

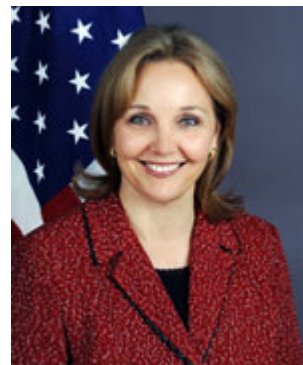
# Josette Sheeran

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**Josette Sheeran** (born 1954) has been President and CEO of the Asia Society since May 2013.<sup>[1]</sup> Previously Sheeran was Vice Chairman of the World Economic Forum. Sheeran assumed that position on the conclusion of her term at the World Food Programme.<sup>[2]</sup> She was the eleventh Executive Director of the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), appointed by United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan and Food and Agriculture Organization Director-General Jacques Diouf in November 2006.<sup>[3]</sup> Prior to this post, she served as the United States Under Secretary for Economic, Business, and Agricultural Affairs in the State Department.

On May 21, 2013, Sheeran was named<sup>[4]</sup> President and CEO of Asia Society, a global non-profit dedicated to strengthening relations between and among the United States and countries of Asia.

## Josette Sheeran



Official photograph of Department of State Under Secretary Josette Sheeran Shiner, August 2005

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

#### In office

August 23, 2005 – April 4, 2007

**Preceded by** Alan Larson  
**Succeeded by** Reuben Jeffery III

#### Personal details

**Born** 1954 (age 60–61)  
United States  
**Nationality** American  
**Spouse(s)** Whitney Shiner (divorced)

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## World Food Programme (WFP)

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 addresses the causes of chronic hunger. The UN estimates that there are more than 850,000,000 hungry and malnourished people,<sup>[5]</sup> disproportionately represented by women and children who are often victims of war and natural disasters; those who do not have access to safe drinking water or sanitation; orphans and families affected by HIV/AIDS; and schoolchildren in poor communities.

"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," Ms Sheeran said.<sup>[6]</sup>

U.S. Ambassador John 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."<sup>[7]</sup>

Sheeran outlined seven reasons why chronic hunger can be overcome and has expressed commitment to meeting the UN Millennium Development Goal of halving hunger and poverty by 2015.<sup>[8]</sup>

"Those pictures of children with swollen bellies will be a thing of history."<sup>[6]</sup>

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.<sup>[9]</sup> In 2008, it had a budget of US\$3 billion and employed 10,000 people in 78 countries.<sup>[10]</sup>

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"<sup>[11]</sup> and lobbied the United States and other governments to give more aid to the world's poor.<sup>[12]</sup> 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.<sup>[13][14]</sup>

Under Sheeran's leadership, WFP increased its donor base to more than 100 nations – including the BRIC nations as major donors and the Gulf States and brought the private sector to one of WFP's top ten donors. She put in place new emergency protocols that helped the institution improve its ability to save lives and livelihoods in disasters and emergencies, most recently in Haiti and Pakistan and in 2011 scaling up response to the historic drought in the Horn of Africa.

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.

"It has been a deep honour to serve the world in this role and to help not only save lives but to transform the face of food aid, to empower lasting hunger solutions," said Sheeran.<sup>[2]</sup>

## **Professional experience: government sector**

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

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

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

### Management

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.

### Journalistic Experience

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.<sup>[15]</sup> 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.

## Honors

In 1997, *Washingtonian* magazine named Sheeran as one of Washington's 100 Most Powerful Women.<sup>[15]</sup> In 2011 *Forbes* named her the world's 30th most powerful woman.<sup>[16]</sup>

## Personal

### Inspired by late father's service

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.<sup>[17]</sup> After returning from World War II he organized a food drive to benefit some of the villages he had helped to liberate.<sup>[18]</sup> He later served as New Jersey's Insurance Commissioner<sup>[18]</sup> 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.<sup>[19]</sup>

## Education

She earned a BA from the University of Colorado at Boulder in 1976.<sup>[15]</sup>

## Religious affiliations

Sheeran was raised in the Roman Catholic Church. She joined the Unification Church in 1975,<sup>[20]</sup> 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.<sup>[21]</sup> He failed, and the scuffle there led to mutual charges of assault.<sup>[18]</sup> Sheeran left the Unification Church about 1996 and joined the Episcopal Church in the United States of America.<sup>[3]</sup>

## Family

She and her former husband, Whitney Shiner, are now divorced. They have three children.

## See also

- 2007–2008 world food price crisis

## Notes

Portions of this article were originally taken from Sheeran's Department of State biography, as well as from her official biography (<http://www.wfp.org/about/corporate-information/executive-director/biography>) on the World Food Programme website.

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## External links

- Josette Sheeran (<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm2798974/>) at the Internet Movie Database
- Josette Sheeran (<https://twitter.com/JosetteSheeran>) on Twitter

## World Food Programme

- Executive Director (<http://www.wfp.org/about/executive-director>), World Food Programme
- World Food Programme home page (<http://www.wfp.org/>)
- Friends of the World Food Program, the US non-profit that supports WFP (<http://www.friendswfp.org/>)
- Speech by Sheeran to the UN (mp3) (<http://www.un.org/av/radio/al/detail/51070.htm>)

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