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Josette Sheeran

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Ambassador Josette

Sheeran (born 12 June 1954)

is a global economic and humanitarian diplomat and leader, with more than 25 years of experience in managing and transforming institutions to be more effective, transparent and relevant to current challenges and opportunities.

Ambassador Sheeran serves as the seventh President and CEO of [Asia Society](#), a Rockefeller institution founded more than six decades ago with 14 centers around the world. She is responsible for advancing the organization's global work in policy, conflict resolution, economics, track 2 dialogues, culture and education. Sheeran is also the [United Nations Special Envoy](#) for [Haiti](#).^[1]

Ms. Sheeran is former Vice Chair of the [World Economic Forum](#).^[2] While there, she helped found and advance global initiatives encompassing global, regional, and industry agendas such as Grow Africa, which has attracted \$10 billion in private sector investment to end aid dependency and tackle hunger and malnutrition in Africa.

She was the eleventh Executive Director of the [United Nations World Food Programme](#) (WFP), appointed by United Nations Secretary-General [Kofi Annan](#) in November 2006.^[3] Prior to this, Ms. Sheeran served as a diplomat and negotiator for the United States, and was unanimously confirmed by the Senate twice.

Josette Sheeran



Executive Director of the World Food Programme

In office

April 4, 2007 – April 5, 2012

Secretary General [Ban Ki-moon](#)

Preceded by [James Morris](#)

Succeeded by [Ertharin Cousin](#)

Under Secretary of State for Economic, Business, and Agricultural Affairs

In office

August 23, 2005 – April 4, 2007

President [George W. Bush](#)

Preceded by [Alan Larson](#)

Succeeded by [Reuben Jeffery III](#)

7th President of Asia Society

Incumbent

Assumed office

June 10, 2013

Personal details

Born June 12, 1954 (age 64)
[Orange, New Jersey, U.S.](#)

Political party [Republican](#)

Spouse(s) [Whitney Shiner](#) (Divorced)

Education [University of Colorado, Boulder](#) (BA)

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She served as United States [Under Secretary for Economic, Business, and Agricultural Affairs](#), and as deputy U.S. Trade Representative and Ambassador covering Asia, Africa, labor, environment, intellectual property, and trade capacity building. She was appointed coordinator of the Pakistan earthquake response by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, and developed economic recovery plans for front line areas in Pakistan, Afghanistan and beyond. She has served on the boards of OPIC, and the Millennium Challenge Corporation; as well as the lead U.S. representative to APEC and the OECD, and as alternative U.S. representative to the World Bank.

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World Food Programme (WFP) [\[edit\]](#)

As Executive Director of WFP, Sheeran was responsible for managing the world's largest humanitarian organization with nearly 11,000 staff worldwide. WFP provides emergency food aid to the world's hungry as well as addressing the causes of chronic hunger.^[4]

Under Sheeran's leadership, WFP enacted more than a dozen groundbreaking, and large-scale financial and structural reforms designed to increase transparency and agility. She pioneered new initiatives such as the African Risk Capacity (ARC), the first disaster insurance model for Africa, and "Purchase for Progress" in more than a dozen nations and conflict zones. Under her leadership, WFP diversified its donor base to more than 100 nations and became the first UN program to include the so-called BRIC countries and the Gulf States among its top 10 donors, she also increased private sector partnerships 10 fold to around \$100 million a year. She instituted key reforms to reduce dependency on food aid among millions of aid recipients.

"I think we can, in our lifetime, win the battle against hunger because we now have the science, technology, know-how and the logistics to be able to meet

hunger where it comes," Sheeran said.^[5]

U.S. Ambassador [John R. Bolton](#), who was told of the decision and jumped the gun on the official announcement, said the United States was very pleased and called Sheeran "extraordinarily well-qualified."^[6]

Sheeran has expressed commitment to meeting the UN [Millennium Development Goal](#) of halving hunger and poverty by 2015.^[7] The World Food Programme, founded in 1963, last year provided food to more than 90 million poor people in more than 80 countries worldwide. Its annual budget was US\$1.7 billion in 1993.^[8] In 2008, it had a budget of US\$3 billion and employed 10,000 people in 78 countries.^[9]

In April 2008, Sheeran attracted worldwide attention with a speech in [London](#) warning about an impending [worldwide food crisis](#), which she likened to a "silent [tsunami](#)"^[10] and lobbied the United States and other governments to give more aid to the world's poor.^[11] In January 2009, Sheeran called on the government of [Israel](#) to allow more UN food aid to the people in [Gaza](#) during the conflict there.^{[12][13]}

Sheeran's influential TED Talk on ending world hunger has been viewed more than one million times and has been used in schools to teach children about ending hunger through innovation and partnerships.

Ms. Sheeran chaired the UN High Level Committee on Management for two terms, leading more than 40 UN entities in a series of historic reforms, from the adoption of International Public Accounting Standards (IPSAS), to enacting world-class agreements on transparency, ethics, whistle-blowing, financial disclosure and technology.

In January 2012, Sheeran announced that she would assume the role of Vice Chairman of the [World Economic Forum](#) upon completing her term at WFP in 2012.

UN Envoy to Haiti [\[edit \]](#)

Ms. Sheeran also serves as the UN Special Envoy to Haiti, appointed on June 20, 2017, representing [UN Secretary General António Guterres](#) in advancing Haiti's transition from an aid-dependent economy, at the end of more than 17 years of UN peace-keeping operations. She has crafted the first UN "pay for success" development bond to help secure an end to the transmission of cholera in Haiti.

The New UN's Approach to Cholera in Haiti was launched under former [Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon](#) when he publicly apologized for the UN's role in Haiti's cholera epidemic in December 2016.^[14] The apology came six years after soldiers from the UN's peacekeeping mission in Haiti, [MINUSTAH](#), introduced the disease by contaminating Haiti's Artibonite River, causing more than 10,000 deaths.^[15]

The new UN approach on cholera involves two tracks: the first to intensify efforts to reduce and ultimately end the transmission of the disease, improve access to care and treatment, and address the longer-term issues of water, sanitation and health systems.

Track 2 involves developing a package of material assistance and support for those Haitians most directly affected by cholera.

Pedro Medrano Rojas, a Chilean diplomat, originally led the UN's cholera response, and left in 2015 upset that the international community failed to "acknowledge the fact that we have in Haiti the largest epidemic in the Western Hemisphere." ^[16] [Dr. David Nabarro](#) was originally placed in charge of fundraising for the UN's new approach.

Professional experience: government sector [\[edit \]](#)

Under Secretary of State for Economic, Business, and Agricultural Affairs [\[edit \]](#)

As [Under Secretary of State for Economic, Business, and Agricultural Affairs](#), Sheeran led new State Department initiatives in supporting Central Asia's and Afghanistan's economic transformation and reconstruction. She was also responsible for a range of economic issues including: development, trade, agriculture, finance, energy, telecommunications and transportation. She helped foster and carry out aid and development initiatives in countries like China, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Lebanon.

Sheeran also served as the Foreign Affairs [Sous-Sherpa](#) on behalf of the President of the United States at the [Group of Eight \(G8\)](#) Summit. She headed a host of high-level bilateral or multilateral economic dialogues with the European Union, China, India, Japan, Iraq, Afghanistan, and many others.

She was named by former UN Secretary General [Kofi Annan](#) along with Prime Ministers [Luisa Dias Diogo](#), Prime Minister of Mozambique; [Jens Stoltenberg](#), Prime Minister of Norway; and [Shaukat Aziz](#), Prime Minister of Pakistan, to the High Level Panel on System-Wide Coherence. The panel conducted hundreds of interviews with development and humanitarian experts, non-governmental organizations and national leaders worldwide, and compiled strategies and recommendations for greater management coherence and effectiveness in UN efforts in the areas of the environment, development and humanitarian assistance.

She represented the United States at a wide variety of high-level bilateral and multilateral meetings, serving as Alternative Governor for the [World Bank](#); the [Inter-American Development Bank](#); the [African Development Bank](#); the [Asian Development Bank](#); and the [European Bank for Reconstruction and Development](#). Congress also confirmed her as a Member of the Board of Directors for the [Overseas Private Investment Corporation](#).

Deputy United States Trade Representative [\[edit \]](#)

Prior to her tenure as Under Secretary, Sheeran served as Deputy United States Trade Representative in the [Office of the U.S. Trade Representative](#) (USTR). There, she was responsible for trade negotiations and treaties in Asia and Africa, driving U.S. efforts to open new markets and enforce existing trade agreements in China, East Asia, South Asia and Africa and for advancing global negotiations on counterfeiting, pharmaceuticals, labor, environment and trade capacity building. One of her legacy projects was fighting global counterfeiting, creating STOP – Strategy Targeting Organized Piracy' and the protection of Intellectual Property. She helped bring to a successful conclusion the landmark [U.S.-Australia Free Trade Agreement](#)

(FTA), which is expected to increase U.S. exports to Australia by \$2 billion a year. She also led trade enforcement negotiations with China and furthered U.S. trade and investment interests in direct talks with Japan, Korea, India and many other nations.

Professional experience: private sector [edit]

Management [edit]

Before joining USTR, Sheeran was managing director of Starpoint Solutions, a [Wall Street](#) technology firm that works with Fortune 500 clients. During her tenure at Starpoint she led major strategic projects with corporate leaders such as [Bank of America](#), [Citibank](#) and the [Associated Press](#). Sheeran also served as President and Chief Executive Officer of [Empower America](#), where she developed its agenda of trade policy, technology policy, education reform, and tax reform, and advancing the agenda of Empowerment Economics to transform America's poorest cities and regions under the leadership of Jack Kemp and Ambassador Jeanne Kirkpatrick.

Journalistic Experience [edit]

Sheeran got her start in journalism in 1976 with the *New York News World*, which was owned by [News World Communications](#), an international media conglomerate owned by the [Unification Church](#), which she had recently joined. She served in a number of capacities for *News World*, eventually becoming their [White House](#) correspondent. In 1982 she moved to *News World's* new sister paper, the *Washington Times*. Originally a features editor, she was eventually appointed managing editor.^[17] During her tenure as managing editor of the *Washington Times*, she appeared as a commentator on programs such as *Nightline*, *Fox news*, *The McLaughlin Group*, *The Diane Rehm Show*, and *CNN*. Sheeran also wrote a nationally syndicated column for [Scripps Howard News Service](#). She has had interviews with more than a dozen heads of state in [Europe](#), [Asia](#), [Latin America](#) and the [United States](#), most famously her interview with [North Korean](#) head of state [Kim Il Sung](#). She has twice served as a [Pulitzer prize](#) juror.^[18]

Boards and Honors [edit]

Ms. Sheeran serves as a director on numerous boards, including the Capital Group, one of America's oldest and largest investment management organizations. She also serves on the Board of Directors, and as co-chair of the Finance & Human Resources Committee, of the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), founded through a partnership between the Rockefeller Foundation and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in 2006 in response to a call from former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who said the time had come for African farmers to wage a "uniquely African Green Revolution."

Sheeran is a member of the Council of Foreign Relations.

In 2011, *Forbes* named her the world's 30th most powerful woman ^[19]; *Foreign Policy* listed her among its top 100 global 'Twitterati'. She was a Fisher Fellow at the Harvard Kennedy School Belfer Center in 2013. She graduated from the University of Colorado and has been awarded numerous

honorary doctorate degrees, including from Michigan State University and the University of Colorado.

She was awarded Japan's Nigata International Food Award, Commandeur de l'Ordre du Mérite Agricole by the government of France, and Brazil's highest civilian award, the Grand Official Order of the 'Rio Branco,' and the "Game Changer" award by the Huffington Post.

Personal [[edit](#)]

Inspired by late father's service [[edit](#)]

Her late father, **James J. Sheeran** inspired her public service. As a young man, he parachuted into [Sainte-Mère-Église](#) with the [101st Airborne Division](#) on [D-Day](#).^[20] After returning from [World War II](#) he organized a food drive to benefit some of the villages he had helped to liberate.^[21] He later served as [New Jersey's](#) Insurance Commissioner^[21] and as [mayor](#) of [West Orange, New Jersey](#). A few months before his death, the French Ambassador decorated him with the insignia of the [Légion d'honneur](#).^[22]

Education [[edit](#)]

She earned a [BA](#) from the [University of Colorado at Boulder](#) in 1976.^[17]

Religious affiliations [[edit](#)]

Sheeran was raised in the [Roman Catholic Church](#). She joined the [Unification Church](#) in 1975,^[23] and in August 1975 her father tried to "rescue" her and her two sisters (against their wishes) from the [Unification Theological Seminary](#) in [Barrytown, New York](#) by forcing his way in to see them.^[24] He failed, and the scuffle there led to mutual charges of [assault](#).^[21] Sheeran left the Unification Church about 1996 and joined the [Episcopal Church in the United States of America](#).^[3]

Family [[edit](#)]

She and her former husband, Whitney Shiner, are now divorced. They have three children Nicole, Daniel, and Gabriel. She has five siblings, James, John, Kim, Victoria, and Jaime.

See also [[edit](#)]

- . [2007–2008 world food price crisis](#)

Notes [[edit](#)]

Portions of this article were originally taken from Sheeran's Department of State biography, as well as from her [official biography](#)[↗] on the World Food Programme website.

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External links [[edit](#)]

- . [Josette Sheeran](#) [↗](#) on IMDb
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- . [Executive Director](#) [↗](#), World Food Programme
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