

**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