

# Reject Threatening HIV and Other Medical Assistance to Zambia Over Critical Minerals

Secretary of State Marco Rubio  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, D.C. 20520

March 26, 2026

Dear Secretary Rubio,

We are deeply troubled by reports that the State Department is considering withholding HIV and other lifesaving medical aid to Zambia as a means of pressuring the country into signing a critical minerals agreement with the United States. We urge you to immediately clarify that the U.S. will not resort to this abhorrent tactic.

An estimated 1.3 million Zambians receive HIV treatment under the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), and tens of thousands of additional lives are saved in Zambia each year thanks to ongoing U.S. efforts to combat malaria and tuberculosis. As you yourself have at times acknowledged, these programs provide well-documented benefits to global health, the global economy and global security. Many in the public health community are advocating for their expansion. Threatening these programs — and the lives of those reliant on them — to gain leverage in trade negotiations is ethically indefensible. Furthermore, to withhold these vital medicines would only deepen poverty and suffering in Zambia and the surrounding region, creating a ripple effect of instability that could have unforeseen impacts on U.S. interests over the short, medium and long term.

Any partnership regarding critical minerals must respect local agency for it to succeed. Insofar as the U.S. seeks Zambia's aid in improving critical mineral supply chain resilience, we should prioritize initiatives that meet the job creation, environmental and sustainable development goals of both countries. Unlike previous critical minerals agreements, any proposal with Zambia should ensure the communities from which minerals are extracted are central participants in the value chain. The attached public comments on the "Design of a Plurilateral Agreement on Trade in Critical Minerals," signed by many of our organizations, contain concrete recommendations on how such a proposal could be crafted.

Of course, PEPFAR and other health assistance to Zambia should in no way be conditioned on any sort of minerals agreement — even a mutually-beneficial one. Again, we urge you to

please immediately and publicly repudiate the notion that the United States would hold lifesaving medical aid hostage to increase leverage in minerals discussions.

Sincerely,

Trade Justice Education Fund  
Afriwatch International  
Africa Faith and Justice Network  
AIDS United  
All-Africa Conference:Sister to Sister  
Alliance of Baptists  
American Friends Service Committee  
Association of Concerned Africa (ACAS-USA)  
AVAC  
Climate Rights International  
Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Region  
Council for Global Equality  
Dominican Leadership Conference  
Earthworks  
Foreign Policy In Focus  
Friends of the Congo  
Friends of the Earth United States  
Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives (GAIA)  
Global Black Gay Men Connect  
Global Health Council  
Global Network of Black People working in HIV  
Global Witness  
Health GAP  
Inclusive Development International  
Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers  
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns  
Mighty Earth  
Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate  
Mpact Global  
Muso  
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd  
National Jobs for All Network  
National Working Positive Coalition  
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice  
Oil and Gas Action Network  
Oxfam  
PAI  
Partners In Health  
PFLAG National

Positive Women's Network-USA  
PrEP4All  
Presbyterian Church (USA), Office of Public Witness  
Public Citizen  
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas Justice Team  
StrongMinds  
The Advocacy Network for Africa (AdNA)  
TIP Global Health  
Treatment Action Group  
Union of Concerned Scientists  
Unitarian Universalist Service Committee  
Unitarian Universalists for a Just Economic Community  
United Church of Christ  
US-Africa Bridge Building Project

350 Seattle  
350NYC  
Action Group on Governance and Environmental Management (AGGEM)  
Blue Line Indivisible  
California Trade Justice Coalition  
CCoHOPE Indivisible  
Center for Health and Hope  
Dallas Peace and Justice Center  
Downtown United Presbyterian Church Justice Ministry  
Earth Ethics, Inc.  
Eco Chaleur Bay  
Extinction Rebellion San Francisco Bay Area  
Good Health Community Programmes  
Hands Off Hudson Valley/Monroe Indivisible  
Housing Works  
Indivisible Corning Elmira  
Indivisible Katy Huddle  
International Trade Education Squad - Park Slope Food Coop  
Just Strategy  
LHL International Tuberculosis Foundation  
LIDOSOM  
Little Sisters of the Assumption  
Malach Consulting  
Middle Wisconsin  
Move Past Plastic (MPP)  
New York Trade Justice Coalition  
Nonviolent Austin  
Occupy Bergen County  
Partnership for Earth Spirituality

Putnam Progressives  
Santa Cruz Climate Action Network  
SoCal 350 Climate Action  
South Asian Fund For Education, Scholarship and Training Inc  
South Country Unites  
Texas Fair Trade Coalition  
The People's Justice Council  
The Resilient Activist  
WESPAC Foundation, Inc.

cc: U.S. Trade Representative Jaimeson Greer  
Acting Global AIDS Coordinator Jeffrey Graham  
Deputy Assistant Secretary for PEPFAR and Health Programs Dr. Rebecca Bunnell  
U.S. Ambassador to Zambia Michael C. Gonzales



## Concerns Regarding Emerging U.S. Critical Minerals Deals

March 19, 2026

Re: Docket Number USTR-2026-0034

Thank you for the opportunity to comment “on the Design of a Plurilateral Agreement on Trade in Critical Minerals and Policy Actions to Strengthen the Resilience of Critical Mineral Supply Chains” (91 Fed Reg. 9686, Feb. 26, 2026).

On December 3, 2025, the undersigned organizations sent a letter to the President expressing our concerns and solutions for emerging US critical minerals trade deals.<sup>1</sup> As the USTR contemplates a potential plurilateral agreement on critical minerals, including through reference pricing or other mechanisms, we reaffirm the contents of that letter, which we submit to this docket.

Thank you for your consideration.

---

<sup>1</sup> Please see December 3, 2025 letter from over 35 civil society, faith, environmental, and human rights organizations to President Trump. Attached below and available at: <https://www.citizen.org/wp-content/uploads/CMA-Letter-Dec-2025-4.pdf>

December 3, 2025

President Donald J. Trump  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We, the undersigned organizations, are writing to express our concern over reports of potential critical minerals deals underway and urge your administration to change course to allow for broad public participation and ensure the rights of vulnerable communities are protected before any critical mineral-related deals are finalized.

The Biden administration rightly received bipartisan criticism after it hastily negotiated a critical minerals agreement with Japan. Republican and Democratic congressional leaders alike slammed the administration for the deal's rushed and opaque process, lack of congressional and public consultation, and failure to include any meaningful labor, environmental, or human rights standards in the infamously dangerous and dirty minerals mining and processing industries. While details are scant, we understand that this administration is also pursuing deals related to critical minerals supply chains with other countries.

Insofar as the Trump administration proceeds with any trade, investment, or fiscal agreements or initiatives related to critical minerals supply chains, such deals must be developed through transparent and participatory processes that allow for informed input from all interested stakeholders, especially the communities most impacted by mining and mineral processing. In addition, any such deals must undergo Congressional review and approval, as is required by the Constitution.

**The stakes of any U.S. deal to secure access to critical minerals are particularly high for already-vulnerable communities, as displacement of Indigenous Peoples, forced labor, environmental destruction, and other widespread labor and human rights abuses are widely documented throughout minerals mining, recovery, and processing supply chains. Critical minerals agreements must not perpetuate an extractivist model that drives these ongoing harms.**

We raise particular concerns with the “minerals for security” deal signed between the U.S. and Ukraine, as well as potentially exploitative minerals-related negotiations with the Democratic Republic of Congo and other countries experiencing conflict. We reject agreements that are for the purposes of control rather than partnership, and object to such agreements prioritizing increased militarism and investor profits at the expense of a just clean energy transition.

Instead, any deal related to critical minerals trade must contain measures that help the United States and its trade partners meet important climate, job creation, sustainable development, and human rights goals. Key initial steps toward these ends include ensuring any agreements contain:

- Robust provisions aimed specifically at advancing minerals circularity, ensuring that transition minerals are traced, reused, refurbished, and recycled as often as possible rather than burned or landfilled at the end of mineral-containing products' initial lifecycles;
- Strong and binding labor, environmental, Indigenous rights, human rights, and transparency standards backed by swift and rigorous enforcement mechanisms, building on those recommended in the Principles to Ensure Energy Transition Minerals Advance Justice, Equity and Human Rights, and by the Initiative for Responsible Mining Assurances (IRMA), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), and other bodies.
- Policy measures, investments, technical support, and other measures that aid in the expansion of value-chain job creation in the United States and other regions where minerals are extracted or recovered.

**We will vigorously oppose any critical minerals deal that does not contribute to sustainable development in both the U.S. and partner nations, does not include meaningful participation from affected communities, and does not include strong, binding standards and enforcement mechanisms to uphold human rights, labor, and environmental protections.**

Sincerely,

**African Diaspora Connection**

**African Immigration Initiative**

**American Friends Service Committee**

**Black Hills Clean Water Alliance**

**Chip Workers 4 Responsible Mining**

**Climate Rights International**

**Earthjustice**

**Earthworks**

**Free Congo Bay Area**

**Friends of the Congo**

**Friends of the Earth US**

**Global Witness**

**GreenLatinos**

**Greenpeace International**

**Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility**

**Jewish Earth Alliance- PA**

**Justice Is Global**

**Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers**

**Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns**

**Mighty Earth**

**NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice**

**New Mexico Environmental Law Center**

**Occupy Bergen County**

**Passionist Solidarity Network**

**Plug In America**

**Presbyterian Church (USA), Office of Public Witness**

**Public Citizen**

**Resource Justice Network**

**Satya Bumi**

**Sierra Club**

**Sisters of Mercy of the Americas Justice Team**

**The United Methodist Church - General Board of Church and Society**

**Trade Justice Education Fund**

**Unitarian Universalists for a Just Economic Community**

**United Church of Christ**

**United Electrical, Radio & Machine Workers of America (UE)**