



**Niamh Lawless**  
**Under Secretary General**  
**Management Policy, Strategy and Corporate Services**

Niamh Lawless is a citizen of both New Zealand and Ireland. She currently serves as the Secretary General of the New Zealand Red Cross (NZRC), where she launched a new Strategic Plan (S2030) that outlined the roadmap for the future of the NZRC. She is a highly experienced and enthusiastic strategic leader with extensive knowledge of the international not-for-profit, public and private sectors.

A Chartered Accountant by profession, Niamh began her career as an auditor at Price Waterhouse Coopers (PwC) in Ireland. She then served as an auditor in various companies and in the public sector, including in with Irish Aid. She subsequently spent a dozen years in leadership roles in Finance and Corporate Services at Barnardos New Zealand, eventually rising to the position of Deputy Chief Executive. Prior to assuming her current functions as Secretary General of the NZRC, she was Chief Executive of Scouts New Zealand.

Niamh holds a degree in Commerce and a Post-graduate Diploma in Professional Accounting, both from University College Dublin. She has lived and worked in Europe, the United States, Africa, Australia and New Zealand.



**Nena Stoilkovic**  
**Under Secretary General**  
**Global Relations, Humanitarian Diplomacy and**  
**Digitalization**

Nena Stoilkovic, who comes from Serbia, comes from the International Finance Corporation (World Bank Group) where she served as Vice President for Asia and Pacific. In this capacity, Nena was responsible for all IFC operations in the region. She brings to the IFRC deep global experience in development issues such as climate change, gender, and fragile and conflict-affected situations, including through her previous role as IFC Vice President of Blended Finance and Partnerships.

Nena had a track record of promoting development finance innovation in a variety of leadership roles at IFC. Most recently, she played a key part in the IFC's efforts to build a new architecture for development finance with other institutions, governments, and the private sector. She helped shape the World Bank Group strategy, working with the International Development Association (IDA) on a pioneering private sector window to catalyze greater private investment in low-income and conflict-affected countries.

Earlier, Nena co-led the establishment of the World Bank Group's Global Practices and Cross-cutting Solutions Areas. In this role, she brought private sector experience into the process of harnessing global expertise to help government clients tackle development challenges. She also has strong operational experience in IFC's investment and advisory businesses through her roles as a co-Vice President of IFC Operations, Vice President of Advisory Services, and Director of the Europe and Central Asia region.

Nena joined IFC in 1995 as an Investment Officer. Prior to that, she worked as a consultant at the Economic Institute of Belgrade. She holds a master's degree in Econometrics from Belgrade Economic University and an MBA from the London Business School. She is fluent in English and Serbian, possesses a good command of Russian, and has some understanding of Spanish.



**Xavier Castellanos Mosquera**  
**Under Secretary General**  
**National Society Development and Operations**  
**Coordination**

Xavier Castellanos Mosquera, who is Ecuadorian, brings more than three decades of experience in National Society development, resilience building and emergency humanitarian operations at the national, regional and global levels. Xavier has served the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in various capacities since 1981, when he started as a volunteer with the National Society of Ecuador. He joined the IFRC in 1998 after Hurricane Mitch in Central America.

As Regional Director for Asia Pacific and Acting Under Secretary General for Programs and Operations, Xavier has ably advised National Societies and managed staff since 2015, including the Marshall Islands and Bhutan, which became the 191<sup>st</sup> and 192<sup>nd</sup> members of the IFRC in 2019. He has also provided strategic and operational leadership on disaster preparedness and responses to COVID-19, tsunamis and earthquakes as well as other health and disaster-related challenges, worked with National Societies to garner trust and foster effective partnerships, facilitated access by vulnerable groups to IFRC support, and maintained open channels of communication with a broad spectrum of stakeholders. Prior to discharging his current dual role, Xavier was the Regional Director of the Americas. He also served in various leadership positions dealing with disaster preparedness, communications and the media within the Movement and in various national and international organizations.

Xavier pursued advanced studies in communication and health, corporate social responsibility, and humanitarian diplomacy. He is fluent in Spanish, English and Portuguese.



**Mohammed Omer Mukhier-Abuzein**  
**Regional Director, Africa**

Mohammed Omer Mukhier-Abuzein is a national of Sudan and is currently IFRC Deputy Regional Director, Asia Pacific. He has a long track record in humanitarian operations management, development work, representation, and strategic leadership. He possesses expertise in disaster risk reduction, community resilience and enhancement, climate change management, agriculture, food security, nutrition, community-driven development, livelihoods, disaster preparedness, disaster policy, and capacity building.

Mohammed has contributed to the humanitarian and development work of many institutions such as the Ministry of Agriculture in Sudan; Sudanese Red Crescent; Save the Children – Canada; Action Aid - UK; Emergency Unit-UNDP; and the Cranfield Disaster Preparedness Centre, Cranfield University, England.

Mohammed has had extensive experience working for the IFRC – including discharging roles such as Head of Operations in Pakistan; Head of Delegation in Iran; Regional Disaster Preparedness and Response Delegate in Kenya; Head of Disaster Preparedness and Response as well as Head of Disaster Policy and Preparedness and Community Preparedness and Risk Reduction, in Geneva. During that time, he was responsible and accountable for key files critical to Strategy 2020.

Mohammed holds a B.Sc. in Plant Pathology from Cairo University; a master's degree in International Management, IMPM, from Lancaster University; and several professional diplomas in international management, food security, and microcomputers for agricultural development. He is fluent in Arabic and English.



**Martha Keays**  
**Regional Director, Americas**

Martha Keays, from the United States of America, is currently Resident Country Director for the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) in El Salvador. Prior to that, she served as Country Director for the Peace Corps for eight years in Guatemala, Kenya and Colombia. Her first tour with the Peace Corps was as a volunteer in the early 1980s in the mountains of Ecuador where she worked as an agricultural extension agent.

Martha started her career with the American Red Cross as a program manager in San Diego, California, U.S.A., where she managed cross-border programming partnering with the Mexican Red Cross. She subsequently worked in El Salvador where she led the development of a disaster management system linking National Societies across the region. She went on to serve in various management capacities within the IFRC for more than a decade in Africa, Central and South America, China and the Pacific, where she managed complex emergencies and large-scale operations and provided support to programming in health and disaster management.

In July 2002, Martha was appointed Senior Advisor to the IFRC Secretary General in Geneva, Switzerland, before returning two years later to the American Red Cross as their Regional Representative for East Africa, based in Nairobi, Kenya.

Martha holds a B.A. degree in Foreign Policy Studies from the College of William and Mary in Virginia, U.S.A. She is fluent in English and has an advanced working knowledge of Spanish.



**Alexander Matheou**  
**Regional Director, Asia Pacific**

A national of the United Kingdom, Alexander Matheou is the Executive Director, International, in the British Red Cross. Alexander has worked in the humanitarian sector for 20 years. During this period, he has gained experience in a broad range of contexts and regions both within the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and outside it.

Alexander has served as Director of Programmes and Partnerships, British Red Cross; IFRC Regional Representative for Southern Africa; IFRC Regional Representative for East Africa; Director, International HIV/AIDS Alliance; IFRC Head of Delegation for Russia, Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova; Desk Officer for Middle East, Afghanistan and CIS, British Red Cross; Director for Central Asia (Civic Education Project), Open Society; and Deputy Project Manager, International Finance Corporation.

A versatile and innovative thought leader, Alexander has worked in the fields of disaster response, food security, social exclusion, HIV prevention, and institutional development. He is a regular contributor of opinion pieces on humanitarian and development issues to an assortment of audiences and forums.

Alexander holds undergraduate (B.A.) and graduate (M.A.) degrees in Slavonic and Eastern Studies from the University of London. He is fluent in English and Russian.



**Birgitte Bischoff Ebbesen**  
**Regional Director, Europe**

Birgitte Bischoff Ebbesen is a national of Denmark. She is presently the International Director of Danish Red Cross, and Co-chair of the IFRC Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support in Denmark. As International Director since 2014, she is a member of the Senior Management Group of the Danish Red Cross and is responsible for all international operations.

A strategic thinker and change driver, Birgitte was previously in turn Head of the Asia Region, Danish Red Cross; Disaster Management Officer, Danish Red Cross; Country Director, Sri Lanka, Danish Refugee Council; and External Relations Officer, UNHCR, Brussels, Belgium. She has also held positions in Guatemala, Somalia and Switzerland.

Birgitte holds a Master of Public Administration (MPA) degree from Roskilde University as well as a diploma in High-Performance Leadership from the Copenhagen Business School. She is fluent in Danish, Spanish and English; and possesses a good knowledge of French.



**Dr. Hossam Elsharkawi**  
**Regional Director, Middle East and North Africa**

Dr. Hossam Elsharkawi, who is Canadian, has over 30 years of professional experience in the humanitarian world, spanning assignments in more than 35 countries, comprising volunteer and professional work with many National Societies (including the Canadian Red Cross), ICRC and IFRC. He is currently the IFRC Acting Regional Director, Middle East and North Africa (MENA). He was previously Vice President, Health in Emergencies: Learning and Innovation, at the Canadian Red Cross, where he led the preparedness and response aspects for complex humanitarian emergencies.

In addition to his Movement work, Hossam worked with the World Health Organization (WHO) to develop guidance for medical teams responding to health emergencies in armed conflict and insecure environments.

Hossam holds a B.S. degree in Clinical Biochemistry from the University of Alberta, a Certificate in Healthcare Management from the Harvard School of Public Health in Boston, and a Ph.D. degree in Health Management from City University in London, England. He is currently an Adjunct Professor at the University of British Columbia and guest faculty at McGill and McMaster Universities. He teaches disaster response and healthcare in complex humanitarian crises.

Hossam is fluent in English and Arabic, and he has a basic understanding of French.