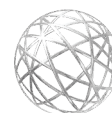




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**HAPPY INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY**



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# 'Advancing women to senior levels remains a huge challenge'

Pernelle Nunez, International Aluminium Institute



**Pernelle Nunez, Deputy Secretary General at the International Aluminium Institute, reflects on her growth over the past 10 years of her career in the aluminium industry.**

## How did you come to work for the aluminium industry?

I've been in metals and mining for almost 15 years and specifically aluminium for over a decade now. After finishing my MSci in Geology, I had a decision to make about the type of career I wanted and ultimately I decided I wanted to work in the metals and mining industry, but not in the field or on-site, so I went down the consulting route. Eventually, I shifted focus from market and economic consulting projects towards sustainability and I haven't looked back.

## What about the aluminium industry most excites you?

It's a truly global industry with a product that is relevant to everyday life. Pretty much every day, regardless of where I am or what I'm doing, I'll come across something that is related to the industry in some way. It could be a drink can, my phone, the train I took to work, the coffee pod I put in the coffee machine – it's everywhere, but I feel like for many people outside the industry, it's not something that is particularly well known, so I enjoy telling people more about the industry.

It's also got great sustainability ambitions, which means it has a bright future. Working for an industry that produces a material that can enable solutions to some major societal challenges is exciting.

## What do you think is the most pressing issue facing women today in the aluminium sector?

I think there are lots of talented women across the sector, but finding the opportunities and support to have them advance to the most senior levels in the industry remains a huge challenge. We are yet to see any notable shift in the leadership positions across the industry despite compelling evidence about the benefits a diverse team can bring to businesses.

I'm excited to be starting up Women in Aluminium

through the IAI to give women in the industry an opportunity for informal networking, as those informal networks can be so crucial as we build and navigate our careers.

## What is your advice for young women aspiring to work in the sector?

I remember going to my first board meeting aged 25, relatively new in my role and having to present to a room full of C-level men – it felt daunting. I was out

of my comfort zone, and I didn't feel like I would have anything that anyone in the room would be interested in hearing, but I was wrong.

After my presentation, there were questions – and ones I could answer to my surprise! Sometimes it can be very intimidating to be the minority in a room, especially when you're starting out in your career, but a little nervousness is probably a good thing! It also helped to remember they were all just normal people – they weren't there to try and catch me out. They were there to listen to what I had to say.

I'm now heading into my 18th board meeting and, while it can still be a little daunting, I have more confidence in my place at that table and the value that I bring.

## Can you highlight some of your career successes?

One of my recent highlights was a successful COP28 after my return to work following 10 months of maternity leave. I generally work quite well under pressure, but I remember thinking in the run-up to COP that preparing for multiple speaking engagements, launching a new industry initiative, and organising a high-level panel was probably overly ambitious alongside the stresses of settling a baby into childcare and navigating my first international trip since becoming a mother!

Luckily, we pulled it off and it has given me confidence to be back in my role again.

**Working for an industry that produces a material that can enable solutions to some major societal challenges is exciting.**