**H.E António Guterres**
Secretary-General of the United Nations
United Nations Secretariat Building
405 East 42nd Street
New York, NY 10017
United States of America

**April 2024**

Dear Secretary-General,

We are writing to urge you to undertake a transparent, inclusive and merit-based appointment process for the United Nations' Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC): the head of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the UN's most senior humanitarian official.

We recognise the enormity of the challenge the next post-holder will face. The worsening humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza, exacerbated by issues of access, security, and the Israeli Government's refusal to cooperate with the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), will require firm and principled diplomacy headed by an individual of unimpeachable integrity.

The ERC will furthermore be required to lead the UN's humanitarian response to multiple complex crises in Afghanistan, Haiti, Myanmar, Sudan, Syria, Ukraine, Yemen and many situations besides and doubtless to come. As climate chaos intensifies and states struggle to fulfil the promise of the "Decade of Action" to deliver the SDGs, these crises are likely to multiply and become more complex still.

In such circumstances, the UN and indeed the world cannot afford the selection of anyone other than the best person for the job. It would be quite wrong to arbitrarily restrict the search for the next ERC to nationals of any one member state.

The last five ERCs have been UK nationals. These appointments have occurred despite over forty years of regular and consistent resolutions from the UN General Assembly demanding increased geographic diversity by not appointing someone of the same nationality as their predecessor in any role. The outgoing ERC, Martin Griffiths, himself stated that he hoped the UN would move in the direction of ensuring that he is the last British national to take the role, arguing that it is "too crucial a job to be left to favouritism".

We commend the work the United Nations, and your Executive Office in particular, has done in recent years to follow aspects of best practice as established in General Assembly resolutions and Joint Inspection Unit reports to increase transparency around such appointments, including by publishing job descriptions and public advertisements for senior roles.

Despite these efforts, and despite the commitment enshrined in the UN Charter to ensure equal treatment for all member states and their nationals, states, especially powerful nations, have successfully lobbied appointment processes, which have often become highly political. The Charter's stated prohibition of member states "seeking to influence" UN staff is regrettably often ignored.

We hope that the UK Government will not insist that a British national be given special consideration for this vacancy, as it has in the past. However, should you be under any pressure to appoint a British national to this post, we urge you to resist, and hope that you will make every effort to find the best possible candidate irrespective of nationality.

Doing so will ensure that a broad spread of global talent can be considered and ensure that the next ERC has the authority, experience and skills to execute the most critical leadership role in the international humanitarian system.

Yours sincerely,

**Ajay Chhibber**, Former UN Assistant Secretary-General and Assistant Administrator, UNDP

**Aleema Shivji**, Chief Impact Office, Oxfam GB

**Andreas Bummel**, Co-founder and Executive Director of Democracy Without Borders

**Andrew Gilmour CMG**, Former UN Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights

**Andrew Whitley**, Former Director, UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA)

**Ann Grant**, Former Director, Africa & Commonwealth Region at Foreign & Commonwealth Office

**Assane Diop**, Former Executive Director of Social Protection, ILO

**Benjamin Tarnue**, National Coalition of Civil Society Organizations of Liberia (NACCSOL)

**Bernard Miyet**, Former United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations

**Charles Petrie OBE**, Former UN Assistant Secretary-General and Secretary-General's Executive Representative for Burundi

**Christina Bennett**, CEO, Start Network

**Dame Christina Figueres**, Former Executive Secretary, UNFCCC

**Christopher Metcalf**, Former UN Resident Coordinator in Swaziland, Burkina Faso, Madagascar and Algeria

**Rt Hon Clare Short**, Former Secretary of State for International Development

**Dylan Matthews**, Chief Executive, Peace Direct

**Enyseh Teimory**, Head of Policy, UNA-UK

**Fatiha Serour**, Former UN Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Special Representative, Somalia

**Ambassador Francis O'Donnell**, Former UN Resident Coordinator in Yugoslavia/Serbia-Montenegro and Ukraine

**Franz Baumann**, Former Assistant Secretary-General and United Nations Special Adviser on Environment and Peace Operations

**Frederick Lyons**, Former UN Resident Coordinator in Benin, Mexico and Kenya and Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Russia Iran and Sri Lanka

**Georgios Kostakos**, Executive Director, Foundation for Global Governance and Sustainability

**Gideon Rabinowitz**, Director of Policy, Bond

**Halima Begum**, Chief Executive Office, Oxfam GB

**Hans-Christof von Sponeck**, Former Assistant Secretary-General and UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq

**Helen McEacherm**, CEO, CARE International UK

**Ian Martin**, Former Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of Mission in Timor Leste, Nepal and Libya

**Jamie McGoldrick**, Former UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Palestine and Yemen and Resident Coordinator in Nepal and Georgia

**Sir Jeremy Greenstock GCMG**, Former UK Permanent Representative to the UN, Former Chairman of UNA-UK

**Jeremy Konyndyk**, President, Refugees International

**John Burley**, Former Director, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

**Jordan Ryan**, Former Assistant Administrator and Director of the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, UNDP

**Judy Hylton**, Senior Advisor, Principal Political Affairs Officer, UN Truce Supervision Organisation, Department of Peace operations

**Kerstin Leitner**, Former Assistant Director-General, WHO Geneva

**Sir Kieran Prendergast KCVO CMG**, Former UN Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs

**Lidija Vuckovic**, President, Center for Human Rights-Nis, Serbia (CHRNis)

**Madeleine Rees**, Secretary-General, Women's International League of Peace and Freedom

**Dr Maimunah Mohd Sharif**, UN Under-Secretary General and Executive Director of UN-Habitat

**Mark Bowden CMG**, Former UN Assistant Secretary-General, and Deputy Special Representative for Afghanistan

**Dr Martin Barber OBE**, Former Director of the United Nations Mine Action Service

**Matthew Kahane**, Former UN Resident Coordinator in Tajikistan and Nepal

**Maureen Connelly**, Former Inspector-General UNHCR

**Michael Heyn**, Former Representative of the United Nations Development Programme (Asia & Pacific)

**Neal G Walker**, Former Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Kyrgyzstan, Banglasdesh and Ukraine

**Nigel Fisher**, Former United Nations Assistant Secretary-General

**Patrick Watt**, CEO, Christian Aid

**Paul Asquith**, Director of Research and Advocacy, Shabaka Social Enterprise CIC

**Peter Ford**, Former Special Representative of the Commissioner General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees

**Professor Randolph Kent**, Former UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Somalia and UN Humanitarian Coordinator in Kosovo and Rwanda

**Rebecca A. Shoot**, Executive Director, Citizens for Global Solutions (CGS)

**René Wadlow**, President, Association of World Citizens

**Rhea Tariq**, Director of Global Impact, HelpAge International

**Sir Richard Jolly KCMG**, Former Deputy Executive Director for Programmes, UNICEF

**Robert England**, Former UN Resident Coordinator in Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Thailand

**Rose Caldwell**, CEO, Plan International UK

**Dr Sara Pantuliano**, Chief Executive, ODI

**Simon Moss**, Co-Founder and Managing Director for Campaigns, Global Citizen

**Sofía Sprechmann Sineiro**, Secretary General, CARE International

**Lord Stewart Wood of Anfield**, Former Chair of UNA-UK

**Susana Malcorra**, Former Chef de Cabinet of the UN Secretary-General

**Terence Jones**, Former UN Resident Coordinator in Bhutan, Malawi and Philippines

**Victor Da Silva Angelo**, Former Under-Secretary-General, Former Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad