AFRICA

Willy Sigei, Immigration Attaché

High Commission of Kenya

Willy Kipyegon Sigei is an Immigration Attaché at the Kenya High Commission in London where he has served since June 2021. He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Economics and a Master's degree in Public Policy and Administration from Kenyatta University.

He joined the Directorate of Immigration Services in 2005 as an Immigration Officer II and has progressively risen through the ranks to Assistant Director. Throughout his career, he has served in various immigration stations, including border points and airports, gaining extensive experience in immigration administration and public service delivery.

At the Kenya High Commission, Mr Sigei has distinguished himself through his dedication to consular services, with a particular focus on the welfare and protection of Kenyans in the UK. He is recognised for his compassionate and professional approach, often going beyond his official responsibilities to assist vulnerable citizens, support families experiencing bereavement or distress, and facilitate access to essential consular services.

His commitment to inclusive service delivery includes assisting persons with disabilities who are unable to visit the Mission for biometric capture during passport and national identity card applications. He also supports travellers facing urgent travel documentation challenges, often beyond normal working hours.

In addition, Mr Sigei actively promotes public awareness of citizenship, immigration requirements and travel documentation through consular webinars and community engagement. He has also played an instrumental role in organising and delivering mobile consular services, bringing essential services closer to Kenyans living in different cities across the UK.

Mr Sigei's professional values are grounded in integrity, teamwork, empathy and a strong commitment to public service. For his willingness to go beyond the call of duty to ensure that Kenyans abroad receive accessible, responsive and dignified consular assistance, he is a worthy candidate for Consul of the Year for Africa.

Ms Havana Maria Menezes, Immigration & Civic Services

High Commission of South Africa

Ms Havana Maria Menezes is a highly deserving candidate for the Consul of the Year for Africa Award, in recognition of her outstanding dedication to the Mission, her exemplary commitment to public service, and her unwavering passion for promoting South Africa's interests.

With over 35 years' dedicated service, Ms Menezes has consistently demonstrated professionalism, integrity and a deep understanding of the importance of consular services. Her extensive experience, combined with her commitment to serving South African citizens, has enabled her to make a meaningful contribution to the work of the High Commission and the community it serves.

Ms Menezes is assigned to Civic Services within the Department of Home Affairs, where she plays an important role in assisting South African citizens with their civic services applications and documentation. She approaches her responsibilities with dedication and takes great care to assist every applicant who visits the Consular Section. She consistently goes the extra mile in the execution of her duties, demonstrating patience, professionalism, and a genuine commitment to public service.

In addition to her day-to-day responsibilities, Ms Menezes shares her extensive knowledge and experience by training and assisting colleagues and stakeholders on various Department of Home Affairs products and civic services processes. Her willingness to share her expertise contributes to the effective delivery of services and supports colleagues in assisting South African citizens with their documentation needs.

Ms Menezes is also recognised for her ability to approach challenging situations with applicants in a calm, respectful, and professional manner. Her approachable nature, commitment to service, and ability to build meaningful working relationships with colleagues and stakeholders reflect the qualities of an effective and distinguished consular official.

Furthermore, Ms Menezes exemplifies the values of accountability, resilience, integrity, and service beyond personal recognition. Through her dedication and commitment to her work, she serves as an inspiration to colleagues and stakeholders. Her service demonstrates that effective diplomacy is not only about representing one's country, but also about making a meaningful and positive difference in the lives of the people one serves.

Ms Menezes takes her responsibilities seriously and exercises great care in ensuring that documents received by the Consular Section are securely handled and safeguarded, while applicants are informed in a timely manner when their documents are ready for collection. Her attention to detail and sense of responsibility demonstrate her commitment to maintaining a professional and reliable service.

This award would be a fitting tribute to her more than 35 years of dedicated service, her significant contribution to the South African High Commission, and her continued commitment to serving South African citizens with professionalism, dignity, and compassion.

Elsiddig Mohamed Eltinay, 2nd Secretary (Consul)

Embassy of Sudan

Elsiddig Mohamed A M Eltinay has shown exemplary service to the Sudanese community in the UK, managing this demanding this role – the heavy workload and time-sensitive requests – with precision and care.

What sets Consul Elsiddig apart is his clear understanding that civil documents – passports, identity records – are more than just forms. They are the foundation of a citizen's rights, their sense of self, and their dignity. This belief guides everything his office does.

He has ensured every service – document attestation, legal declarations, power of attorney, passport applications and renewals, marriage formalities, and visa processing – is handled promptly, openly and with respect.

Rather than expecting people to travel to London, he and his team bring services directly to Sudanese communities across the UK, reaching those who would otherwise be cut off from help. This active, community-focused approach is a benchmark for all of us in the consular service.

His care extends well beyond official tasks. He recognises and celebrates our students and scholars, encouraging the best among us. He walks with families in their saddest moments, personally overseeing arrangements when a loved one passes away, so no one faces grief alone far from home. He also stands beside those navigating visa and immigration hurdles in the UK, advocating for them fairly and professionally.

Consul of the Year goes to those who show excellence, commitment, integrity, accessibility, and real engagement with the people they serve. Consul Elsiddig meets and exceeds every one of these expectations. Elsiddig Mohamed A M Eltinay is deserving of recognition as Consul of the Year for Africa.

AMERICAS

Fábio Antibas, Deputy Consul General

Consulate-General of Brazil in London

Fábio Antibas was born in São Paulo, Brazil. He is a career diplomat with 30 years of experience.

Before joining the Rio Branco Institute – Brazil's diplomatic academy – in 1996, he studied History at the University of São Paulo (USP) and Social Communication at the Escola Superior de Propaganda e Marketing (ESPM).

Throughout his career, he has served at the Brazilian Embassies in The Hague, Mexico City, London and Santiago. Since 2023, he has been posted to the Consulate General of Brazil in London, where he has focused on projects to modernise and improve working arrangements and public-facing consular services.

He values the role of the Consulate General as a key point of reference to the community, providing guidance, assistance and support to Brazilians living in the UK, as well as those visiting the country.

He takes particular satisfaction in helping to raise the profile of the Brazilian community in the UK and supporting community-led initiatives. These include projects to improve women's economic opportunities and working conditions, combat domestic violence, and promote the teaching and preservation of the Portuguese language among the children of Brazilians growing up away from their parents' country of origin.

One of the developments he particularly looks forward to is the Consulate General's move to its new premises near Trafalgar Square, following an extensive period of refurbishment. The move represents an opportunity to improve working conditions for the entire team and provide a more suitable, accessible and welcoming environment for the public. His dedication and care he shows for the Brazilian community and for his colleagues, makes him a deserving candidate for Consul of the Year for The Americas.

Paulina Cruz Aroca, Consul General

Embassy of Chile

Ms Paulina Cruz Aroca has been part of the Embassy of Chile since 2024 and has shown the utmost dedication in her role to colleagues and citizens alike, serving the Chilean community here in the UK with warmth, professionalism and an unwavering commitment.

As Consul General, she oversees a huge range of matters, from supporting Chilean citizens and providing essential services, to representing Chile at key diplomatic events. No two days are the same, and she continuously shows strong leadership and pride in her work.

Her leadership was especially evident from November and December 2025, when she took on the enormous responsibility of organising Chile's general election at the Embassy. Thanks to her guidance, more than 15,000 Chileans in the UK were able to register and exercise their right to vote from overseas.

Ms Cruz was also nominated for the Women in Diplomacy Awards 2025, in recognition of her outstanding contributions and commitment to excellence in diplomatic service.

We are so grateful for everything Ms Cruz has given the Embassy so far. She and the Consulate have seen just about everything, yet she meets every challenge with a plan and a great sense of humour. She is a worthy candidate for Consul of the Year for The Americas.

Major Edguin Geney, Police Attaché

Embassy of Colombia

The nomination of Major Edguin Geney, Police Attaché at the Embassy of Colombia to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, reflects a diplomatic contribution that extends beyond the traditional functions of police liaison and international cooperation.

His mission has been characterised by a sustained commitment to service, solidarity and protection, aimed at contributing to a safer, more inclusive, humane and prosperous society.

In carrying out his duties, Major Geney has strengthened cooperation between Colombia and the UK through continuous engagement with British police forces, security and intelligence agencies and other relevant authorities, as well as with police representatives from other countries. He has also promoted coordinated work with the police authorities of Chile, Brazil and Peru, strengthening international cooperation networks and joint approaches to emerging risks and threats. His contribution, however, extends beyond institutional cooperation.

He has developed an active programme of guidance and support for the Colombian community and other Spanish-speaking communities, as well as for individuals and families living in the UK who require assistance and orientation, particularly those experiencing vulnerability. His professional background as a police officer and lawyer, together with his specialised studies in human rights and constitutional law, enables him to provide comprehensive guidance grounded in respect for human dignity and fundamental rights.

On a voluntary and entirely selfless basis, he also participates weekly in activities supporting vulnerable communities and families facing financial hardship, demonstrating that his commitment to public service extends beyond his official responsibilities.

Major Geney has also worked with migrants, business

owners and community members to promote a culture of security, lawfulness, prevention and peaceful coexistence. He is an outstanding candidate for Consul of the Year for The Americas.

René Figueredo Corrales, 1st Secretary

Embassy of Paraguay

René Figueredo Corrales serves as Deputy Head of Mission and Head of the Consular Section at the Embassy of the Republic of Paraguay in London. He has been an elected member of the Executive Committee of the Consular Corps of London since his arrival in 2024.

As Head of the Consular Section, he is responsible, under the supervision of the Head of Mission, for the management and delivery of the full range of consular services provided by the Embassy. Mr Figueredo is recognised to perform consular duties with responsibility for the consular district comprising England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland within the UK. The Embassy's wider consular responsibilities also extend to Ireland, Iceland and Norway, further broadening the scope of his duties. These responsibilities include passport issuance and renewal, notarial services, processing visa applications from foreign nationals wishing to travel to Paraguay and preparing and submitting financial accountability reports relating to consular revenue.

In addition, Mr Figueredo has provided consular assistance to Paraguayan nationals facing a wide range of complex and often sensitive situations, including detentions and arrests, family matters involving domestic violence and child protection, and urgent travel-related difficulties, such as lost, stolen or damaged passports. His responsibilities have also included coordinating the repatriation to Paraguay of nationals in vulnerable circumstances, liaising with relevant authorities and family members, and assisting with the practical arrangements for their return.

He has also supported the Embassy's efforts to promote Paraguayan culture, including an active participation at the recent opening of Paraguayan ceramicist Julia Isídrez's exhibition Mud is Everything at Nottingham Contemporary.

These responsibilities are particularly demanding for a small Mission operating with limited diplomatic staff. Mr Figueredo's commitment to managing these diverse duties makes an important contribution both to protecting the rights and interests of Paraguayan nationals abroad and to assisting foreign nationals in their engagement with Paraguay.

His exceptional consular service is worthy of recognition as Consul of the Year for The Americas.

ASIA

Mr Ronald Arafah, 1st Secretary for Protocol and Consular Affairs

Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia

Mr Ronald Arafah has served as First Secretary for Protocol and Consular Affairs at the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in London since mid-2023. In this role, he provides consular services and assistance to Indonesian nationals in the UK and Ireland. The community he serves is diverse, comprising professionals, students, mixed-nationality families, and migrant workers across various sectors, including domestic work, agriculture and maritime industries.

Prior to his current assignment, Mr Arafah developed extensive experience in consular affairs and the protection of Indonesian citizens abroad, including in countries affected by conflict or natural disasters in Asia, Europe, and Africa. During the COVID-19 pandemic, he also contributed to efforts to support Indonesian seafarers stranded in different parts of the world, helping to address their urgent needs and facilitate their safe return.

Throughout his career, Mr Arafah has approached consular service with professionalism, adaptability, and a strong sense of responsibility. His experience in diverse and often challenging circumstances has reinforced his commitment to a compassionate, practical, and people-centred approach to protecting the rights and welfare of Indonesian nationals abroad. In recognition of his dedication and contributions in this field, he received an award from Indonesia's Minister for Foreign Affairs in 2024.

In his current role in London, Mr Arafah continues to focus on safeguarding the rights, welfare, and interests of Indonesians in the UK and Ireland. Working closely with colleagues at the Embassy and under the guidance of its leadership, he is committed to delivering reliable consular support and accessible public services. Through efforts to educate and empower the Indonesian community, he remains dedicated to assisting Indonesian nationals with professionalism, care and respect.

For these reasons, Mr Arafah merits his nomination as Consul of the Year for Asia.

Mr Flavio Moniz Leão, Justice Attaché

Embassy of Timor-Leste

Since the establishment of our consular services in the UK in 2024, Mr Leão has demonstrated exceptional commitment, professionalism, and dedication in carrying out his responsibilities. His work has been particularly significant given that the UK is home to one of the largest Timor-Leste communities in the diaspora.

Under his dedicated service, the Embassy has issued more than 10,000 Timor-Leste passports to our nationals residing not only in the UK, but also across other parts of Europe, Africa, the Americas, and the Middle East. This substantial achievement reflects the scale, complexity, and importance of the consular services provided by our Embassy, as well as Mr Leão's commitment to ensuring that our citizens receive timely, efficient and professional assistance.

Beyond the number of documents processed, Mr Leão has consistently demonstrated a strong sense of responsibility towards our nationals. He has worked tirelessly to respond to their needs, facilitate access to essential consular services and strengthen the relationship between the Embassy and the Timor-Leste community abroad.

His professionalism, integrity, diligence and commitment to public service have made a valuable contribution to the work of the Embassy and to the welfare of Timor-Leste citizens living overseas. His efforts have also helped strengthen the confidence of our diaspora in the institutions and services of the Government of Timor-Leste.

As the Ambassador of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste to the UK, I am pleased and honoured to nominate Mr. Flavio Leão, Consul of the Embassy of Timor-Leste in London, for recognition of his outstanding service and dedication to our nationals and to the Government of Timor-Leste.

CARIBBEAN

Nakinda Daniel, 1st Secretary

High Commission of The Commonwealth of Dominica

Nakinda Daniel is a diplomat with more than 15 years of experience serving the Commonwealth of Dominica in London. Since joining the High Commission in 2010, she has combined consular responsibilities with bilateral and multilateral diplomacy and community engagement.

Her work includes managing sensitive consular and citizen-service matters, working closely with government departments, overseas missions and external authorities to assist Dominican nationals. She brings sound judgement, discretion and a commitment to responsive public service to responsibilities which often require coordination across borders and institutions.

Ms Daniel's contribution extends to the wider diplomatic and consular community. She served as Honorary Secretary and an Executive Committee member of the Consular Corps of London, supporting its work and strengthening connections among colleagues.

A committed advocate for personal and professional development, Ms Daniel mentors emerging leaders through the London Metropolitan University Alumni Mentorship Programme and the Regional Organisation of Women in Leadership. She also brings practical experience in coaching, programme facilitation and public speaking.

Ms Daniel holds an MBA in Leadership and Management and a BA (Honours) in International Economics. In 2025, she was recognised as a Rising Woman Leader in Diplomacy at the Women in Diplomacy Awards. For her outstanding service, she is deserving of the recognition that Consul of the Year for The Caribbean would bring.

Miss Sasha Wedderburn, Minister Counsellor

High Commission of Jamaica

Miss Sasha Wedderburn has been nominated for Consul of the Year in recognition of her exemplary leadership, unwavering commitment to service and outstanding representation of Jamaica in rendering consular assistance to Jamaicans and other nationalities across the Caribbean Diaspora.

In a professional setting where individuals often encounter people at some of the most challenging moments of their lives, Miss Wedderburn consistently demonstrates empathy, patience and understanding. Whether assisting nationals in distress, supporting vulnerable individuals, or responding to urgent and complex situations, she approaches each case with the same level of diligence and genuine concern.

Miss Wedderburn has gone above and beyond what could reasonably be expected. Her commitment to public service is evident in the countless hours she dedicates to resolving issues, guiding individuals through difficult circumstances, and finding practical solutions to complex challenges.

She has demonstrated strong leadership, sound judgment and an ability to build positive relationships with diplomatic colleagues across the divide, government partners, community organizations, and stakeholders. Her collaborative approach fosters teamwork and inspires those around her and those she supervises to strive for excellence.

Miss Wedderburn continues to remain calm, focused, solutions-oriented and effective under pressure. Regardless of the complexity of a situation, she consistently displays professionalism and resilience. Her integrity is beyond question and she represents Jamaica with dignity and distinction, earning the respect and trust of colleagues.

For her outstanding service, exceptional character and unwavering commitment to helping others Miss Sasha Wedderburn is deserving of nomination for the honour of the Consul of the Year for the Caribbean.

Dr Christopher Stange, Consul General

High Commission of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

Some leaders represent their country. Dr Stange changes lives. As Consul General, he has redefined what diaspora diplomacy can achieve by putting people, especially young people, at the heart of everything he does.

Through sports diplomacy, including cricket, baseball, softball and BMX, he has built lasting bridges between St Vincent and the Grenadines (SVG) and Northern Ireland (NI), creating opportunities that inspire confidence, inclusion, leadership and hope.

His impact is felt on both sides of the Atlantic. Supporting communities in SVG to equipment, resources and facilities, including those recovering from Hurricane Beryl, people have been brought together through sport and friendship. He has been the driver in sports infrastructure in NI through the development of purpose-built sports facilities.

Dr Stange's commitment comes from the heart. He gives his time, energy and vision generously, always focused on helping others succeed. Through his leadership, he has strengthened international ties, raised the profile of SVG, and created opportunities that will benefit generations to come.

Through his integrity, compassion, and unwavering dedication to service, Dr Stange embodies the values of leadership, service and humanity. While his many achievements are well documented online, his greatest legacy is found in the lives he has touched, the opportunities he has created and the hope he has inspired. His influence reaches far beyond diplomacy, strengthening communities, changing lives and leaving a legacy that will be felt for generations to come.

At its very best, diaspora diplomacy is about building human connections that transcend borders and generations. Few have demonstrated that more powerfully than Dr Stange, whose vision, service, and compassion have transformed diplomacy into a force for opportunity, unity, and change.

His legacy stands as a remarkable example of what can be achieved when public service is guided by purpose, people, and heart and for these reasons he is a deserving candidate for Consul of the Year for The Caribbean.

EUROPE

Dóra Urbányi, Consul

Embassy of Belgium

Despite being a junior diplomat, Ms Urbányi successfully manages one of the largest and busiest visa sections of the Belgian diplomatic network with remarkable professionalism, competence and dedication. She has

consistently demonstrated exceptional organisational and leadership skills, introducing more efficient procedures that have significantly reduced waiting times while improving the overall quality of service and customer experience.

Beyond her outstanding operational achievements, Ms Urbányi is an excellent manager and team leader. She is deeply committed to supporting her staff, creating a positive working environment, and bringing out the very best in every member of her team. Her leadership is characterised by empathy, professionalism, and a genuine commitment to the wellbeing and development of her colleagues.

Ms Urbányi is also an absolute pleasure to work with. She is approachable, collaborative and always willing to make herself available to assist colleagues, regardless of how busy her own workload may be. Her positive attitude and strong sense of service make her a role model within the Embassy.

What makes Ms Urbányi's achievements even more impressive is that she has reached this level of excellence at such an early stage of her diplomatic career. She has already demonstrated extraordinary competence, maturity and leadership potential. There is no doubt that she has a very bright future ahead of her, and we have the highest expectations for her continued success in the diplomatic service.

For her outstanding performance, dedication to public service, exemplary leadership and exceptional potential, Ms Urbányi is wholeheartedly recommended for the title of Consul of the Year for Europe.

Mr Jaime De Villota, Head of Citizens, Social, Justice and Home Affairs

EU Delegation to the UK

Jaime is both a Spanish career diplomat and EU diplomat. He started his career in the Spanish Diplomatic Service in which he has been posted both in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs headquarters and abroad. In Madrid he held positions in the managing of the external dimension of migration and coordinating the consular protection of the two million Spanish citizens abroad and 183 Spanish Consulates.

Jaime has also served briefly in the Spanish Embassy in San Salvador and as Cultural Counsellor and Consul in Ankara. Later, in 2014, he was posted as Deputy Ambassador at the Spanish Embassy in Angola, one of Spain's largest missions in the continent.

In 2016 he then became seconded to the Spanish Ministry of Interior as Deputy Director General for European Affairs in charge of the EU Justice and Home Affairs Councils and EU bilateral relations. He was also the Ministry's Brexit coordinator.

Finally, in 2021 Jaime joined the EU's diplomatic service, the European External Action Service, in the newly created EU Delegation to the UK. He is the Head of one of the four Sections of the EU Delegation, leading on Citizens, Social, Justice and Home Affairs. Apart from his mother tongue, he speaks English, French, Portuguese and Italian.

Karolina Kedeva Manevska, 2nd Secretary

Embassy of North Macedonia

Ms Karolina Kedeva Manevska is a diplomat and legal expert with a PhD in Law and extensive experience in international law, diplomacy and consular affairs. Throughout her diplomatic career, she has combined specialist legal knowledge with a strong commitment to public service, international cooperation and supporting citizens abroad.

During her posting at the Embassy of the Republic of North Macedonia in London, she served as Consul and Head of the Consular Section, independently leading its operations and overseeing a wide range of complex consular matters. Her responsibilities included the management of visa and passport services, citizenship cases, international family law disputes and consular advice relating to extradition. She also handled a substantial volume of cases, providing support and guidance to individuals navigating often complex legal and administrative processes.

Her leadership extended beyond consular affairs. She served as Chargé d'Affaires during her posting in London and played an active role in promoting economic diplomacy and strengthening relations between North Macedonia and the UK. This included organising high-level business forums, facilitating ministerial engagements and developing working relationships with senior representatives across UK government departments and public institutions.

Prior to her London posting, Ms Manevska worked within the Department of EU Law and International Law at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of North Macedonia. Her work involved drafting international agreements, supporting bilateral and multilateral cooperation, and contributing to the alignment of national legislation with European Union law. She has also contributed to academic research and publications on legal and medico-legal issues.

Through her combination of independent leadership, legal expertise and diplomatic experience, Ms Manevska has demonstrated a strong commitment to delivering effective consular services and representing her country with professionalism and dedication.

Professor Maurizio Bragagni, Honorary Consul

Honorary Consulate of Republic of San Marino

Since 2019, Prof Maurizio Bragagni has served as Honorary Consul of the Republic of San Marino to Great Britain, promoting the interests of San Marino and its citizens while strengthening political, economic, social and cultural relations between San Marino and the United Kingdom.

Prof Maurizio Bragagni OBE is a Chartered Director and Fellow of the Institute of Directors with extensive experience in business leadership, international trade, corporate governance and sustainable strategy. He is recognised for his commitment to ethical leadership, sound governance and long-term sustainable growth.

Prof Bragagni is Chief Executive Officer of Tratos UK Ltd, the UK arm of Tratos, the family-owned European cable manufacturer founded in 1966. With operations in the United Kingdom and Italy and exports to 36 countries, the Group serves the power, rail, transport, telecommunications, and oil and gas sectors. He also serves as a Board Member and shareholder of Tratos Cavi S.p.A., the parent company of the Tratos Group.

Since 2023, Prof Bragagni also served as Alternate Governor at the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), contributing to discussions on sustainable investment, economic development and international cooperation.

In academia, Prof Bragagni is President of Regent

European University in San Marino, overseeing the University's governing bodies and strategic development. He is also an Honorary Senior Visiting Fellow at Bayes Business School, City, University of London, and a Visiting Professor at the University of Greater Manchester, where he contributes to research and thought leadership on family business, sustainability, leadership and management.

His public appointments include membership of the UK Government's Trade Advisory Board since 2020, advising on trade negotiations and free trade agreements. From 2019 to 2026, he served on the Market Strategy Board of the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC), contributing to international strategy concerning electrical and electronic technologies.

Prof Bragagni is Founder and Chairman of the Esharelife Foundation, a UK-registered charity supporting vulnerable women and children through education, healthcare and sustainable development initiatives.

A Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, he is also a member of the Society of Leadership Fellows at St George's House, Windsor Castle, a Freeman of the City of London, and a Liveryman of the Worshipful Company of Communicators. His honours include appointment as an Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE), Knight of the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic, Knight Grand Officer of the Equestrian Order of Saint Agatha, and Knight of the Order of Saints Maurice and Lazarus.

Prof Bragagni holds an MBA from Bayes Business School and a Law degree from the University of Pisa. A Chartered Director and Fellow of the Institute of Directors, he is also the author of several works on family business, leadership and sustainable strategy, including *Transforming Challenges into Opportunities: Mastering the Art of Family Business Success* (2026).

Vesna Verčon Ivić, 1st Counsellor (Consular)

Embassy of Serbia

Vesna Verčon Ivić is an exceptional colleague who has consistently demonstrated outstanding dedication, professionalism, and commitment to the diplomatic and consular community.

Since her first arrival in London in 2014, Ms Verčon Ivić has been actively involved in supporting the Community of Consuls. Following her election to the Executive Committee of the Consular Corps of London, she provided invaluable voluntary assistance in the organisation of professional seminars, social events and activities for her colleagues. At the same time, she tirelessly served and supported the Serbian community in the UK, always approaching her responsibilities with commitment, compassion, and professionalism.

Upon her return to London for her second posting in September 2023, Ms Verčon Ivić once again wasted no time in contributing to the Consular Corps and the wider consular community. True to her nature, she immediately became involved in supporting her colleagues and volunteering her time and expertise in the organisation of events and activities. She is always willing to lend a helping hand, is consistently present when support is needed, and approaches every task with a positive attitude and a genuine smile.

Alongside these contributions, Ms Verčon Ivić has successfully led the Consular Department and carried out the demanding responsibility of assisting and caring for her own citizens. She manages these responsibilities with remarkable dedication, professionalism, and empathy.

Ms Verčon Ivić's willingness to contribute, her strong sense of collegiality and her genuine commitment to helping others make her a highly valued member of the Consular Corps. Her positive spirit, reliability and generosity with her time and expertise are qualities that make a lasting difference to those around her.

MIDDLE EAST

Dr Hayder Al-Hasani, Consul

Embassy of the Republic of Iraq

Dr Hayder Al-Hasani is a Consul at the Embassy of the Republic of Iraq in London, bringing extensive experience in diplomacy, law, academia and public service to his role. With a PhD in Private Law and further degrees in Law from Al-Nahrain University, he has built a distinguished career combining legal expertise, administrative leadership and a strong commitment to serving the Iraqi community.

Before taking up his current consular responsibilities, Dr Al-Hasani held a range of senior positions within the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research. His responsibilities have included serving as First Consul at the Consulate General of the Republic of Iraq in Manchester, Assistant Head of the Legal Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Director of the Government Contracts Department and Director of Legal Affairs at the Presidency of Baghdad University. He has also contributed to the development of future diplomats as a lecturer at the University of Baghdad and the Institute of Foreign Service.

Dr Al-Hasani's professional interests extend to international law, human rights, legal identity and the protection of individual rights. He has participated in United Nations General Assembly Legal Committee meetings and meetings of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL (UNITAD). His academic contributions include research and publications on criminal law, modern contracting methods, higher education legislation, extradition under international law and the right of legitimate defence against cyber attacks.

At the heart of Dr Al-Hasani's consular work is his dedication to the needs and wellbeing of Iraqi citizens. He oversees a substantial volume of consular enquiries and applications, handling more than 25,000 cases annually. Recognising that many people require assistance beyond standard office hours, he regularly extends his working day and responds to urgent cases when necessary, helping ensure that citizens can access essential services when they need them most.

His commitment also extends to vulnerable members of the community, including elderly people and those who are unwell. By arranging visits to their homes and facilitating consular services without requiring them to attend in person, he helps remove barriers to accessing support and ensures that individual circumstances are treated with care and consideration.

Through improvements to service delivery, Dr Al-Hasani reports a 75% increase in positive feedback from citizens compared with previous years. Having received numerous letters of appreciation for his work, he continues to demonstrate a strong sense of duty, professionalism and personal commitment to public service.

Dr Al-Hasani's approach reflects the essential purpose

of consular diplomacy: to support citizens, respond to their needs and provide practical assistance with compassion, dedication and integrity. For these reasons, Dr Al-Hasani's service is most deserving of recognition.

Ms Sima Doovdevani, Consul General

Embassy of Israel

Since July 2022, Sima Doovdevani has served as Head of the Consular Section at the Embassy of Israel in the UK, delivering significant improvements in service accessibility, responsiveness and support for Israeli citizens abroad.

Ms Doovdevani began her diplomatic career in 1999 as a Situation Room Coordinator at Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. She subsequently served as Consul in Beijing and Guangzhou, held a senior position within the Security Division, and led the Israelis Abroad Department in Jerusalem. She holds a BA in Education Studies from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Under Ms Doovdevani's leadership, the Consular Section has improved access to essential services through extended appointment hours, flexible booking arrangements and a daily WhatsApp service, enabling faster communication and more timely responses. She is also overseeing a comprehensive renovation of the Consulate to increase capacity and improve the visitor experience. Ms Doovdevani's leadership style promotes accountability, teamwork and professional development by assigning clear responsibilities and encouraging empathetic communication and practical problem-solving.

Ms Doovdevani believes that consular assistance must begin with the individual not the procedure, ensuring that every citizen is treated with dignity, understanding and compassion. She has embedded this principle in staff training and practical service delivery, particularly for vulnerable citizens. Recognising the challenges faced by elderly citizens and those with limited mobility when undertaking procedures for life certificates and identity verification, she facilitates identity verification by WhatsApp video call where appropriate and permissible. Where an in-person visit is necessary, she ensures that she or a team member visits the citizen at home.

Ms Doovdevani provides emergency consular assistance around the clock. In one particularly challenging case, she personally supported an Israeli woman experiencing a serious mental health crisis after arriving in London and being taken to an immigration detention facility. Following the woman's transfer to a psychiatric hospital, Ms Doovdevani continued providing practical support, including delivering essential clothing and other items. This demonstrates her willingness to go beyond routine responsibilities to protect vulnerable citizens and ensure they receive appropriate care. Her experience also includes complex repatriation and medical evacuation cases.

Support for bereaved families residing in the UK is a priority for the Consulate. To assist with this, Ms Doovdevani introduced an Excel-based tracking system to help the Consular Section maintain contact with bereaved families and anticipate their needs . Reminders ahead of annual memorial dates and timely communication about commemorative arrangements and practical assistance ensure families feel remembered and supported.

Following the attacks of 7 October, she organised a gathering at the Embassy for Israeli students experiencing emotional and social challenges, including antisemitism on university campuses. The initiative provided an opportunity for connection, mutual support and a stronger sense of community.

Responding to challenges posed by the closure of Israel's diplomatic mission in Ireland and the challenges for Israeli citizens in accessing consular services, Ms Doovdevani actively advocated for Israeli citizens affected by the closure, raising concerns with the relevant authorities and exploring alternatives to reduce the burden of travelling long distances for essential consular services.

Ms Doovdevani combines operational leadership with genuine compassion and personal commitment. Her initiatives have improved access to consular assistance, strengthened support for vulnerable citizens and bereaved families, and demonstrated an unwavering dedication to the welfare of Israelis abroad. Her professionalism, initiative and humanity make her a strong candidate for the Consul of the Year – Middle East Award.

Ms Paulette Merheb, Consular Section

Embassy of Kuwait

Ms Paulette Merheb has dedicated 24 years of distinguished service to the Consular Section of the Embassy of the State of Kuwait, demonstrating unwavering commitment, professionalism, and dedication throughout her tenure. Over the course of her service, she has built strong professional relationships and lasting friendships, becoming a valued and respected member of the Embassy community.

Her 24 years of service reflect not only her commitment to her responsibilities but also the positive and lasting impact she has had on her colleagues and those around her. She regards her time in the Consular Section as a particularly meaningful chapter of her professional life, marked by valuable experiences, mutual respect and a strong sense of camaraderie.

Ms Merheb's long-standing service and dedication are a testament to her professionalism, loyalty and commitment to the Embassy. The relationships she has fostered during her career, together with the contribution she has made to the Consular Section, reflect the value she has brought to the Embassy over more than two decades of service.

Please select your choice of Consul of the Year for each region and complete the online voting form

Online Regional Vote closes at 17:00 Friday 30 October

Regional winners will be finalists for the overall Consul of the Year 2026