Bank Information Center Welcomes the Appointment of Woochong Um as Director General of the World Bank Group Independent Accountability Mechanism

November 2026

Bank Information Center welcomes Woochong Um's appointment as the Director General of the new World Bank Group (WBG) Independent Accountability Mechanism (IAM). We wish him success in this challenging role, and we look forward to working with him.

Mr. Um joins the IAM at a critical moment. In June, the Board approved the integration of the WBG's public and private sector IAMs: the CAO, the Inspection Panel, and the Dispute Resolution Service. At the end of October, it confirmed that the integrated mechanism would have a single head, a role that Mr. Um will assume.

Throughout this process, BIC has emphasized that the mechanism's structure matters far less than the strength of its policies and independence. The Board has committed to avoiding any weakening of IAM policies through the integration process. Its recent actions, however, raise serious questions about that commitment.

Shortly after the June integration decision, the Board overruled CAO's findings that the International Finance Corporation violated its own policies in its Cambodia microfinance investments. This unprecedented intervention undermined CAO's independence and opened the door for the Board to reject future findings of institutional noncompliance whenever they prove inconvenient. Meanwhile, the integration process has proceeded largely behind closed doors, limiting opportunities for affected communities and civil society to shape decisions affecting access to remedy for people harmed by WBG operations. As Mr. Um takes office, he has an opportunity to promote a more open process and build trust in the new mechanism.

One of Mr. Um's first responsibilities will be to oversee the development of the new IAM policy. We understand that the Board will make the ultimate decision on what this policy will look like, and that management will come to the table with its own position. However, his leadership in this process will be essential, and in his role as Director General, we urge him to:

- Defend the IAM's independence and preserve the strongest provisions across the existing mechanisms, particularly CAO's policy.
- Seek to preserve broad accessibility through simple, low-burden requirements for bringing complaints, and respect complainants' choice of which IAM function to pursue.
- Promote a transparent policy development process with timely opportunities for affected communities to shape the new IAM policy.
- Staff the IAM with independent, credible compliance, mediation, and advisory experts with experience working with communities facing threats and reprisals.
- Press for explicit requirements for WBG management to address findings of noncompliance and deliver remedy.

That final priority is fundamental. IAMs can not deliver remedy alone. Their effectiveness depends on management cooperating with investigations, developing action plans that respond to findings and community priorities, and implementing them promptly. Too often, we have seen management delay or obstruct accountability, particularly in private sector operations.

The World Bank was the first institution to develop an accountability mechanism. For the WBG to preserve its status as a leader in accountability, the new policy must establish clear management responsibilities for delivering remedy and give the IAM authority to verify whether these commitments translate into remedy for communities who have been harmed. IFC's interim Remedial Action Framework provides a useful starting point for framing management's responsibilities, but management's track record underscores the need for the new IAM policy to set out management's obligations to facilitate accountability and deliver remedy.

We look forward to engaging with Mr. Um to advance an independent, accessible, and effective mechanism that communities can trust.

For more information on BIC's recommendations, please see our feedback to the Task Force's Draft Report on Integration of the World Bank Group Independent Accountability Mechanisms: https://bankinformationcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/05/afD_vcBOoF08xZF3_BICsFeedbackonDraftReportonWBGIAMIntegration.pdf