

Danish economist picked to be new UN environment chief

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Inger Andersen, who heads the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), is set to succeed Erik Solheim of Norway, who resigned in November amid an outcry over his huge travel expenses

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has picked Danish economist and environmentalist Inger Andersen to be the new UN environment

chief, turning the page on a scandal over expenses that rocked the UN agency, according to a letter seen by AFP on Friday.

Andersen, who heads the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), is set to succeed Erik Solheim of Norway, who resigned in November amid an outcry over his huge travel expenses.

UN Deputy Secretary General Amina Mohammed told a meeting of ambassadors on Thursday that Guterres had chosen Andersen as his nominee.

Her nomination as head of the Nairobi-based UN Environment Programme (UNEP) will be submitted to the General Assembly for approval.

Andersen, 60, has also served as World Bank vice president for the Middle East and North Africa and worked at the United Nations for 15 years on water and environment issues.

If confirmed as expected, Andersen will take up helm of UNEP following Solheim's scandal-wracked tenure.

A UN audit last year found that Solheim had spent nearly \$500,000 on travel over 22 months at a time when the world body is struggling with shrinking budgets.

His globe-trotting raised accusations that he showed little regard for the [environment](#) and efforts to reduce carbon emissions generated by air travel.

The audit found that UNEP had a "culture of scant regard for internal controls and existing rules," with Solheim taking too many trips to Paris and Oslo and spending little time at the agency's Nairobi headquarters.

The audit findings had prompted some donors to withhold funding to UNEP.

Andersen's nomination comes amid a push by Guterres to appoint more women to senior UN posts.

The UN chief is also preparing a major climate summit in September to push for international action to confront global warming.

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