

**Commission on the Status of Women
Fifty-fifth session
22 February – 4 March 2011**

**Emerging issues, trends and new approaches to issues affecting the situation of
women or equality between women and men**

**Interactive expert panel
“Gender equality and sustainable development”**

1 March 2011, 10 am - 1 pm

PANELISTS

**Henrietta Elizabeth Thompson, Executive Coordinator of the United Nations
Conference on Sustainable Development**

Ms. Thompson is a recognized leader on environmental issues in Small Island Developing States. During her time as Minister of Energy and the Environment of Barbados, she enacted a range of progressive policies for sustainable development and environmental protection. She became a key voice to raise awareness of global warming in Barbados and led the Barbados delegation to Kyoto and Bali. Ms. Thompson has played a role in environmental awareness and protection across the Caribbean region. In 2008, UNEP awarded her the prestigious Champion of the Earth Award. Ms. Thompson holds an LLM in energy and environmental law from the Robert Gordon University in Scotland, an MBA from the University of Liverpool, UK, and an LLB from the University of the West Indies. In December 2010, the Secretary-General appointed Ms. Thompson Executive Coordinator of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development.

**Monique Essed-Fernandes, Interim Executive Director, Women’s Environment &
Development Organization (WEDO)**

Monique Essed-Fernandes has been active in social development and politics for the past twenty years. She is a Tufts Alumna from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. She is the founder of the Women’s Parliament Forum, an organization focusing on women’s political participation, as well as an NGO focusing on women and development. Ms. Essed-Fernandes is also the founder of a political party in Suriname, and was in 2005 the first woman to be nominated for the presidency of Suriname. She has been actively engaged in international policy formulation in major UN conferences and the linkages to national policy. In addition to her work with WEDO, she continues working on governance and democratic processes in her country.

Mr. Robert A. Freling, Executive Director, Solar Electric Light Fund

Robert Freling is Executive Director of the Solar Electric Light Fund (SELF), a Washington, DC-based nonprofit organization that has been on the cutting edge of delivering solar solutions to rural villages since 1990. Under Freling's leadership, SELF has pioneered the use of solar power for a wide range of applications including household lighting, water pumping, school electrification, drip irrigation and wireless Internet access. SELF has completed projects in 20 countries, making it a leader among non-governmental organizations in providing practical and cost-effective renewable energy alternatives for the developing world. Mr. Freling holds a B.A. in Russian Studies from Yale University, and an M.A. in Communications Management from the Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Southern California. Mr. Freling is the recipient of the 2008 King Hussein Leadership Prize.

Ms. Albina Ruiz, President, Grupo Ciudad Saludable

Albina Ruiz is the founder and President of Grupo Ciudad Saludable "Healthy City Group", an organization that turned the waste problems in Peru into an entrepreneurial success story with worldwide potential. Beginning about 20 years ago in one of Lima's largest slums, Ms. Ruiz has collaborated with municipalities, universities, businesses, and social organizations and has organized over 3,500 waste collectors, and has helped create employment and improve health and living conditions for over 6 million poor people. Ms. Ruiz has published several articles and books, including on the prevention of cholera, and manuals on recycling and composting. She has consulted for GTZ, IDB and USAID, among others. Ms. Ruiz has received several honours, including the Social Entrepreneurs' Fellowship of Ashoka in 1996; the 2006 Dubai International Award for Best Practices to Improve the Living Environment; and the 2007 Globe Energy Award. As the only woman in her class, Ms. Ruiz graduated from the National University of Engineering, and received a Masters in Ecology and Environmental Management from the University of Ricardo Palma, Peru, and a PhD in Chemistry from Universidad Ramon Llull, Spain.