

Ms. Michelle Gyles-McDonnough (Jamaica)



On 16 December 2024, Ms. Gyles-McDonnough was appointed by the United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres as UN Assistant Secretary-General, Executive Director of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research.

With more than 30 years' experience in sustainable development, policy advocacy, international trade and international relations, and change management in complex bureaucracies, Ms. Gyles-McDonnough has held multiple leadership roles within the UN system and in the field. She brings a wealth of experience in managing diverse portfolios in the economic, social, and environmental fields that impact the Sustainable Development Goals. She has led work in

transforming international organizations and cross-cultural teams, resulting in new and agile ways of working, strengthened capacities, and innovative development solutions for governments and key partners.

Before assuming the post as UNITAR Executive Director, Ms. Gyles-McDonnough was the Director, Sustainable Development Unit, in the Executive Office of the United Nations Secretary-General in New York. In this role, she served as lead Sustainable Development Adviser to the Secretary-General and Deputy Secretary-General, responsible for the shaping of policy priorities and the design and delivery of the work programme to implement the Secretary-General's sustainable development vision and reforms for a fit for purpose U.N. development system.

Throughout her career with the United Nations since 1999, Ms. Gyles-McDonnough has served in leadership and senior advisory roles as Chief of the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) sub-regional policy advisory facility for the Caribbean (1999-2004); Coordinator of the Grenada Recovery Programme following hurricane destruction of 212 percent of GDP (2004-2005); Caribbean Regional Adviser, UNDP (2005); Programme Adviser, UNDP Executive Office/Operations Support Group (2006-2008); UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative for Barbados and the OECS (2008-2013); and UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative for Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei Darussalam (2013-2016).

Prior to joining the United Nations, Ms. Gyles-McDonnough practiced privately as an international trade lawyer; served as Legal Advisor to the Embassy of Jamaica in Washington DC; Advisor to the Secretary-General of the Organization of American States on international trade; and teaching assistant at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University.

She holds a law degree from Columbia University School of Law, with honours in international and foreign law; a Masters in Public Administration from the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University; and a Diploma in Executive Education from The Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania. She received her undergraduate degree at Bryn Mawr College in Pennsylvania, USA in Economics, with a minor in French.