

Ilze Brands Kehris – Short bio

During a career spanning almost three decades, Ilze Brands Kehris has developed her expertise on human rights and conflict prevention, while engaging at the intersection of human rights, political science and diplomacy.

Ilze Brands Kehris has held several leadership positions at national and international levels. Most recently, for more than six years, until June 2026, she served as the United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights and Head of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) at United Nations Headquarters in New York. Previously, she was Member and Chairperson of the Management Board of the European Union Fundamental Rights Agency (2007-2012); Director of the Office of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (2011-2014); first Vice-President and Member of the Advisory Committee on the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (2006-2012); and Member of the Management Board and Vice-Chairperson of the Executive Board of the EU Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (2004-2007).

As an independent expert, Ilze Brands Kehris has been a senior scholar and scientific and editorial board member at several academic institutions and has also been a member of significant human rights monitoring bodies: from 2017-2020 she was a member of the United Nations Human Rights Committee, the treaty body monitoring the implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and from 2006-2012 she monitored compliance with minority rights as a member of the Council of Europe Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.

Ilze Brands Kehris has actively worked with civil society. She also served as Director of the Latvian Centre for Human Rights from 2002 to 2011 and she has been a board member of other non-governmental organizations in Europe.

Ilze Brands Kehris speaks Latvian, Swedish, English, French and Russian, Latvian. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in International Relations from Mills College, CA, USA (1982), a Master of Arts in Political Science (International Relations) from Columbia University, NY, USA (1983), where she also pursued Ph.D. studies.

Ilze Brands Kehris is a citizen of Latvia and Sweden. She has two sons.