The World Bank Dispute Resolution Service

Leadership Messages

2026

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Message from Sabine Bernabè,

Acting Head of DRS

This report comes at an important juncture for the Dispute Resolution Service (DRS), as it approaches five years since it became operational in October 2021. During that period, the DRS has developed from a newly established function into an integral part of the World Bank's accountability framework, providing project-affected people and borrowers with an independent forum to engage in dialogue, address concerns, and seek practical solutions to disputes arising from World Bank-financed projects. Throughout FY26, the DRS remained focused on this core mandate, offering and facilitating dispute resolution, monitoring the implementation of agreements, and expanding its outreach and capacity-building activities.

This report marks the conclusion of an important chapter in the development of the DRS. I would like to acknowledge the contribution of Orsolya Székely, who completed her term as Accountability Mechanism Secretary and Head of DRS in July 2026 after leading the DRS from its establishment through its formative years. The progress reflected in these pages is the result of a collective effort by DRS staff, mediators, consultants, and partners who have contributed to building and strengthening the DRS.

FY26 was also a significant year for accountability across the World Bank Group. In June 2026, the Boards approved the integration of the Group's independent accountability mechanisms into a single institution, marking the beginning of an important transition. The DRS will remain fully operational until the Board approves the new integrated mechanism, helping to ensure a seamless transition without interruption to service delivery. As the World Bank Group enters this next phase, the experience, lessons, and institutional foundations developed by the DRS will provide a strong platform on which the future integrated mechanism can build.

At a time when institutions around the world are seeking more effective ways to address complex social and environmental concerns within a rapidly evolving geopolitical and technological context, the experience of the DRS reinforces the importance of providing independent, people-centered, and credible avenues for dialogue as part of a broader accountability architecture.

Message from Matteo Bugamelli,

Dean of the World Bank Board of Executive Directors

Independent and impartial dispute resolution is a central element of the Board's oversight of accountability and development effectiveness at the World Bank. Since becoming operational in October 2021, the Dispute Resolution Service (DRS) of the World Bank Accountability Mechanism has advanced this mandate. Our efforts underpin the World Bank's own work to create jobs, end poverty, and ensure a better future for millions of people.

As this report demonstrates, the DRS sustained a strong program of casework, outreach, and reporting. It continued to deepen engagement with people and communities affected by World Bank projects and other key stakeholders, and to strengthen the transparency and predictability of its work. The Board has fully pursued its objective of a best-in-class dispute-resolution model for the public sector, and the results speak for themselves.

I wish to recognize Orsolya Székely, former Accountability Mechanism Secretary and Head of DRS, on the completion of her mandate and thank her for her service to the Bank. I also thank Sabine Bernabè, Director-General, Evaluation, and Board-appointed Acting Head of DRS, for her leadership.

Above all, I extend my warmest thanks to the staff of the DRS, whose dedication, professionalism, and commitment have established the World Bank's first independent dispute resolution service and given practical effect to the mandate entrusted to it. In a relatively short time, they have earned the trust of stakeholders and built a strong foundation for the work. We recognize that credibility requires constant vigilance, and we remain committed to delivering results for the communities and people this entity exists to serve.

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