Focus on Faith
Planting & Nurturing the Seed
of Climate Responsibility

6 June 2019
11:00 - 12:45
Conference Room 1
United Nations Headquarters
Tina Eonemto Stege serves as Climate Envoy for the Government of the Republic of the Marshall Islands. Tina also serves as International Liaison for the Marshallese Educational Initiative (MEI), a non-profit in Springdale, AK that was created to blend scholarly research with practical outreach efforts to create awareness of Marshallese issues on the international stage, while also making a real difference in the lives of individual Marshallese.

Born on Saipan in the Northern Marianas Islands, raised on Kwajalein and Majuro atolls in the Marshall Islands, and educated in Honolulu, Hawaii for high school, Tina’s formative experiences are grounded in the islands of the Pacific. She has also worked and lived outside the Pacific, receiving her B.A. in Sociology from Princeton University in 1997 and a M.A. in Anthropology from the Université d’Aix-en-Provence in France in 2006.

She worked for the RMI Government at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Majuro and at the R.M.I. Embassy in Washington, D.C. for many years before leaving to focus on community-based projects related to climate change, the impacts of nuclear testing in the Pacific, migration, sustainable development, education and heritage. Tina has worked on projects for the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, the U.S. Department of the Interior, the RMI Government, the Asian Development Bank, Greenpeace, and the American Museum of Natural History. In all her work, Tina aims to support and strengthen island communities by promoting informed and sustainable choices in all areas and by all members of the community.

Venerable Youwang is the executive director of Fo Guang Shan temple in New York and the director of UN affairs of the Buddha’s Light International Association, an international nongovernmental organization of monastics and laypeople headquartered in Los Angeles, California.

She was ordained in 2008 at Hsi Lai Temple in California. Her professional experience is in teaching Chinese as a language and in early childhood education.

She served as the executive director of Buddha’s Light Hsi Lai School in California and was the director of general affairs of Fo Guang Shan Xiang Yun Temple in Austin, Texas.

Felipe Queipo began his United Nations career at the NGO Relations & Advocacy Section of the Department of Public Information (DPI) in 2008. He currently serves as the officer responsible for outreach, engagement and global communications with civil society organizations for the Civil Society Unit in the Department of Global Communications (DGC).

Felipe is also the focal point for faith-based organizations within DGC. In this capacity, he leads the team that organizes the “Focus on Faith” briefings within the Department, an initiative that studies the links between faith traditions and religious organizations, and the work and mission of the United Nations. The Focus on Faith Series has explored, amongst other themes, the role that gender plays in religious institutions, the contribution of religious groups, such as communities of faith, to the refugee and migrants crises around the globe and the resettlement work of governments and faith-based civil society.

He also serves as the focal point for technology and is a strong advocate of new communications tools and their role in developing effective communication and media strategies.

Before Graduating from Brigham Young University, where he studied Political Science, Felipe studied Theology and Biology in Spain, emphasizing his training on Political and Social Theology.

Gopal Patel serves as Director of the Bhumi Project, an international initiative that works with Hindu communities to address global environmental concerns, such as climate change.

Over the past 10 years the Bhumi Project has run campaigns to make Hindu temples environmentally-friendly, protecting tigers and lions in India, and training young people for climate action.

Current major areas of work include training religious leaders in India about the importance of renewable energy and promoting climate-friendly lifestyles within Hindu communities in the US.

Signed by over 60 major Hindu organisations and leaders, to date it has been the most widely-adopted statement on climate change from the Hindu community.

Gopal currently serves on the multi-faith Advisory Council of the UN Interagency Task Force on Religion and as Advisor to the Parliament of the World’s Religions.

In addition to his work within the Hindu community, Gopal also serves as Director of International Community Engagement at GreenFaith, bringing together different faith groups for climate action.

Gopal is a graduate of King’s College, London, and has spent time living in Hindu ashrams in India and England. He currently lives in New York City.

Jillian Aballe is a global advocacy and policy professional who currently serves as the UN Advocacy Officer and Head of Office for the Anglican Communion Office at the United Nations in New York.

Jillian is also pursuing her Master of Science in Global Affairs at New York University with a concentration on peacebuilding and a specialization in global gender studies. She received her Bachelor’s Degree from Fordham University in International Political Economy with a specialization in humanitarian affairs.

Jillian has been working in United Nations-focused advocacy for 4.5 years and has built specialized expertise in the key areas of gender justice and women’s rights, peacebuilding, reconciliation, and peace and security issues, and the religion and development nexus.

Jillian has also served in leadership positions on a number of committees and coordinating groups, such as co-chair of Ecumenical Women at the United Nations, a coalition of 18 church-based organizations advocating for gender justice and ending violence against women and girls. She has also been a co-member on the NGO Working Group on the Security Council and the Global Steering Committee of the UN Office on Genocide Prevention for the engagement of religious leaders and actors in prevention of incitement to violence.

Karen Gore is the founding director of the Center for Earth Ethics (CEE) at Union Theological Seminary. The Center for Earth Ethics bridges the worlds of religion, academia, policy and culture to discern and pursue the changes that are necessary to stop ecological destruction and create a society that values the long term health of the whole community of life.

Before founding CEE, Ms. Gore worked as the director of Union Forum at Union Theological Seminary, during which she organized a conference called Religions for the Earth, which brought together over 200 religious and spiritual leaders from around the world to reframe climate change as a moral issue and galvanize faith-based activism to confront it.

Ms. Gore’s previous experience includes work as a lawyer at Simpson Thacher & Bartlett and in the legal center of Sanctuary for Families, as well as serving as director of Community Affairs for the Association to Benefit Children (ABC). She has also worked as a writer and is the author of Lighting the Way: Nine Women Who Changed Modern America. Ms. Gore is a graduate of Harvard College, Columbia Law School and Union Theological Seminary.

She lives in New York City with her three children and serves on the boards of the Association to Benefit Children (ABC) and Riverkeeper.