

May 22, 2026

Mr. Alexander De Croo
UNDP Administrator
United Nations Development Programme
One United Nations Plaza
New York, NY 10017 USA

Dear Administrator De Croo,

Congratulations on your recent appointment as UNDP Administrator. Your appointment comes at a crucial time in global development, where development challenges are increasing while resources are decreasing. As civil society organizations who support communities to advance their own development goals, we are writing to urge you to ensure that UNDP's Independent Accountability Mechanism (IAM), the Social and Environmental Compliance Unit (SECU),¹ is trustworthy and effective.

IAMs are important governance tools for development institutions and other investors. Research reflects that IAMs significantly enhance development outcomes, including not only through enhancing a given project's design, but also through documenting systemic failures and supporting a refining of policies and practices that help avoid future impacts to and conflicts with communities. Benefits to having a strong IAM far outweigh its operational costs. These reasons drive donor support for IAMs.

SECU also helps UNDP fulfill its human rights-related responsibilities and, in turn, supports the UN in achieving its human rights mandate. Meeting these responsibilities depends on SECU satisfying the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights' [effectiveness criteria](#) for non-judicial grievance mechanisms - legitimacy, accessibility, predictability, equitability, transparency, rights-compatibility, and a source of continuous learning.

Particularly important for legitimacy in the eyes of project-affected communities is independence and effectiveness. Communities must trust that SECU is an impartial fact-finding body that has the expertise and other capacity to directly engage with them, fairly and impartially investigate claims of actual or foreseeable social and environmental harm and recommend meaningful actions to redress the harm. SECU investigations alone cannot restore livelihoods; resolutions through the complaint process depend on an institutional commitment and action to make complainants whole, which in turn relies on an Administrator's leadership and responsiveness.

¹ While this letter concerns SECU, we encourage your support of UNDP's Stakeholder Response Mechanism (UNDP's IAM focusing on dispute resolution), and much of this letter is applicable to the SRM.

As UNDP Administrator, your support of SECU is crucial for ensuring that SECU can perform its functions as effectively as possible. Even as discussions continue about [cutting costs](#) across the UN, we ask you to ensure that SECU has sufficient staffing and resources to effectively operate.

Many of the undersigned contributed to the development of SECU and have been tracking its operations since its establishment in 2015. We welcome the opportunity for a conversation with your office on the importance of SECU. We also refer you to the 2024 publication [Good Policy Paper: Guiding Practice from the Policies of Independent Accountability Mechanisms](#) for background and guidance on IAMs. We wish you the best as you move forward with your term.

Sincerely,

Accountability Counsel – International
African Law Foundation (AFRILAW) – Nigeria
Buliisa Initiative for Rural Development Organisation (BIRUDO) – Uganda
CDES – Ecuador
CEE Bankwatch Network – Czechia
Ecolur Informational NGO – Armenia
GAIA Asia Pacific – Asia Pacific
Global Rights – Nigeria
Green Advocates International – Liberia
Inclusive Development International – United States
Indigenous Women Legal Awareness Group (INWOLAG) – Nepal
Inisiasi Masyarakat Adat (IMA) – Indonesia
International Rivers – United States / Global
MiningWatch Canada – Canada
Oil Refinery Residents Association (ORRA) – Uganda
Oyu Tolgoi Watch – Mongolia
Peace Point Development Foundation (PPDF) – Nigeria
Sustentarse – Chile
SynDev (former LSD Senegal) – Senegal
Urgewald – Germany
Witness Radio – Uganda

CC: Mr. Chris Taylor, Director, Office of Audit and Investigations
Ms. Christine Reddell, Head of Unit, SECU