

June 17, 2015

The Honorable John Kerry
Secretary, United States Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Kerry,

As faith-based organizations and religious institutions joined by our shared commitment to build peace, protect God’s creation and accompany marginalized communities around the world, we urge you to call on the Securities and Exchange Commission to release a strong implementing rule for Section 1504 of the Dodd-Frank Act.

Our staff, members and partners working to alleviate poverty in countries across Africa, Asia, and Latin America have witnessed first-hand how proper management of natural resources and responsible investment of resource revenues can serve as a powerful driver of development. However, too often, mismanagement and corruption disenfranchises affected communities, diverts funding from schools, health clinics and basic infrastructure, and fuels conflict and instability.

To address this phenomenon – often referred to as the “resource curse” – Congress passed Section 1504 of the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Financial Reform and Consumer Protection Act (also known as the Cardin-Lugar Amendment). Section 1504 requires oil, gas and mining companies that are listed on a U.S. stock exchange to publically disclose all payments to host governments for access to natural resources.

We support Dodd-Frank Section 1504 because it stands to enable affected communities to identify how much money is being exchanged for the resources in their areas and advocate for those resource revenues to be used in ways that benefit the common good. Increased transparency and citizen engagement can also prevent mistrust and grievances that generate and prolong resource-related conflicts.

In order for Section 1504 to achieve its intended objectives, it must be implemented robustly. Therefore it is essential that an implementing rule for Section 1504 requires company-by-company and project-by-project reporting – by contract, license, or lease. Such a requirement would be in-line with transparency legislation in the EU, Canada and Norway.

We believe Section 1504 will have far-reaching development and security benefits, but five years after it was signed into law, it awaits an implementing rule from the SEC and its potential remains unrealized.

As people of faith, we call on the U.S. Government to renew its moral leadership to help combat corruption, protect human rights, and ensure that citizens can hold companies and their governments accountable for which resource concessions are granted, the money received from those projects and how the profits are spent.

We urge you to write to SEC Chairwoman Mary Jo White, calling on her agency to issue a strong Section 1504 rule mandating public, project-level reporting in line with the global standard. In your role as Secretary of State, you are uniquely qualified to make clear the foreign policy benefits of greater transparency and good governance in the extractives sector. Please stand with people of faith and historically marginalized communities around the world and urge the SEC to act.

Sincerely,

Africa Faith and Justice Network

American Jewish World Service

Church World Service

Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach

Conference of Major Superiors of Men

Franciscan Action Network

Jubilee USA Network

Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

Medical Mission Sisters Alliance for Justice

Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate

NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Office of Public Witness

Sisters of Mercy of the Americas' Institute Justice Team

Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur Justice and Peace Office

United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries

CC: Shaun Casey, U.S. Special Representative for Religion and Global Affairs