

MELCHIADE BUKURU, *Former Director, UNCCD Liaison Office in New York*



Mr. Melchiade Bukuru is the former Director of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) Office at the Headquarters of the United Nations in New York. A career diplomat from Burundi, he was among the key delegates who made the case, at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, that, unless the international community adopts a legally binding treaty to address desertification, land degradation and drought, the planet would continue to lose its fertile land thus compromising any efforts to achieve sustainable development, food security, water security, adaptation to climate change, protection against the loss of biodiversity among other global policy challenges. Mr. Bukuru's diplomatic and political work during his early engagement with the UNCCD secretariat led to the universal membership of the UNCCD (197 Parties), making it the most ratified treaty in the world. Before joining New York in September 1989, Mr. Bukuru served as Adviser to the President of the Republic of Burundi.

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GUANGZHOU QU, *Director, FAO Liaison Office in New York*



Guangzhou QU is the Director of the FAO Liaison Office in New York. He joined the Office in January 2021. He joined FAO headquarters in 2019 as Special Adviser to the Director-General and was subsequently appointed Deputy Directeur de Cabinet in the Office of the Director-General. Prior to joining FAO, he served consecutively as Deputy Chief of Mission in the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Bangladesh and in New Zealand, 2013-2019. He started his career in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, China, and held increasingly senior positions on Arms Control and Non-Proliferation at home and abroad. He was posted in The Hague, Netherlands, and in Vienna, Austria, then served as Director of the Department of Arms Control and Disarmament, Chinese Foreign Ministry. Mr QU holds a Master of Arts in World History from Nankai University, and a Bachelor of Science in Chemistry from Anhui Normal University in China. He was also a Visiting Fellow at the Monterey Institute of International Studies in California, United States.

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GIOVANNA SEDDAIU, *Professor in Agronomics and EWA-BELT Project Coordinator, Università di Sassari, Desertification Research Centre*



Associate Professor of Agronomy and Crop Sciences at the University of Sassari (UNISS) and EWA-BELT project coordinator. Within Ewa-belt, Giovanna Seddaiu is involved in developing a composite indicator of sustainable intensification for several agricultural technologies in Sub-Saharan cropping systems. Through her 25 years of research, she gained experience on the interrelations between Mediterranean and Sub-Saharan

cropping systems, the associated ecosystem services, and their environmental impacts. She is currently serving as Secretary-General of DeserNet International, and from 2016 to 2019, she was the scientific responsible for UNISS in the H2020 project "FLOWERED" that aimed to find strategies to deal with fluoride contamination in cropping systems in Kenya and Tanzania. She is also currently the project coordinator of the Horizon Europe project "Monalisa" that will start in autumn 2024 aiming to monitor and assess prevention and restoration solutions to combat desertification in European and Mediterranean drylands.

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YOUSSEF BRAHIMI, *Member of the EWABELT Scientific Advisory Board, Founding member of the Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS)*



Youssef BRAHIMI worked for 20 years in Algeria as a senior civil servant in higher education and scientific research, before becoming involved at international level. He has solid experience of international organisations, notably as a founding member of the Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS) and as an international consultant, working for various bilateral development agencies and for African and international organisations. He worked for 6 years as a United Nations official as Programme Coordinator at the UNCCD/Global Mechanism, based in Rome (Italy). Since 2013, he has been Managing Director of CAP & DEV, based in Paris (France).

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FRANÇOIS TAPSOBA, *Member of the EWABELT Scientific Advisory Board, Professor at University Joseph KI-ZERBO*



François TAPSOBA is a Senior Environmental Economist, with a special focus on land degradation and rehabilitation issues. He extensively worked with FAO and African Union Commission on the implementation of the Great Green Wall for the Sahara and Sahel Initiative.

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GIOVANNI ZANONI, *Junior Project Manager, OCCAM*



I have recently obtained my master's degree in International Relations at Università degli Studi di Milano, where I graduated with a thesis on the participation of the European Union in other international organizations. During my academic career, I had the opportunity to spend a semester in Prague as part of the Erasmus Student Program. At the end of 2022, I started my 6 months internship at OCCAM. Since then, I have worked on several tasks, especially related to the organization of the XXII Infopoverty World Conferences and the XXV Euromediterranean Conference on Cinema. Since 2023, I work on the EWA-BELT

project, where I assist the team in managing communication and developing the PlantHead diagnostic platform.

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MARTINA BALDESSIN, *Programme coordinator, OCCAM*



I have started my experience at OCCAM in 2019 during my undergraduate. Since then, I have worked on a series of tasks, mainly related to the organization of the Infopoverty World Conferences, the Infopoverty Webinars, and various events, while also managing and contributing to several international projects in the fields of food-security, telemedicine, rural development and digital technologies. I obtained my MSc in Economics and Political Science at the University of Milan with a thesis on the implications of Brexit on Anglo-Norwegian trade relations. I've also studied in the USA, France (SciencesPo – Lille) and Norway (University of Oslo). I am a passionate of interior design.

MARCO CEREDA, *Silicon Biotech Researcher, STMicronics*



Marco Cereda is the Biological Application R&D Team Manager in the Silicon Biotech R&D team at STMicronics, which he joined in 2007. He earned a Master's Degree in Industrial Biotechnologies at "Università degli Studi di Milano-Bicocca" in 2008. His work focuses on applied research in the biotechnology field, in particular the study of the applications of microelectronics and microfluidics to biotechnology techniques, like qPCR, DNA/RNA extraction, and protein analysis. Currently he is mainly involved in the development of the Q3 qPCR portable platform, whose biological testing and validation he is leading, besides supporting partners and customers in developing new tests on it. He is co-author of several papers published on peer-reviewed scientific journals, and co-inventor of three granted patents, and he has already participated to three other EU-funded research projects.

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NICOLA MORGANTI, *President, Fondazione ACRA*



Nicola Morganti is a socio economist of Italian and Swiss nationality with 40 years of working experience and specifically 23 years' experience in rural development in Africa with several international organisations and companies. Since 1983 he is member of ACRA, an Italian NGO born in Milano in 1968. He has been elected President of ACRA Foundation Board of Directors in 2014 and re-elected in 2017, 2020 and 2023. Within ACRA Board of Directors he is supporting the development of the energy programme in Africa and Latin America and to develop partnership with private sector companies. In 2009 he has started African Ways Ltd, a consulting firm involved in development cooperation with its headquarters in Switzerland.

Passionate of cycling he is member of the Advisory Board of Velafrica, a Swiss organization supporting the development of small workshops for the repair and maintenance of bicycles and the development of cycling as sport in Africa. From 2011 to 2014 he has been the Team Manager of the Tanzanian National Team of cycling.

In 2018 he became Founding member of AIDA, Associazione Italiana di Agro-ecologia and Member of the Board of Guarantors of COLOMBA (Associazione delle Organizzazioni di Cooperazione e Solidarietà Internazionale della Lombardia).

Since 2021 he is member of the Technical Committee of FOSIT, the NGOs federation of the Italian speaking part of Switzerland (Ticino) and is a founding member of AIDA, the Italian Agro-ecology Association (2018).

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JOHN BIDZAKIN, *Research Fellow*, Cranfield University



John Kanburi Bidzakin is an agricultural economist with interest in socio-economic evaluations and bio-economic modelling of African land use systems. He has interest in analysing commodity value chains to identify upgrading opportunities and has done this on maize, sorghum, soyabeans, peanuts, finger millet and fonio in Ghana and Kenya. John has a PhD. and MSc. in Agricultural Economics and a BSc. in Agriculture Technology. John works for Cranfield University as a research fellow and his current research focus is on the economics and social analyses of African land use systems for east and west Africa. He previously worked as a Research Scientist for Council for Scientific and Industrial Research Savanna Agricultural Research Institute (CSIR-SARI), Ghana for 10 years. He has led and supported the development of several agricultural development and research projects including AGRA funded Quality Rice Development Project, Ghana, USDA web-base marketing project, Ghana, USDA Cowpea Value Chain Development Project, Ghana. He has served as principal investigator and coordinator for some these projects and has published some of his research work.