the **vital role that** intergenerational discussions and networks play; we have heard tangible and for some, relatable challenges. And we have explored solutions and best practices together.

These conversations today and the actions we can take as a result are what will shape our future.

I would now like to give the floor to each of the panelists for a final closing thought:

H.E. Ambassador Liberata Mulamula

Ms. Anastasiia Kulikova

Dr. Tzanka Kokalova Wheldon

Ms. Marinet Ky

Dr. Robert Floyd

This exchange has been an inspiring reflection on what we can do for the future, and how we can shape it. Because a future of peace, security, and scientific advancement is not something we wait for - it is something we build together, starting here, starting now.

I'd like to thank our esteemed panelists and our engaged audience that have joined us both in person and online.

Let us take this discussion far beyond this room; let this be the **catalyst for effective dialogue**, for **bridging experience and leadership** with **innovation and creativity**. Let us find solutions together to ensure we are leveraging the experiences and wisdom of our leaders with the ideas and drive of our youth!

Our goal - a safe and peaceful world. Our journey – one that we walk together!

With that, I end our session - Thank you!

Closing – 3:00pm