



Permanent Mission of The  
United Republic of Tanzania

NOTE VEBALE

**Ref. No. NC 291/738/02/61**

The Permanent Mission of the United Republic of Tanzania to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva presents its compliments to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Special Procedures Branch and wishes to acknowledge receipt of the latter's Note Verbale with Ref No. AL TZA 2/2025 dated 25 June 2025 concerning allegations of grave violations of the rights of Indigenous Peoples and of other affected communities, including pastoralists, fishers and peasants farmers near or inside Ruaha National Park (RUNAPA) in Tanzania.

The Permanent Mission has the honour to communicate the response of the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania as attached.

The Permanent Mission of the United Republic of Tanzania to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva, avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights - Special Procedures Branch in Geneva, the assurances of its highest consideration.

**Geneva, 15 September, 2025**

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights,  
Special Procedures Branch,  
**GENEVA.**



**THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA  
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND EAST AFRICAN COOPERATION**

Telephone: + 255-26-2323201-7  
Fax: +255-26-2323208  
Email: [nje@nje.go.tz](mailto:nje@nje.go.tz)  
website: [www.foreign.go.tz](http://www.foreign.go.tz)



Government City,  
Mtumba Area,  
P. O. Box 2933,  
40466 DODOMA.

*In reply please quote*

Ref. No. CLB. 415/833/01

9th September, 2025

**Mr. Michael Fakhri,**  
Special Rapporteur on the right to food;  
**GENEVA.**

**Lyra Jakuleviciene,**  
Chair-Rapporteur of the Working Group  
on the Issue of human rights and transnational  
corporations and other business enterprises;  
**GENEVA.**

**Gabriella Citroni,**  
Chair-Rapporteur of the Working  
Group on Enforced or  
Involuntary Disappearance;  
**GENEVA.**

**Farida Shaheed,**  
Special Rapporteur on the right to education;  
**GENEVA.**

**Astrid Puentes Riano,**  
Special Rapporteur on the right to a clean,  
healthy and sustainable environment;  
**GENEVA.**

**Morris Tidball-Binz,**  
Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial,  
summary or arbitrary executions;  
**GENEVA.**

**Balakrishnan Rajagopal,**  
Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as  
a component of the right to an adequate standard  
of living, and on the right to non-discrimination on this context;  
**GENEVA.**

**Albert K. Barume,**  
Special Rapporteur on the  
rights of Indigenous Peoples;  
**GENEVA.**

**Carlos Arturo Duarte Torres,**  
Chair-Rapporteur of the Working Group  
on the rights of peasants and other  
people working in rural areas;  
**GENEVA.**

**Olivier De Schutter,**  
Special Rapporteur on extreme  
poverty and human rights;  
**GENEVA.**

**Reem Alsalem,**  
Special Rapporteur on violence  
against women and girls, its causes and consequences;  
**GENEVA.**

**Re: RESPONSE TO ALLEGATIONS ON GRAVE VIOLATIONS OF THE RIGHTS OF  
INDIGENOUS PEOPLE NEAR OR INSIDE RUAHA NATIONAL PARK (RUNAPA)**

I wish to acknowledge receipt of your letter dated 25th June 2025 in respect of the above-mentioned subject matter.

2. The Government of the United Republic of Tanzania, henceforth the Government, reaffirms its commitment to upholding the rule of law, protecting human rights, and balancing conservation with the socio-economic development of communities. Allegations raised concerning human rights violations and mismanagement of conservation projects are addressed as follows:

**Background Information**

The Tanzania Resilient Natural Resource Management for Tourism and Growth (REGROW) Project, financed through a World Bank loan of USD 150 million, was implemented from 2017 to November 2024. The Project was specifically designed by the Government, in collaboration with stakeholders, to unlock the tourism potential of Southern Tanzania.

Given Ruaha National Park's (RUNAPA) unique biodiversity and its central role as the largest national park in Tanzania, RUNAPA was naturally one of the priority areas targeted under REGROW. However, the project interventions were development-oriented, focusing on tourism infrastructure, improved visitor facilities, and livelihood support for surrounding communities. They did not involve altering or expanding the boundaries of the park.

REGROW interventions were spread across five priorities protected areas Ruaha, Mikumi, Nyerere, and Udzungwa Mountain National Parks, as well as Kilombero Nature Reserve (KNR) together with 61 selected adjacent villages. Key components included infrastructure development, Community Conservation Banks (COCOBA), educational scholarships, and training of Village Game Scouts (VGS).

To ensure respect for human rights, the project embedded strong safeguards throughout its implementation. These included Grievance Redress Mechanisms (GRM), a Process Framework, a Stakeholder Consultation and Disclosure Plan (SCDP), Environmental and Social Impact Assessments (ESIA), a project-specific Code of Conduct (CoC), and broad-based community consultations.

It is critical to clarify that the boundaries of RUNAPA were not altered during the REGROW Project. The park's expansion had already occurred more than a decade before REGROW was conceived. Linking the project to boundary changes is therefore factually incorrect and misleading. REGROW's focus was on sustainable tourism development and community benefit not territorial expansion.

In view of the above, the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania wishes to respond to the allegations as follows:

**i. Forced Evictions, Torture, Extrajudicial Killings, Enforced Disappearances, and Excessive Use of Force;**

The Government categorically refutes allegations of forced evictions, torture, extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, and excessive use of force. Tanzania Rangers, who are entrusted with the protection of national parks and wildlife resources, carry out their duties under the *Wildlife and Forest Conservation Services (WFCS) Code of Conduct* issued through General Orders GN. 590 of 2021. These Rangers undergo rigorous training, including specialized courses in human rights, conflict management, and community engagement, both locally and internationally. In discharging their responsibilities, they work in close collaboration with other law enforcement agencies to ensure that all actions are undertaken with professionalism, accountability, and respect for the rule of law.

Regarding the reported disappearance of a 27-year-old fisherman, the Government confirms that the matter has been formally referred to the police and is under investigation through Case File No. **RUJ/CID/PE/10/2025**. This reflects the Government's commitment to ensuring that due process is followed whenever such concerns arise.

The Government also wishes to clarify that the law of Tanzania strictly prohibits livestock from entering or grazing in national parks. Any such incursions are unlawful and must be addressed accordingly. For example, incidents involving armed herders unlawfully entering Ruaha National Park have been recorded under Case File No. **CHI/IR/286/2025**. These activities are contrary to Section 21(1)(a) and (b) of the *National Parks Act* (Cap 282 R.E. 2002), which prohibit unauthorized entry and grazing, and Section 29(2) of the same Act, which empowers authorities to remove or penalize such unlawful activities. They also violate Section 107 of the *Wildlife Conservation Act* (Cap 283 R.E. 2022), which criminalizes acts that endanger wildlife or their habitats, as well as provisions of the *National Parks Regulations* GN No. 50 of 2002 (as amended by GN No. 4 of 2003) and the *Environmental Management Act* No. 20 of 2004.

In all these circumstances, law enforcement measures taken by Tanzania Rangers are lawful, proportionate, and consistent with both domestic legislation and Tanzania's conservation objectives. Their actions are not designed to target communities but to safeguard the integrity of Ruaha National Park, protect biodiversity, and ensure that natural resources continue to provide sustainable benefits for present and future generations.

**ii. Denial of Access to Land and Loss of Livelihoods**

The Government firmly disputes the allegation that communities have been denied access to land, grazing areas, or fishing rights within the vicinity of Ruaha National Park (RUNAPA). Villagers residing within the park's gazetted boundaries continue to pursue their livelihoods without interference. Farming, grazing, and fishing activities

are ongoing under existing government directives, demonstrating that no forced restrictions have been imposed on local communities.

It is important to emphasize that the 2023 gazettelement of RUNAPA boundaries has not yet been operationalized. As such, the communities remain in their villages, carrying on with their traditional economic and subsistence activities. Any future implementation of boundary enforcement will be carried out strictly in accordance with Tanzanian law and international human rights obligations. This will include transparent community consultations, legally mandated compensation, and fair resettlement processes designed to safeguard the welfare and dignity of affected people.

The Government also wishes to make it clear that state authorities have not, at any point, engaged in actions that would deprive individuals or communities of their livelihoods. Allegations of forced loss of land, grazing rights, or fishing opportunities are therefore unsubstantiated. On the contrary, the Government continues to pursue policies that balance conservation imperatives with the protection of community rights and sustainable development.

### **iii. Lack of Community Involvement and Consent**

The Government firmly refutes allegations that communities surrounding Ruaha National Park (RUNAPA), including the Maasai, Sukuma, and Datoga, were excluded from consultation or that their consent was disregarded. Extensive engagement with local communities has been a consistent feature of the REGROW Project and related conservation initiatives. These engagements included village meetings, participatory planning, and Grievance Redress Mechanisms, ensuring that community members could provide input, raise concerns, and participate meaningfully in decisions affecting their livelihoods.

The Government of the United Republic of Tanzania reiterates that no special group or community in the country is recognized as indigenous. However, all Tanzanians are equal and enjoy equal rights as provided under Article 13(6) (d) of the Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania and enjoy equal civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights. The Maasai, Sukuma, and Datoga are historically migrants or settlers within their current areas, including regions around RUNAPA, Loliondo, and Ngorongoro. Any suggestion that consultation obligations specific to "indigenous peoples" were ignored is therefore factually and legally unfounded.

The REGROW Project did not alter RUNAPA boundaries, nor did it involve relocations of community members. Any future actions involving land acquisition or relocation will be conducted strictly in accordance with Tanzanian law including the Land Act (Cap 113 R.E. 2023), the Village Land Act (Cap 114 R.E. 2023), and the Land Acquisition Act (Cap 118 R.E. 2023) with transparent consultations, fair compensation, and full respect for human rights.

Tanzania remains committed to ensuring that all conservation and development initiatives are inclusive, transparent, and consistent with both national legislation and international human rights standards.

Accordingly, allegations that communities were excluded or that their consent was disregarded are without merit. Tanzania continues to uphold transparency, inclusivity, and respect for human dignity in its conservation and development initiatives.

## **Inadequate Compensation and Relocation Planning**

The Government wishes to clarify that no relocations have been conducted within Ruaha National Park (RUNAPA). Communities residing in and around the park continue their normal livelihood activities, including farming, grazing, and fishing, within their village boundaries. The Government has no plans to relocate these villages in the foreseeable future, and any future considerations would strictly adhere to established legal frameworks and safeguards.

The Ministry responsible for land has provided guidance confirming that any potential relocation or compensation measures would be carried out in full compliance with Tanzanian law, including the *Land Act* (Cap 113 R.E. 2023), the *Village Land Act* (Cap 114 R.E. 2023), and the *Land Acquisition Act* (Cap 118 R.E. 2023). These laws ensure that affected communities receive fair and transparent consultation, adequate compensation where applicable, and judicial oversight to protect their rights.

The Government emphasizes that allegations of inadequate compensation or improper relocation planning are therefore unfounded. Communities maintain secure access to their lands, and the Government remains committed to balancing conservation objectives with the protection of livelihoods, food security, and human rights.

### **vi. Measures Taken under the Management Action Plan (MAP)**

The Government, working in close partnership with the World Bank, has taken deliberate steps to strengthen the human rights safeguards in conservation projects through the implementation of the Management Action Plan (MAP). These measures reflect the Government's commitment to ensuring that conservation is carried out in a manner that not only protects biodiversity but also promotes community welfare.

As part of this effort, a USD 2.8 million Trust Fund Project has been established under the Rufiji Basin Water Board to directly support community livelihoods and water resource management in areas surrounding Ruaha National Park. This intervention is designed to ensure that conservation and sustainable development go hand in hand, thereby reducing potential conflicts between communities and protected areas.

Furthermore, the Government has launched the Scaling-up Locally Led Climate Action Program (SCALE), a nationwide initiative that extends livelihood support to communities across Tanzania, including those living in Southern RUNAPA. This programme empowers communities to adapt to climate change, diversify their sources of income, and strengthen resilience while participating meaningfully in conservation.

To enhance accountability and ensure that community voices are heard, the Government has significantly reinforced Grievance Redress Mechanisms (GRM). This includes the training of Grievance Redress Committees, revision of operational manuals, wide dissemination of information to local communities, and the establishment of toll-free hotlines. In addition, the e-Mrejesho digital complaints platform has been operationalized to provide a transparent, accessible, and timely avenue for addressing grievances.

Beyond these measures, the Government has convened stakeholder workshops that bring together local leaders, conservation authorities, civil society, and international partners to exchange experiences and share best practices on biodiversity protection and effective park management. These engagements ensure that conservation

strategies are informed by diverse perspectives and that communities remain central partners in safeguarding Tanzania's natural heritage.

Through the MAP, Tanzania is demonstrating that conservation and human rights are not competing priorities but mutually reinforcing goals. The Government remains committed to implementing these measures with transparency, inclusivity, and accountability, thereby ensuring sustainable conservation that benefits both people and nature.

#### **vii. Protection of Human Rights and Land Security**

The Government reaffirms its unwavering commitment to the protection of human rights and the security of land tenure in all conservation and park management activities. The Government guarantees that forced evictions, displacement, or threats to food security will not occur, as there are no relocations planned in the foreseeable future. Land tenure and ownership rights are fully safeguarded under the Constitution (Article 24), the Land Act, and the Village Land Act. Any claims for compensation or remedies are legally protected under the Land Acquisition Act and are subject to judicial review, ensuring that affected individuals have access to fair and transparent procedures.

Communities continue to have secure access to productive land, enabling them to maintain food security and sustain their livelihoods within their village boundaries. At the same time, the Government ensures that all conservation initiatives, particularly those undertaken under the Management Action Plan (MAP), are implemented in full compliance with Tanzania's international human rights obligations. These initiatives are designed to balance ecological conservation with the economic and social well-being of local communities, reflecting a holistic approach to sustainable development.

The Government also emphasizes that the REGROW Project was never intended to alter the boundaries of Ruaha National Park (RUNAPA) or displace communities. Tanzania has consistently demonstrated that its conservation strategies prioritize community benefit, transparency, and adherence to human rights safeguards. Moving forward, all conservation and park management activities will continue to be guided by national laws, constitutional guarantees, and international human rights standards, ensuring that environmental protection and human development proceed hand in hand.

#### **viii. Mismanagement of the REGROW Project Funds**

The Government firmly refutes any allegation of mismanagement of funds under the Tanzania Resilient Natural Resource Management for Tourism and Growth (REGROW) Project. All resources were utilized strictly in accordance with the project's approved plan to achieve its intended objectives, which included enhancing park management, developing tourism infrastructure, and improving the livelihoods of communities surrounding the targeted protected areas. The project was successfully implemented and has now been formally concluded.

During the project's implementation, a wide range of achievements were realized. Key infrastructure developments included the construction of four airstrips, staff and tourism facilities such as student hostels, drivers' and guides' accommodations, visitors' information centres, cottages, an ecological monitoring centre, campsites, bandas, park gates, a canopy walkway, and ranger posts. These interventions collectively contributed 453 tourist beds, significantly expanding the capacity for tourism in Southern Tanzania.

The project also supplied both light and heavy equipment necessary for effective park management and conservation activities. In support of community livelihoods, 559 Community Conservation Banks (COCOBAs) were established, benefiting 10,734 members. A total of 153 livelihood projects were implemented, providing economic opportunities to local communities, while 1,050 scholarships were awarded to support education for targeted villagers.

To strengthen conservation efforts and mitigate human-wildlife conflicts, 408 Village Game Scouts (VGS) were trained and deployed in the project areas. Employment opportunities were generated for 2,008 individuals, both permanent and temporary, while over 2,500 people received training in various skills related to conservation, tourism, and sustainable livelihoods.

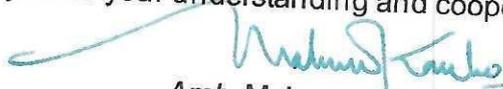
The project also delivered tangible environmental and community benefits, including the provision of clean domestic and livestock water to more than 1,000 households across five villages, improvement of irrigation schemes serving over 3,500 villagers, planting of more than 197,000 trees to enhance environmental sustainability, and preparation of village land use plans for 19 villages. Additionally, river training works were conducted along a 31 km stretch to control flooding, benefiting 100 households.

Through these interventions, the REGROW Project successfully balanced ecological conservation, community development, and tourism growth, demonstrating prudent and effective management of resources. Allegations of fund mismanagement are therefore entirely unfounded and misrepresent the significant achievements and positive impact of the project on both conservation and local communities.

3. In light of the foregoing, the Government reaffirms that all activities in and around Ruaha National Park, including those conducted under the REGROW Project and the Management Action Plan (MAP), are fully compliant with Tanzanian law, international human rights standards, and recognized conservation best practices. Allegations of forced evictions, human rights violations, denial of access to land, or mismanagement of project funds are entirely unfounded.

Through transparent procedures, meaningful community engagement, and targeted interventions, Tanzania has effectively balanced the protection of biodiversity with the promotion of sustainable livelihoods and tourism development. These accomplishments underscore the Government's unwavering commitment to inclusive, lawful, and sustainable conservation that safeguards both people and nature for present and future generations.

I thank you for your understanding and cooperation.



Amb. Mahmoud Thabit Kombo  
**MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND  
EAST AFRICAN COOPERATION**