



Empowered lives.  
Resilient nations.



# ANNUAL REPORT

Social and  
Environmental  
Compliance Unit  
(SECU)

**2023**

OFFICE OF AUDIT AND  
INVESTIGATIONS (OAI)

# CONTENTS

Introduction	<a href="#"><u>3</u></a>
Foreword	<a href="#"><u>4</u></a>
Welcoming Chris Taylor	<a href="#"><u>5</u></a>
About SECU	<a href="#"><u>6</u></a>
SECU in numbers	<a href="#"><u>11</u></a>
Case activity	<a href="#"><u>14</u></a>
Outreach	<a href="#"><u>28</u></a>
Institutional strengthening	<a href="#"><u>31</u></a>

# INTRODUCTION

UNDP established the Social and Environmental Compliance Unit (SECU) to ensure accountability to individuals and communities. SECU is located in the UNDP's independent Office of Audit and Investigations (OAI). It investigates allegations by communities affected by UNDP-supported activity of non-compliance with the UNDP's Social and Environmental Standards (SES) and other relevant policies. It also recommends measures to address non-compliance.

This annual report aims to provide SECU's stakeholders, including others in UNDP, case complainants, civil society, donors, academics, and other interested parties, information about SECU's mandate, activities, and function.

The report covers:

- A snapshot of SECU's work over the years
- An overview of our current case activity
- Our outreach and institutional strengthening initiatives

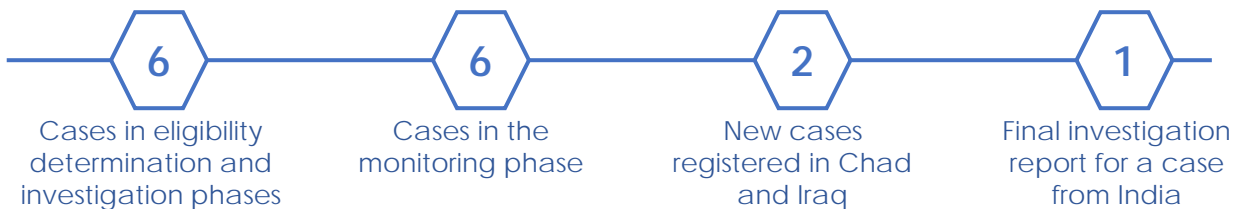
# Foreword

As we present the Social and Environmental Compliance Unit’s annual report, we take pride in reflecting on the past year’s achievements. As one of the custodians of UNDP’s commitment to social and environmental standards, SECU remains steadfast in its commitment to ensuring accountability for social and environmental responsibilities.

Through independent, impartial and transparent assessments, our dedicated team works to promote UNDP’s commitment to sustainable development. SECU has continued to play a vital role in fostering accountability across the Programme’s activities. Through thorough investigations and comprehensive reporting, SECU provides actionable recommendations to bring UNDP projects in line with the Programme’s commitment to ensuring that its activities avoid harm and lead to robust sustainable outcomes that its stakeholders support.

We hope the annual report serves as a useful tool to inform the public about key SECU activities and to open up a dialogue with our stakeholders. We invite you to read the report and trust that you will find value in its summaries and reflections.

## Highlights of 2023



**Paul Goodwin**  
Head of Unit, Social and Environmental Compliance Unit

**Richard Bissell**  
Lead Compliance Officer, Social and Environmental Compliance Unit

**Chris Taylor**  
Director, Office of Audit and Investigations

# Welcoming Chris Taylor



Chris Taylor was appointed Director of the UNDP Office of Audit and Investigations (OAI) in July 2023. Formerly the Director of Internal Audit and Investigations in the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office of the United Kingdom, Mr. Taylor brings extensive expertise in internal auditing, risk management, counter-fraud prevention, and investigations to his new position.

In his capacity as OAI Director, Mr. Taylor will play a critical role in promoting the Social and Environmental Compliance Unit's mandate, aligning with UNDP's commitment to transparency, accountability, and compliance in its operations. He will contribute to advancing the social and environmental compliance functions within UNDP.

A national of the United Kingdom, Mr. Taylor holds a Master's degree in physics from Oxford University and is a Certified Internal Auditor and a Fellow of the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants.

For more information click here: [Official Appointment](#)

# About SECU



# About SECU

The Social and Environmental Compliance Unit (SECU) **investigates alleged non-compliance with UNDP's social and environmental commitments** from project-affected stakeholders **and recommends measures to address findings of non-compliance.**

## Who may file a complaint?

Any person or community who believes the environment or their well-being may be affected by a UNDP-supported activity may file a complaint. Representatives, such as civil society organizations, can also file complaints on behalf of affected communities.

Complainants have the option to request that SECU protect their names and identities, and submissions can be made through email, telephone, post, or social media applications. While there are no strict format or language requirements for complaints, providing specific details is encouraged. This may include contact information, a request for confidentiality, and comprehensive information about the UNDP project and its perceived harm to the complainant or a third party.



# About SECU

## The Compliance Review Process

The Social and Environmental Compliance Unit meticulously processes each complaint independently, impartially, and transparently, following an established procedure for every case. Initially, SECU determines if the complaint is eligible based on whether the complaint:

- Relates to an activity supported by UNDP;
- Raises actual or potential issues relating to compliance with UNDP's social and environmental commitments;
- Reflects that, as a result of UNDP's noncompliance with its social and environmental commitments, complainants may be or have been harmed.

If the complaint meets the eligibility criteria, SECU proceeds to investigate whether UNDP is meeting its social and environmental commitments concerning the specific UNDP-supported activity. In case of non-compliance, SECU proposes measures to correct UNDP's adherence to the Social and Environmental Standards (SES) and other relevant policies and commitments. The final report is submitted to the Administrator for a decision on implementing SECU's findings and recommendations. At the same time, the final report is shared with the complainants and released to the public.



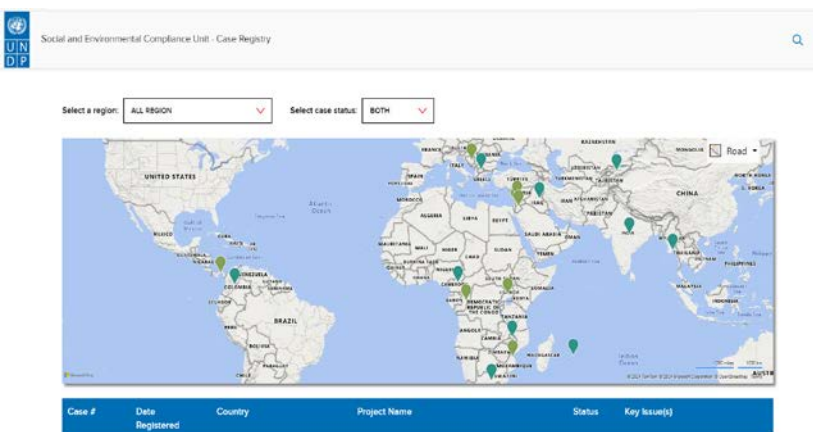


# About SECU

## Case Registry

For public access to a repository of case information, the SECU website includes a Case Registry that shows all registered cases, their status, and any public documents relevant to the compliance review.

Available at  
<https://secu.info.undp.org/>



## SECU Team

The team is composed of one Head of Unit, a Lead Compliance Officer, four part-time Compliance Officer consultants, one Case and Policy Specialist, one Case and Communications Analyst, and regular interns.



# About SECU

## Outreach



### SECU Website

Being committed to transparent investigations, SECU's website provides all essential information about its operations and the process for submitting a request or complaint. It can be visited at [www.undp.org/secu](http://www.undp.org/secu).



### Outreach missions

SECU organizes regular outreach events with civil society organizations and communities in regions where UNDP has a significant portfolio of projects. These events are either in-person or virtual meetings to explain SECU's mandate and how to access it. Civil society organizations also have the opportunity to have one-on-one meetings with the SECU team to discuss specific issues.



### Outreach Video

SECU has produced a video with subtitles in 10 languages to communicate with stakeholders potentially affected by UNDP activities. It explains SECU's mission, mandate and procedures to file a complaint. The video is available on our webpage.

### Social Media

In addition to the website, SECU has the following social media accounts:



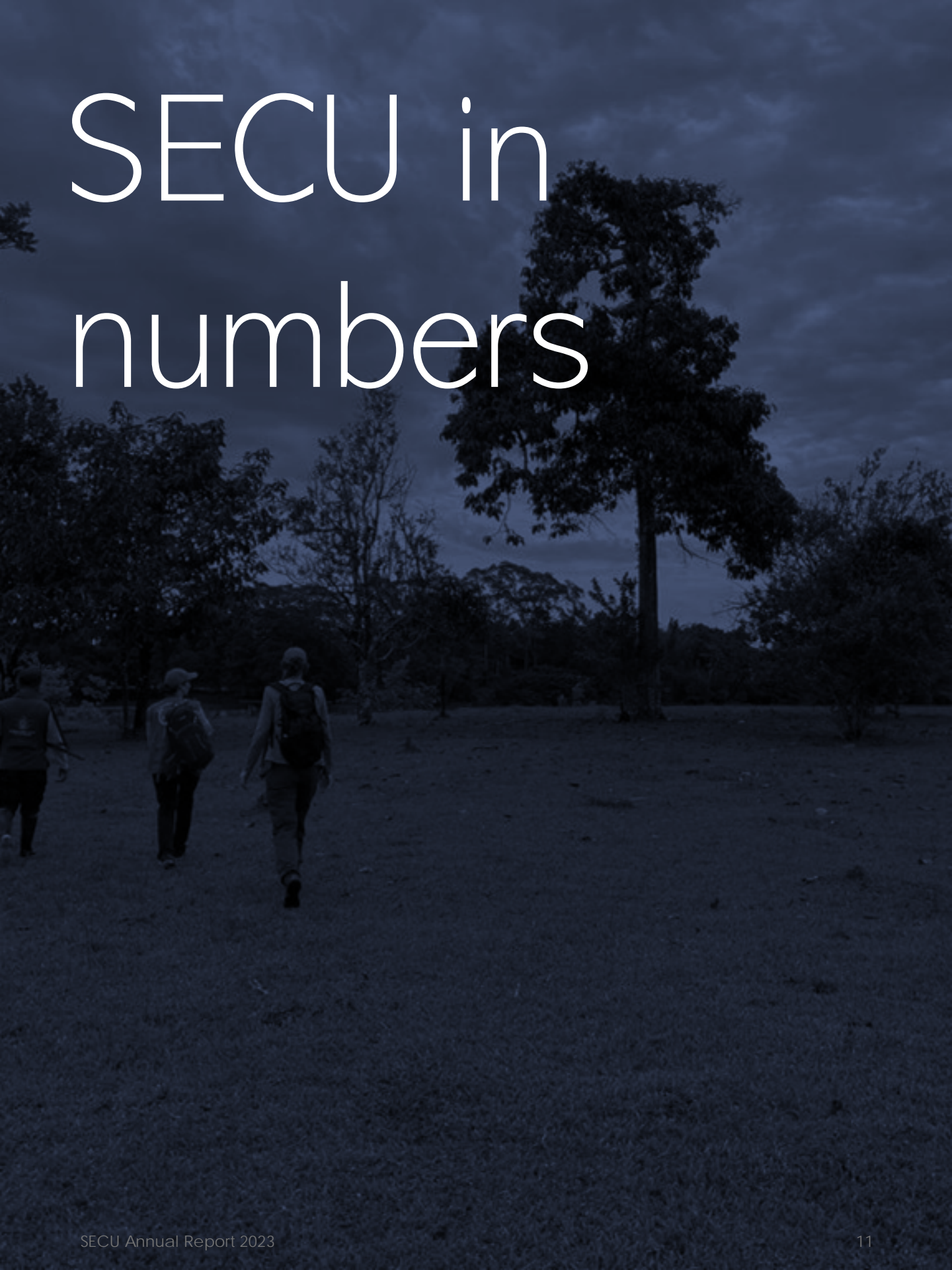
**in** [secu-undp](https://www.linkedin.com/company/secu-undp)

**f** [secu.undp](https://www.facebook.com/secu.undp)

**X** [secu\\_undp](https://twitter.com/secu_undp)

Our social media pages provide updates on SECU's activities and a platform for engagement with the public through messaging and post-sharing.

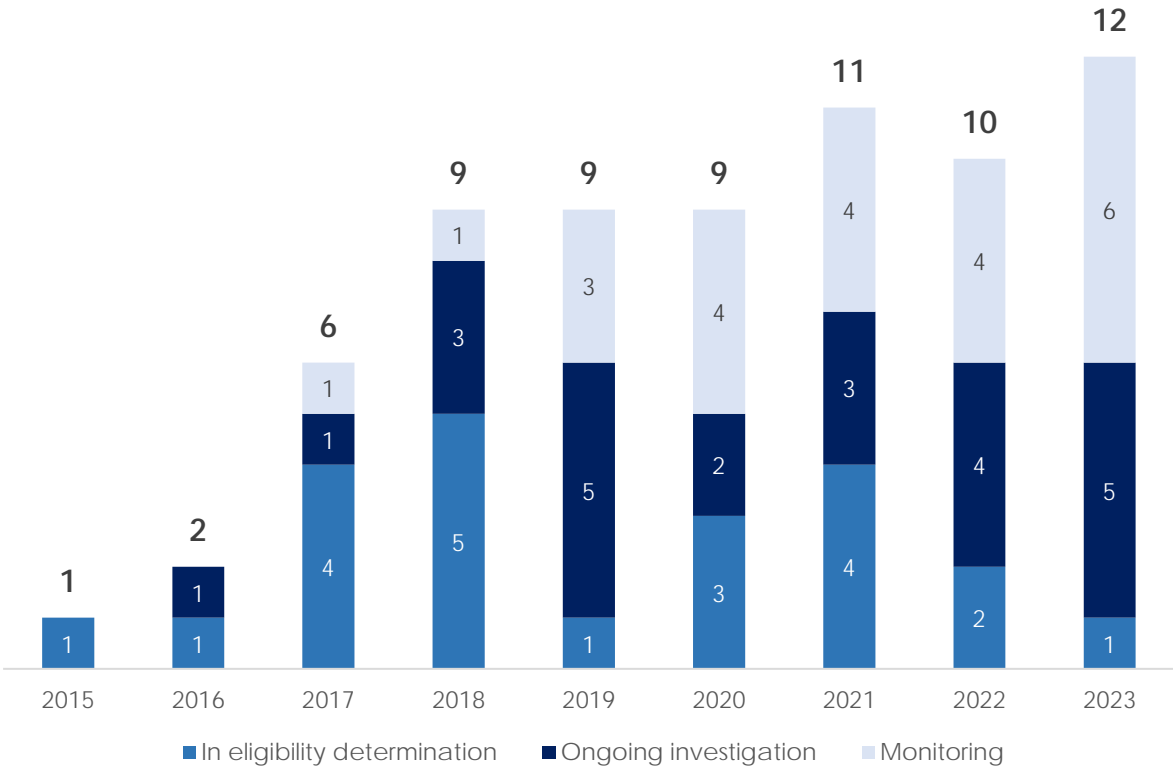
# SECU in numbers



# SECU in numbers

Since its inception in 2015, SECU has undergone a notable transformation, with a steady increase in active cases over the years. From a single open case in 2015, the number has risen to 12 active cases in 2023. Not only does this reflect a growing awareness of civil society organizations and communities of the SECU's processes, but also the fact that many cases stay open and active for years after the final report is published as SECU monitors ongoing projects to ensure that they adhere to the investigations' outcomes.

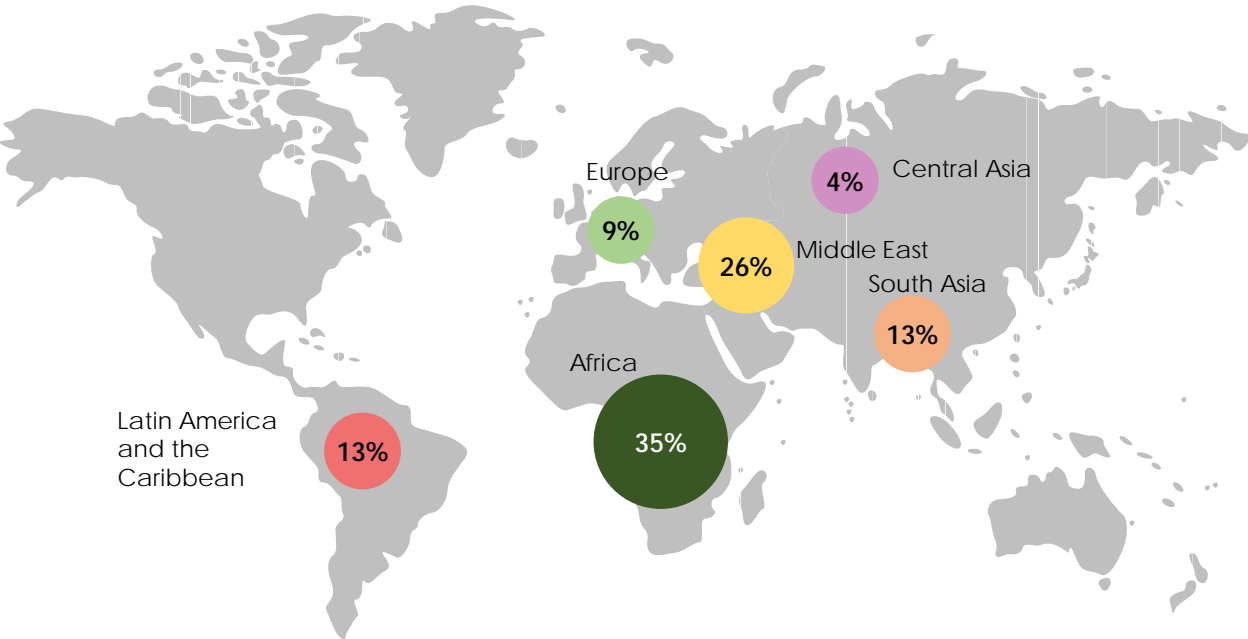
## Active cases per year



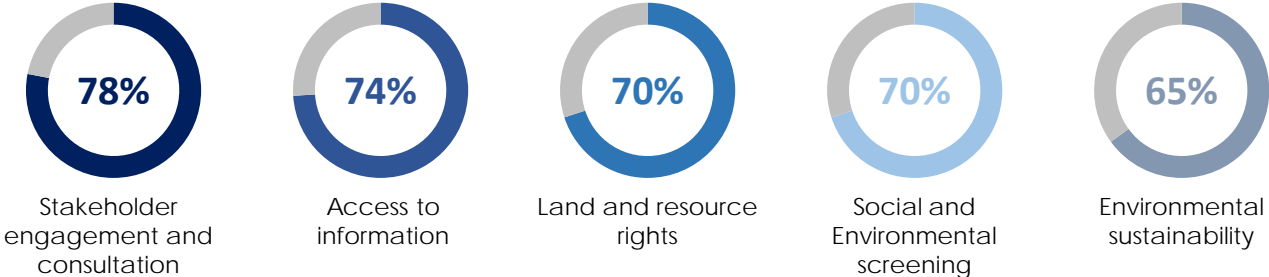
# SECU in numbers

## Cases by region (2015 – 2023)

A high number of total cases, 43%, come from Asia. The Africa and Middle East regions are significant contributors, accounting for 35% and 26% of all cases, respectively. This distribution closely aligns with UNDP’s portfolio budget allocation in these regions.



## Main issues raised in complaints (2015 – 2023)



# Case activity



# Summary *(as of 31 December 2023)*

Case Number	Country	Project name	Status	Complainant
SECU0005	Malawi	Malawi national registration and identification system	Monitoring	Community organization (confidential)
SECU0007	Jordan	“Mitigating the impact of the Syrian refugee crisis on Jordanian vulnerable host communities” and “Improving solid waste management and income creation in host communities”	Monitoring	Dibeen Association for Environmental Development
SECU0008	Cameroon	Integrated and transboundary conservation of biodiversity in the basins of the republic of Cameroon	Monitoring	Individuals of the Baka People
SECU0012	Mauritius	Mainstreaming biodiversity into the management of the coastal zone in Mauritius	Monitoring	Aret Kokin Nu Laplaz (AKNL)
SECU0014	India	Enhancing climate resilience of India’s coastal communities	Monitoring	CSOs in India
SECU0015	Kyrgyzstan	Socio-economic development of communities around radioactive sites in Kyrgyzstan	Monitoring	Villagers of Kadji-Sai
SECU0010	Myanmar	Integrated protected area land and seascape management in Tanintharyi (ridge to reef)	Investigation	Communities from Lenya and Monorone area
SECU0017	Colombia	Sector privado y agenda 2030	Investigation	Colombian communities
SECU0020	South Africa	MoU between the United Nations development programme and Musina-Makhado Special Economic Zone	Investigation	Earthlife Africa and Living Limpopo
SECU0021	North Macedonia	Integrated climate-resilient transboundary flood risk management in the Drin River basin in the West	Investigation	Ohrid SOS
SECU0023	Chad	Programme d’Appui au Développement Local et à la Finance Inclusive au Tchad (PADLFIT)	Investigation	Self-initiated
SECU0022	Iraq	Funding facility for stabilization	Eligibility determination	Confidential

# SECU0005

**Country:** Malawi

**Project:** Malawi national registration and identification system

**Status:** Monitoring



In October 2017, SECU received a complaint concerning the UNDP-supported Malawi National Registration and Identification System (NRIS) project that raised concerns about labor and human rights practices during project preparation and implementation. In May 2018, the SECU team traveled to Malawi to gather additional evidence and meet with relevant stakeholders. In October 2019, SECU submitted the final investigation report to the UNDP Administrator, noting that, although the Social and Environmental Screening Procedure (SESP) had been applied, UNDP failed to identify all the social and environmental risks. SECU also found that labor standards were not met and recommended taking corrective actions to align the project with UNDP social and environmental standards.

In March 2020, the UNDP Administrator issued a decision directing UNDP Malawi to incorporate Social and Environmental Standards requirements into procurement processes and ensure that contractors comply with relevant measures. He also required that UNDP Malawi ensure the application of SES-mandated measures to labor standards in future UNDP projects, including subcontractor activities.

UNDP Malawi formulated a Management Response Plan to address the recommendations outlined in the Administrator's decision. In November 2022, SECU released an interim monitoring report assessing the progress of UNDP Malawi in implementing the plan. SECU continues to monitor the latest phase of the NRIS project, focusing on child registrations.





# SECU0007

**Country:** Jordan

**Project:**

“Mitigating the impact of the Syrian refugee crisis on Jordanian vulnerable host communities” and “Improving solid waste management and income creation in host communities”



**Status:**

Monitoring

In June 2018, a Jordan-based non-governmental organization (NGO) filed a complaint regarding the construction of a waste management and transfer station in the Jerash area, part of a UNDP Jordan project to improve solid waste management. The complainant noted concerns about potential environmental damage to their lands and highlighted difficulties in obtaining documents related to the construction of the plant, including Environmental Impact Assessments. The SECU team traveled to Jordan in December 2018 to gather additional evidence and meet with relevant stakeholders.

In December 2019, SECU issued its final investigation report, which found that UNDP Jordan failed to conduct a thorough Social and Environmental Screening Procedure (SESP). UNDP Jordan also failed to achieve adherence to UNDP standards on stakeholder engagement and access to information. SECU recommended the provision of additional guidance and support to country offices for completing a Social and Environmental Screening Procedure for each UNDP project/programme. In June 2020, the UNDP Administrator issued his decision outlining follow-up actions responding to SECU’s recommendations, such as raising awareness of all country office staff of the importance of UNDP’s Social and Environmental Standards. The case was closed prior to the release of this Annual Report.



# SECU0008

**Country:** Cameroon

**Project:** Integrated and transboundary conservation of biodiversity in the basins of the republic of Cameroon

**Status:** Monitoring



In August 2018, Survival International, an international NGO dedicated to Indigenous Peoples' rights, filed a complaint on behalf of the Baka people in the village of Zoulabot Ancien in Cameroon. The complaint alleged illegal evictions and other human rights violations linked to a UNDP-supported project. In January 2019, the SECU team traveled to Cameroon to meet with the complainants, UNDP Cameroon staff, and other stakeholders and gather additional evidence.

In September 2020, SECU submitted the final investigation report to the UNDP Administrator. The report highlighted that UNDP Cameroon did not screen project activities in a manner consistent with SES requirements, failed to adequately consult the Baka, and did not prepare an Indigenous Peoples Plan or an adequate initial management plan to address the risks identified in the Indigenous Peoples Plan. The Unit recommended screening final drafts of the Prodoc in a manner consistent with Social and Environmental Standard requirements and the creation of an Indigenous Peoples Plan in consultation with potentially affected Indigenous communities. In March 2020, the Administrator's decision directed UNDP Cameroon to reformulate the project for full compliance with the Social and Environmental Standards.

In September 2021, SECU issued an interim monitoring report noting progress but identifying limitations in the stakeholder engagement plan and Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) processes. As of the end of 2023, UNDP Cameroon was still reformulating the project, and SECU continues to actively monitor the implementation of the Administrator's decision.



# SECU0012

**Country:** Mauritius

**Project:** Mainstreaming biodiversity into the management of the coastal zone in Mauritius

**Status:** Monitoring



In March 2019, Aret Kokin Nu Laplaz (AKNL), an NGO Network in Mauritius, submitted a complaint to SECU related to the “Mainstreaming Biodiversity into the Management of the Coastal Zone in the Republic of Mauritius” project. The complainants alleged that the UNDP’s project failed to protect Environmental Sensitive Areas and violated several of UNDP’s Social and Environmental Standards, given the development permits issued by the government for hotel and residential construction projects along the country’s coast. In July 2019, a SECU team traveled to Mauritius to meet with the complainants, UNDP Mauritius personnel and other stakeholders.

In October 2020, SECU submitted the final investigation report to the UNDP Administrator. It found that UNDP Mauritius understood the Social and Environmental Standard requirements; however, the analysis failed to reflect past experience with environmental incentives in Mauritius and neglected the warnings on risk from stakeholder consultations. SECU recommended raising the project completion ambitions and reassessing the risk framework through the midterm review or other targeted screening exercises.

In March 2021, the Administrator issued his decision in response, and the country office outlined actions in a 'Management Response' including workshops and meetings to review the Wetlands Bill and revisit the risk framework for SES compliance. The case was closed prior to the release of this Annual Report.



# SECU0014

**Country:** India

**Project:** Enhancing climate resilience of India's coastal communities

**Status:** Monitoring



In July 2020, the Democratic Traditional Fishers Workers Forum, in association with Fridays for Future Andhra Pradesh, submitted a complaint to SECU regarding a Green Climate Fund (GCF) project implemented by UNDP. The complainants alleged that the destruction of mangrove forests by the Government of Andhra Pradesh State near the port city of Kakinada is causing the loss of livelihoods for fishing communities and adverse environmental effects for local communities. They asserted that these actions by the State Government go against the project's goal of protecting the environment and safeguarding the ecological balance. In April 2022, the SECU team traveled to India to meet with the complainants, UNDP staff, and other relevant stakeholders.

In October 2023, SECU submitted its final investigation report to the UNDP Administrator. The report highlighted that UNDP India assessed some but not all risks in a manner consistent with SES and SESP requirements. The report also noted that UNDP India did not engage in meaningful, effective, and informed consultation processes during project design. SECU recommended that UNDP India should update the SESP to acknowledge that the project could face heightened exposure to climate change-related impacts, urgently conclude the revision of its stakeholder engagement plan and carry out consultations with careful regard to the SES requirements.

Following SECU's investigation, the Administrator issued his decision in November 2023, directing UNDP India, with support from the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific and the Bureau for Policy and Programme Support, to review and update the Social and Environmental Screening Procedure (SESP) in alignment with the project's current risk profile, enhance the stakeholder engagement plan and reinforce SES capacities in the country office for more effective implementation, among other measures. The case will now enter a monitoring phase in which SECU will track the implementation of the activities described in the Administrator's decision.



# SECU0015

**Country:** Kyrgyzstan

**Project:** Socio-economic development of communities around radioactive sites in Kyrgyzstan

**Status:** Monitoring



In September 2020, residents of the village of Kadji Sai in Kyrgyzstan filed a complaint through a representative, expressing concerns about the UNDP-rehabilitated water supply system's inability to provide clean and safe drinking water. As the village's sole drinking water source, complainants were concerned about health risks from contaminants and the additional costs of purchasing bottled water or household filtration equipment.

In October 2022, SECU submitted the final investigation report, which found that UNDP Kyrgyzstan did not adequately consult with communities during the design phase and, when issues arose, failed to monitor and assess the performance of subproject activities, particularly the effects on water supply for communities. SECU recommended that UNDP Kyrgyzstan should support the capacities of drinking water management entities to provide local residents with information about the quality of drinking water and support their efforts to secure alternative sources of sufficient, safe, acceptable, and affordable water for Kadji Sai residents, among other measures.

In December 2022, the UNDP Administrator's decision included various interim actions, such as testing ground and surface water sources and assessing possible remedial solutions until a more extensive investment project delivers clean water to Kadji Sai. SECU continues to monitor the implementation of the activities described in the Administrator's decision.



# SECU0010

**Country:** Myanmar

**Project:** Integrated protected area land and seascape management in Tanintharyi

**Status:** Investigation / Draft report



In August 2018, the 'Conservation Alliance Tanawthari' (CAT) filed a complaint on behalf of the Indigenous Karen communities in the Tanintharyi region of Myanmar. The complainants alleged that the implementation of UNDP's Ridge to Reef protected area project in Tanintharyi would violate their right to Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) and the rights of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and refugees to return to areas from which they were displaced by armed conflict.

In October 2018, UNDP Myanmar suspended the project indefinitely in response to the issues and concerns highlighted in the complaint. In July 2019, the SECU team traveled to Myanmar to interview stakeholders and gather case evidence. A planned second trip to Myanmar was canceled in February 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic. As a result, the SECU team split the investigation into two phases in order to make as much progress on the case as possible.

In February 2022, SECU released the initial segment of the investigation report, centering on inland communities. Given the prevailing political and security situation on the ground, SECU is currently deferring additional investigative activities. In the coming months, SECU will reassess the situation to determine the next steps in advancing the investigation.



# SECU0017

**Country:** Colombia  
**Project:** Sector Privado y Agenda 2030  
**Status:** Investigation / Draft report



In May 2021, SECU received a complaint from Amazon Watch on behalf of local NGOs accompanying the Siona Buenavista indigenous reserve and the Asociación de Desarrollo Integral Sostenible Perla Amazónica (ADISPA), the legal representative of the Perla Amazónica campesino reserve in Colombia.

The complaint alleges that the alliance of UNDP Colombia with GeoPark, a Latin American oil and gas company, violates UNDP's social and environmental commitments, as GeoPark has been accused of environmental and human rights violations. The complainants also claim that UNDP failed to properly investigate the company prior to the agreement's signing or to consult with relevant civil society groups. They allege that the agreement with GeoPark was in direct conflict with the Sustainable Amazon for Peace Project, a UNDP conservation project in which the complainant communities were participants. In December 2022, the SECU team traveled to Colombia to meet with the complainants, project teams, and other stakeholders.

As of December 2023, SECU was in the final stages of completing the fact-finding and evidence-gathering phase in order to publish the draft report in 2024, which will undergo an open public comment period.



# SECU0020

**Country:** South Africa

**Project:** MoU between the United Nations development programme and MMSEZ

**Status:** Investigation / Draft report



In June 2022, South African NGOs Earthlife Africa and Living Limpopo filed a complaint with SECU concerning a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that had been signed between UNDP South Africa and the Musina-Makhado Special Economic Zone State Owned Company (MMSEZ SOC). Both NGOs represent other local organizations and people who work and live in the Musina-Makhado area in this complaint.

The complainants allege that the company's planned activities in the Musina-Makhado Special Economic Zone will significantly impact sacred and heritage sites, water use, air pollution, climate change, biodiversity loss, and many other social and environmental aspects for people living in the area. They also allege that the memorandum of understanding signed by UNDP has caused, and will continue to cause, harm to communities and the environment because it lends the company's project "significant legitimacy, prestige and momentum" given the UNDP's "prestige as a United Nations body."

In November 2022, SECU determined the complaint eligible. In January and February 2023, a team traveled to South Africa to gather more evidence and meet with the complainants, UNDP personnel, and other relevant stakeholders. As of December 2023, SECU was in the final stages of completing the fact- and evidence-gathering phase. Subsequently, the draft report has been distributed for public comment before this report was published.





# SECU0021

**Country:** North Macedonia

**Project:** Integrated climate-resilient transboundary flood management in the Drin River basin in the West

**Status:** Investigation / Draft report



In December 2022, Ohrid SOS, a local citizens' initiative, filed a complaint regarding the restoration of the Sateska River to its natural riverbed, which is being undertaken as part of the UNDP's Integrated climate-resilient transboundary flood risk management plan in the Drin River basin in the Western Balkans Project (Drin FRM Project). The complainant alleges that although rediverting the Sateska River in the Ohrid region to its original path is well-conceived and necessary, it is being conducted with a substandard Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). Allegations include the omission of critical studies and analyses of the diversion's impact on groundwater and soil, the use of outdated information, and insufficient detail in drawing conclusions and recommendations, among other concerns. Additionally, the complainant highlighted a lack of comprehensive monitoring plans for the affected area in Lake Ohrid.

In February 2023, SECU deemed the case eligible for a compliance review. In June 2023, the SECU team visited North Macedonia to gather evidence and interview complainants, UNDP personnel, and other stakeholders. As of December 2023, SECU was in the final stages of completing the investigation phase. SECU will publish the draft investigation report for public comment in 2024.



# SECU0023

**Country:** Chad

**Project:** Programme d'Appui au Développement Local et à la Finance Inclusive au Tchad

**Status:** Investigation



In May 2023, SECU received information regarding potential noncompliance with UNDP's social and environmental commitments within the "Programme d'Appui au Développement Local et à la Finance Inclusive au Tchad (PADLFIT)" in the Republic of Chad. The received information specifically pertains to project activities involving the establishment of 'integrated farms.' The information indicates a notable absence of essential Social and Environmental Standards (SES)-related screenings and assessments prior to the initiation and execution of activities. The information also suggests a general deficiency in project documentation, creating uncertainty regarding compliance with additional SES requirements, such as project-level standards.

In accordance with its investigation guidelines, SECU has determined that a compliance review of the project is appropriate and is self-initiating an investigation. As per the investigation guidelines, the lead compliance officer may trigger investigations on SECU's initiative. In such cases, the disclosure of documents will follow a process similar to the disclosure pursuant to complaint processes triggered by community complaints. UNDP treats all reports of alleged breaches of social and environmental commitments seriously, subjecting each allegation to a thorough assessment to determine the appropriateness of an investigation.

The compliance review will focus on assessing the social and environmental risks and potential harms associated with the current situation. It also aims to provide recommendations targeting any exit process, ensuring the alignment of activities in this phase with UNDP's social and environmental commitments.



# SECU0022

**Country:** Iraq  
**Project:** Funding Facility for Stabilization  
**Status:** Eligibility determination



In September 2023, an individual lodged a complaint regarding the UNDP's Funding Facility for Stabilization project in Iraq. The complainant alleged the partial collapse of several houses previously rehabilitated by UNDP due to shoddy construction work. Specifically, the complainant attributes the issue to the use of plastic water pipes by UNDP, which leaked and affected the stability of the complainant's house. Additionally, the complainant alleges a lack of thorough assessment, including a comprehensive evaluation of the structure, soil quality, standing pillars, and the water system before conducting the renovation work. The complainant further explained that the cavity poses a threat to pedestrians and may lead to the total collapse of these and neighboring houses.

As of December 2023, SECU was determining the complaint's eligibility for a compliance review. The case has since been confirmed eligible before this report was published.



# Outreach

A dark, blue-tinted photograph of three people walking away from the camera in a field with trees in the background. The scene is dimly lit, suggesting dusk or dawn. The people are wearing backpacks, and the trees are silhouetted against a cloudy sky.

# Outreach events

## In-person outreach in Indonesia

In early August 2023, the SECU team traveled to Indonesia to host a series of meetings with local civil society and grassroots organizations in Jakarta, Bogor, and Pontianak. Throughout these engagements, SECU presented information about its mandate, the UNDP's Social and Environmental Standards, and the procedure for submitting a complaint. Additionally, the team presented examples of previous SECU cases and met with more than 30 representatives from various civil society organizations working on Indigenous peoples' rights and biodiversity conservation topics across Indonesia.



# Outreach events

## Virtual seminars

In July 2023, SECU participated in the inaugural Mass Open Outreach Seminar (MOOS) in collaboration with the Independent Accountability Mechanisms (IAMs) from the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, the International Finance Corporation, and the World Bank. Over 100 civil society representatives, community leaders, and stakeholders from more than 30 countries in Asia attended the two-hour event conducted on Zoom and streamed live on YouTube. The panelists provided insights into the mandates of independent accountability mechanisms, the compliance review and dispute resolution processes and safeguard policies. These topics were then discussed in detail during the debrief sessions involving participants and representatives of each independent accountability mechanism.

In December 2023, SECU took part in a second MOOS seminar focusing on the Middle East and North Africa region co-hosted by the Arab Watch Coalition and accountability mechanisms from the African Development Bank, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, European Investment Bank, International Finance Corporation, the World Bank and Internationale Klimaschutzinitiative Guarantee Agency. The panelists presented case studies and insights into the mandates of independent accountability mechanisms, the compliance review and dispute resolution processes.



# Institutional strengthening



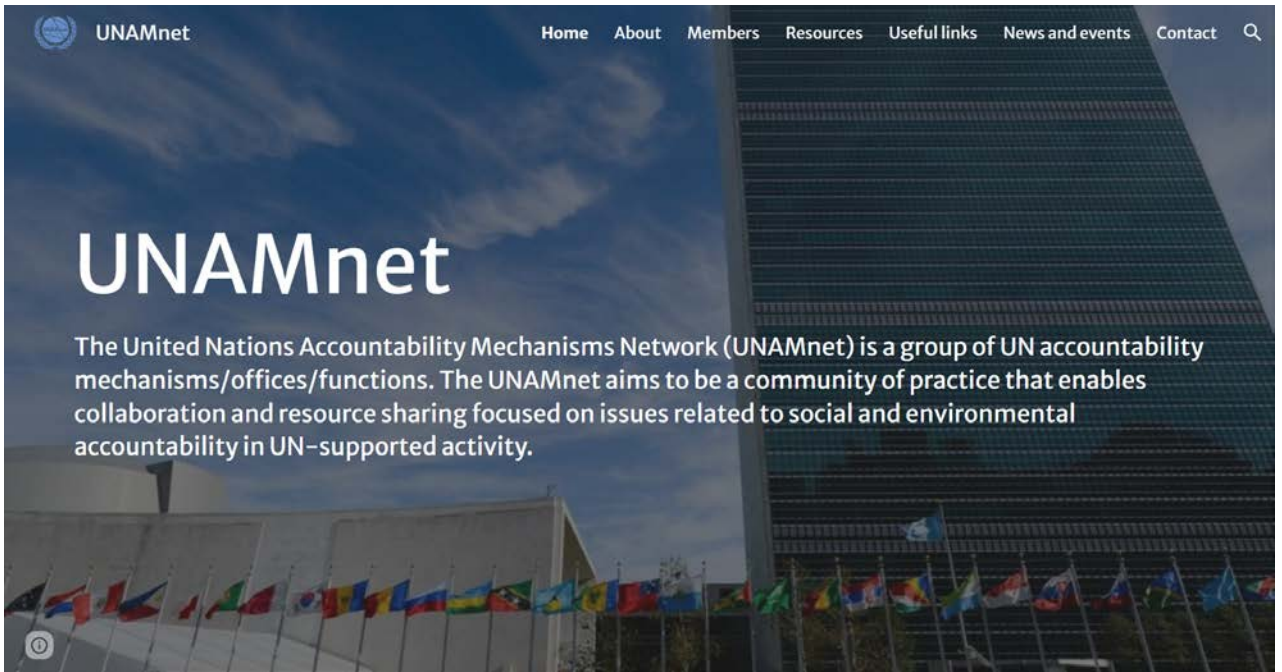


## 20<sup>th</sup> IAMnet Annual Meeting

SECU participated in the twentieth annual meeting of the Independent Accountability Mechanisms Network (IAMnet), hosted by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and World Bank accountability mechanisms. IAMnet serves as a network to facilitate the regular exchange of ideas among independent accountability mechanisms from various international development organizations. This year's meeting centered around the theme "Taking a Community-Centric Approach to Independent Accountability Mechanisms." Discussions covered a wide range of topics, including the general counsel's role, remedy, gender-based violence, reprisals, and the parent institution's relationship to mechanisms. Representatives from civil society organizations presented best practices to ensure that accountability processes are safe and accessible for communities, emphasizing the protection of their rights and the implementation of community-oriented remedial actions.

During the meeting, the SECU team led discussions on intimidation and reprisals, focusing on confidentiality and safety measures in high-risk contexts and the challenges independent accountability mechanisms face when dealing with the parent institution's management and methods to promote positive inclusion of bank management in accountability mechanism processes.





# 1<sup>st</sup> UNAMnet Annual Meeting

In November 2023, SECU hosted the first United Nations Accountability Mechanism Network (UNAMnet) Annual Meeting. Established in 2023, UNAMnet serves as a community of practice that fosters collaboration and resource sharing, specifically addressing social and environmental accountability issues in United Nations-supported activities. SECU/UNDP was nominated by its members to become the network's first secretariat for an initial period of three years.

For two days, more than 20 participants representing eight United Nations agencies convened virtually to delve into accountability matters within the United Nations Organization's system. Discussions centered around topics such as effective complaint intake management, strategies for conducting internal outreach within the parent institution, and outreach to external stakeholders. Participants also learned about the personnel requirements for conducting effective investigations and dispute-resolution processes. As a conclusion, Professor David Hunter led a discussion on different accountability mechanism models spanning project, country and headquarters levels.

# Institutional strengthening

## Review of Investigation Guidelines

In 2021, SECU launched a formal review of its Investigation Guidelines and associated policies and procedures. The objective of the review is to revise SECU's operational documents based on lessons learned over its nine-year tenure to ensure the implementation of SECU's mandate is fit for purpose and aligns with international best practices in the field of independent accountability mechanisms.

First, SECU compiled a list of potential changes to the guidelines drawn from previous experience over the years and worked internally to develop a first draft set of changes. Next, it convened a panel of external experts to provide guidance and feedback on the proposed revisions to the guidelines.

Following the panel's feedback submission in December 2021, SECU worked internally to finalize a draft version of the guidelines. In November 2022, it released the draft for a public comment period. In 2024, the SECU team will continue the process of incorporating feedback to prepare the final guidelines.



# Institutional strengthening

## Advisory Review

*SECU has a mandate to **provide advisory notes on systemic, institution-wide or policy issues, drawing from lessons learned in past compliance reviews and other sources, as outlined in its investigation guidelines.***

In 2022, SECU underwent a comprehensive review of its advisory mandate, organizing working sessions with other independent accountability mechanisms and engaging with teams across UNDP to optimize its approach to offering advisory services to its parent institution. Drawing from these interactions and thorough research, SECU crafted a concept note and a standard operating procedure establishing a comprehensive framework and guidelines for conducting advisory work in the context of its compliance cases.

Following an in-depth analysis of SECU's past cases and consultations with internal stakeholders, the first subject chosen for an advisory review is "Private Sector Partnerships." SECU aims to complete the corresponding advisory note in 2024.

## Proactive Model

*As part of the Office of Audit and Investigations, **SECU is entrusted with conducting proactive investigations.** In 2022, SECU finalized its proactive model, an **objective, data-driven model to identify higher-risk projects that otherwise may not be reviewed by SECU.***

The model follows a two-part process involving the ranking of high-risk countries based on identified risk factors and the assessment of specific projects within those countries. Following this, a detailed review of the top 10 high-risk projects is conducted to determine the target project for investigation.

In 2023, SECU ran its proactive model for the first time. As of December 2023, SECU was in the final stages of selecting the project for proactive investigation. Once the project is identified, SECU will initiate its investigation, adhering to the established compliance review process, similar to reactive investigations. This entails following the processes outlined in SECU's investigation guidelines, including the eligibility determination assessment, to identify potential compliance issues.



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