

Alenka Smerkolj

Secretary General of the Alpine Convention

Alenka Smerkolj began her term as Secretary General of the Alpine Convention as the first woman in this position in July 2019. Ms Smerkolj is an experienced leader in international banking and management and was Minister for Development, Strategic Projects, and Cohesion in the Slovenian government from 2014 to 2018. She strongly believes that people can succeed if they show the right attitude, passion, and perseverance.

As Secretary General, Ms Smerkolj first and foremost works to continue her predecessor's efforts for the protection and sustainable development of the Alps as a pioneering region for sustainable living at the heart of Europe. She believes in the power of teamwork, dialogue, and open communication with the Contracting Parties and all partners. With this attitude, mountains can be moved. The priorities set out in the Multi-Annual Work Programme 2023-2030 will continue to serve as a guiding principle for her work in the coming years.

Ms Smerkolj entered the political scene in November 2014 when she became Minister for European Cohesion Policy and Development in the Slovenian government. During her term, which ended in September 2018, she coordinated, among other things, the government's efforts to implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the elaboration of a national long-term vision and development strategy for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. At the personal request of the Prime Minister of Slovenia, Ms Smerkolj served as Acting Minister of Finance for two and a half months starting July 2016.

Alenka Smerkolj was born in Kranj, Slovenia in 1963 and graduated in French and Spanish from the University of Ljubljana. She started her professional career in 1996 at Nova Ljubljanska Banka in Ljubljana, where she held various positions ranging from Head of Unit to Deputy Director. Before Alenka Smerkolj gave up her banking career in 2014 to take up her ministerial post in the Slovenian government, she was successively Director of the International Capital Markets Department and Executive Director for Financial Markets.

Ms Smerkolj's recent publications include the book chapter (as co-author) "Prototyping the Future: A New Approach to Whole-of-Society Visioning" in the book *Realistic Hope: Facing Global Challenges* edited by Angela Wilkinson and Betty Sue Flowers (Amsterdam University Press, October 2018).