



February 17, 2022

Mr. António Guterres
Secretary-General of the United Nations
UN Secretariat
One United Nations Plaza
New York, NY 10017

Dear Mr. Secretary-General:

I write to you out of deep concern about the continued service of Jane Holl Lute as your Special Coordinator on Improving the United Nations Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. While Ms. Lute is serving as the UN's highest-ranking official dedicated to addressing the UN's sex abuse crisis—at the level of Under-Secretary-General—she simultaneously occupies the post of Non-Executive Director with Shell Oil.

The Standards of Conduct for the International Civil Service [state](#):

“If the impartiality of the international civil service is to be maintained, international civil servants must remain independent of any authority outside their organization; their conduct must reflect that independence. In keeping with their oath of office, **they should not seek nor should they accept instructions from any Government, person or entity external to the organization.**”¹

It is, in other words, a fundamental requirement that UN staff and representatives remain neutral, working for the good of all nations collectively, without allegiances or obligations to any outside entity.

Ms. Lute operates under an untenable conflict of interest. **I urge you to terminate her position as Special Coordinator.**

Ms. Lute, in her role as a Non-Executive Director, follows instructions from Shell Oil. She has been chosen by Shell to testify on its behalf before a Committee of the US House of Representatives on March 8. A letter from the Committee to Ms. Lute [pointed](#) to her experience “advocating for increased shareholder value and sustainability in the oil and gas industry.”

¹ International Civil Service Commission (2013). *Standards of Conduct for the International Civil Service*. Para 8 (emphasis added)

Mr. Secretary-General, I trust it is unnecessary to detail all that you have said about the destructiveness of the fossil fuel industry. Your [opening remarks](#) at the UN's 26th meeting of the Conference of Parties (COP26) in Glasgow were impassioned: "Our addiction to fossil fuels is pushing humanity to the brink. We face a stark choice: Either we stop it—or it stops us."

You have [described](#) the fight against climate change as a signal priority of your second term and have called for "an avalanche of action."

And yet the actions of your Under-Secretary-General are in service to the prerogatives of Shell Oil.

Mr. Secretary-General, the credibility of the Organization you lead is undermined by Ms. Lute's dual roles as a UN Under-Secretary-General and a Shell Oil spokesperson. Given all that you have said on the global stage, it is impossible to imagine any justification for retaining the services of a senior UN official who also works on behalf of the fossil fuel industry.

I urge you to act swiftly to rectify this conflict of interest.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paula Donovan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Paula Donovan
Co-Director, AIDS-Free World