



Ms Helen Taylor
Senior Legal Researcher
Spotlight on Corruption

DECS Reference: MIN/1013251/23

19 October 2023

Dear Ms Taylor,

Thank you for your letter of 27 September 2023 on behalf of Spotlight on Corruption and other UK and Nigerian civil society organisations regarding the return of assets stolen by the former Delta State Governor, James Ibori, and his associates. I am replying as the Security Minister.

As a signatory to the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC), the UK is committed to recovering and returning corruptly obtained assets. The UK is proud to endorse the GFAR principles and has incorporated the spirit of these 10 principles into our own domestic asset return framework, available here:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/framework-for-transparent-and-accountable-asset-return/framework-for-transparent-and-accountable-asset-return#:~:text=This%20Framework%20builds%20upon%20the,the%20requested%20and%20requesting%20state.

The purpose of the framework is to ensure consistency, transparency, and accountability in the UK's process for returning assets. We also seek to enhance transparency by publishing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on GOV.UK for every return. The publication of these MoUs acts as a public statement of intent and success, and a demonstration of commitment to combatting corruption.

The UK recognises the crucial role played by civil society in uncovering corruption, and we will continue to support their contribution and participation in international fora, including through the UNCAC. We highly value the experience that these groups hold and the insights they can share when returning assets. This is clearly demonstrated by the involvement of civil society in our most recent asset returns in 2021, where civil society organisations were appointed to oversee the return of funds linked to Luca Filat and associates of James Ibori.

I am delighted to recognise the continued efforts of law enforcement to recover assets linked to James Ibori and his associates. In July 2023, confiscation orders totalling over £129 million were made against Mr Ibori and Bhadresh Gohil. Once the funds have been realised, in line with our asset return framework, we will work with the relevant stakeholders to ensure that these funds are returned via the most appropriate mechanism and in the best interest of both the requested and requesting state. This must be done in accordance with legal due process, which can take time, but ensures a fully fair and transparent process.

I understand that you are already in regular contact with my officials through the UK Anti-Corruption Coalition, which provides an excellent opportunity to maintain an open dialogue on these important issues.

Thank you for taking the time to write to me. I would be grateful if you could share this reply with your co-signatories.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom Tugendhat". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Tom" being more prominent than the last name "Tugendhat".

Rt Hon Tom Tugendhat MBE VR MP
Security Minister