

MARÍA FERNANDA ESPINOSA

LONDON
SPEAKER
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- Former President of the UN General Assembly (2018-19)
- Former Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of Defense of Ecuador
- Leading Authority on Global Governance, Climate change, and Gender equality



María Fernanda Espinosa was the President of the United Nations General Assembly 2018-2019, becoming the fourth woman and the first from Latin America and the Caribbean to hold the position. Maria Fernanda, a distinguished academic, diplomat, politician, poet, and linguist, has also served in high-level government positions, including as Ecuador's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Integration, and Minister of National Defense.

Maria Fernanda's expansive professional portfolio spanning over three decades includes roles in academia, NGOs, international organizations, and the government. With graduate studies in social sciences, anthropology, geography, and Amazonian studies, she has established herself as an expert in areas such as public policy, international relations, sustainable development, climate change, gender equality, and the rights of indigenous peoples.

She began her career working with indigenous communities in the Ecuadorian Amazon, and later transitioned to working in civil society organizations and academia. She honed her skills in multilateral diplomacy and international political affairs, with key roles at the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), where she served as an advisor on biodiversity and climate change policy, and later as regional director. She represented Ecuador at the United Nations in both New York (2008-2009) and Geneva (2014-2017), culminating in her historical tenure as the President of the United Nations General Assembly.

In her roles as Minister of Foreign Affairs, Trade, and Integration (2007-2008 and 2017-2018) and Minister of National Defense (2012-2014), she played an instrumental part in leading international negotiations on climate change, establishing bilateral and multilateral agreements, and implementing significant reforms in Ecuador's armed forces, with a strong emphasis on human rights and humanitarian standards.

Today, Maria Fernanda continues to hold several influential positions in the global arena. These include Executive Director of Global Women Leaders for Change and Inclusion, member of the Board of Trustees of the International Crisis Group, and a member of the High-Level Advisory Council for the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations. She is also the Chair of the Board of Women in Global Health and a Commissioner to the World Commission on the Economics of Water.

Her tireless work and leadership were recognized in 2019 when the BBC listed her as one of the 100 most inspiring and influential women worldwide. An adept linguist, fluent in Spanish, French, and English, she continues to contribute significantly to international diplomacy and sustainable development.

Topics

- Climate Change
- Economics
- Gender Equality
- Geopolitics
- Politics

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