

JOINT LETTER

MARCH 17TH, 2025

Dear Commissioner Sikela,

We, the undersigned organisations across civil society, are writing to you as the new European Commissioner for International Partnerships to raise our concerns about the Global Gateway's impacts in the Global South. Last December, the Council of the EU endorsed 46 Global Gateway flagship projects for 2025, following Commission President von der Leyen's strategic guidelines to scale up the initiative despite its numerous flaws.

The Global Gateway strategy aims to address global challenges, help improve people's lives around the world, and to promote the EU's own geopolitical and commercial interests by using the bloc's development budgets. It continues to reflect the 'billions to trillions' agenda for development and climate finance – an approach with a dubious track record in the Global South. To do so, this strategy uses intransparent financing mechanisms – guarantees and blending – to mobilise private profit from "development", promoting infrastructure privatisation, public service commercialisation, and a liberal reform agenda for business opportunities.

At a time of urgent needs for climate action and a just energy transition, it is critical to assess these investments' social, environmental, and developmental impacts. We have serious doubts about the real development potential this strategy offers to so-called "partner" states. The Global Gateway's approach disregards evidence that many essential investments with a proven track record in supporting sustainable development – such as universal public services and social infrastructure – will not generate profits and risk being sidelined. Moreover, the European Court of Auditors (ECA) has [questioned](#) the effectiveness of these financing tools in meeting the EU's development objectives, their real ability to mobilise investments, and additionality.

We urge the EU to fulfill its responsibilities by providing high-quality adequate development and climate finance – focusing on adaptation and nature conservation – through grants and highly concessional funds, rather than turning development and climate into a business opportunity for the corporate sector.

This approach is concerning for heavily indebted, poverty-stricken countries where such financing may worsen debt and poverty. At the same time, fragile, conflict-affected regions and low-income countries are [at risk of being sidelined](#) due to an increased dominance of the Global Gateway approach in the EU's development cooperation. It favours middle-income countries, where the Global Gateway projects are easier to implement as they offer more opportunities to generate private returns for investors. These initiatives often reinforce a [neocolonial model](#), with EU investments securing resource exploitation in former colonies at the cost of local development. This is especially true for energy projects aimed at export to Europe, which undermine energy sovereignty and obstruct just energy transitions in countries suffering from energy poverty.

Furthermore, the Global Gateway fails to support the development of local sustainable productive sectors and efforts to reduce import dependency. Provisions for technology and knowledge transfer from European companies benefiting from Global Gateway projects are not systematically required while implementing projects. Instead, the Global South is turned into a supplier of cheap resources for the EU and a consumer of its technologies, with added value captured by the rich European countries while lacking commitment for global trade and tax justice. Here, strategic procurement can provide an opportunity to fix this current direction by setting out clear rules to the benefit of recipient countries, not just the European companies, and ensure that EU-funded projects focus on developing locally owned sustainable productive capacity.

We are deeply concerned by the negative impacts the Global Gateway projects risk having on human rights. In this context, the Global Gateway agreement of the Commission and the European Investment Bank with Rwanda on critical raw materials – which risks fuelling violent conflict and Rwanda's armed campaign in the DRC – is a striking example. This deal must be immediately suspended, as demanded by [over 60 civil society organisations](#) and [the European Parliament](#).

The lack of transparency around the Global Gateway hinders a full assessment of its impacts. This is concerning as many projects show [environmental harm](#), especially those with large ecological footprints like hydrogen production, lithium mining, data centers, and infrastructure projects. Risks are amplified in projects financed by companies with poor environmental and rights records, such as [TotalEnergies](#), [Enel](#), and [Bayer](#). [Weak human rights policies](#), including due diligence, by implementing institutions like the European Investment Bank allow these projects to proceed without adequate involvement from Indigenous people and local communities or accessible complaints mechanisms.

We regret the lack of interest from the European Commission to date to meaningfully engage with civil society, both within and outside of the established platform, on the implementation of the Global Gateway strategy. The role of local authorities and national parliaments in recipient countries has also been neglected, further exacerbating the democratic and accountability deficit of the EU's main development strategy. Having said that, we appreciate that you stressed the importance of a closer contact with local authorities and civil society institutions [at your confirmation hearing](#) at the European Parliament, and we hope for an inclusive and systemic dialogue which will inform the Commission's policy-making under your leadership.

Finally, we remind the Commission of its legal transparency obligations, which – as stressed by the ECA – remain unfulfilled in over three years since the launch of the Global Gateway. This includes publishing information on a single website on financing and investment operations, all essential elements of all External Action Guarantee agreements, and complaints procedures. The process of project selection and tendering for the guarantees, the minutes and agendas of the meetings of the EFSD+ strategic board, and debt assessments for guaranteed projects must also be made public.

The EU must move beyond empty branding exercises and build partnerships based on respect for resource sovereignty and genuine development priorities. Only anti-colonial and feminist approaches to development cooperation, which listen to the abundant voices of local communities most affected by these challenges, can lead to transformative change. Until human rights, sustainability, and local benefits come first, the Global Gateway will stand as nothing more than another blueprint for exploitation and plunder disguised as development.

SIGNATORIES

11.11.11 - Belgium

Accountability Counsel - International

Asociación de Mujeres Defensoras de la Vida (AMDV) - Honduras

Association Al Bawsala - Tunisie

Association Développement Sans Frontières Tataouine - Tunisia

Both ENDS - The Netherlands

Broederlijk Delen - Belgium

CAN Africa

Caritas Europa

CEE Bankwatch Network - Central and Eastern Europe

CIDSE - International

CNCD-11.11.11 - Belgium

Concerned Youth Organization (CYO) - Malawi

Confédération nationale des Producteurs Agricoles du Congo (CONAPAC) - Democratic Republic of Congo

Corner House - The UK

Counter Balance - Europe

Debt Observatory in Globalisation (ODG) - Catalonia, Spain

Diakonia - Europe

Egyptian Foundation for Environmental Rights -Egypt

Entrepueblos-Entrepobles-Entrepobos-Herriarte - Spain

EU-LAT Network - Latin America

FIAN Belgium

FIAN Colombia

FIAN Deutschland e.V

FIDH (International Federation for Human rights) - International

FOS - Belgium

Fair Trade Advocacy Office (FTAO) - Europe

FTDES -Tunisia

Girls On The Lead Young Feminist Movement - Malawi

Global Witness - International

Human Environmental Association for Development (HEAD) - West Asia

Individuell Människohjälp - Sweden

International Planned Parenthood Federation European Network (IPPFEN) - Europe

Jamaa Resource Initiatives - Kenya

MENAFem Movement for Economic, Development and Ecological Justice - North Africa & Middle East

ONG Sustentarse - Chile

Pax Christi International

Plataforma Colombiana de Derechos Humanos Ciudadanía y Democracia- Colombia

Point of Progress, Malawi

Power Shift Africa

PowerShift e.V. Germany

Publish What You Pay, International

ReCommon

Réseau Europe-Afrique Centrale (EurAc), Europe & Central Africa

Society for Women and Youths Affairs (SWAYA)- Nigeria

Solsoc - Belgium

Transnational Institute - International

Trócaire - Ireland

Youth Action for Success and Development - Malawi

Youth Initiative for Community Development (YICOD) - Malawi

SIGNATORIES



Counter Balance Challenging Public Investment Banks

