

President Haruhiko Kuroda
Asian Development Bank
P.O. Box 789
0980 Manila, Philippines

August 1, 2007

Re. Resignations of ADB Staff from SPU process

Dear President Kuroda,

We write to express concern about the Safeguard Policy Update process currently underway at the ADB. The process has suffered considerable delay, and we have reason to believe it may be delayed further. We fully understand delays occurring for quality assurance purposes, but it would be extremely troubling if the SPU delays are due to efforts to hoist a pre-determined outcome onto a supposedly open and consultative process.

Our suspicions, unfortunately, appear to be bolstered by the July 12th resignations of four members of the Safeguard Policy Update core team. Our understanding is that they resigned from the team to protest the severe alteration, without their knowledge, of the draft they had prepared after nearly 2 years of deliberations by someone not connected with this effort. It will be troubling if this revised version, which ADB's own subject specialists have refused to endorse, is circulated for public consultation.

The lack of confidence of ADB's technical specialists in the draft SPU paper and process should be of tremendous concern to you. We believe you need to inquire into the following issues to ensure the SPU consultation draft is worthy of public circulation and engagement.

1. Why have seven staff resigned or otherwise ended their association with the SPU drafting process to date?
2. Is the ADB ensuring that the reason/s given for resignation by the four staff will be investigated fairly?
3. Has a new Core Team been assembled? What is the skill set and competence of the new team? How will the views of technical specialists be incorporated in the consultation draft?

As civil society organizations that have a keen interest in ensuring the ADB adheres to the highest social and environmental standards, we remain committed to providing the ADB with our independent expert advice. However, we would not want to be associated in any way with a sub-standard consultation draft or a flawed process. Unfortunately, ADB's apparent disregard for the expertise of its own social development specialists does not bode well for the content of the yet-to-be released consultation draft.

We urge you to use your office to support the integrity and credibility of ADB safeguards so as to restore public confidence in the SPU process. You can do this by making the drafting process more transparent both internally and externally, enabling an external review of the various drafts in contention, and ensuring the staff who resigned from the core team on July 12 do not face any retaliation and their grievances receive a fair hearing.

Lastly, Mr. President, we hope you will ensure ADB's commitment to strong and mandatory safeguard policies, revised through an open and transparent process, in the best interest of the citizens and environment of Asia.

Sincerely,

AMAN (Indigenous Peoples Alliance of the Archipelago), Indonesia
Asian Indigenous Women's Network, Philippines
Asienhaus, Germany
Bank Information Center, USA
Centre for Environmental Justice, Sri Lanka
Cordillera Peoples Alliance, Philippines
CORE Centre for Organisation Research & Education, India
EarthRights International
Environmental Defense, USA
Environmental Law Center "Armon", Uzbekistan
Forest Peoples Program, UK
INFID, Indonesia
International Accountability Project, USA
JACSES, Japan
Lawyers' Association for Human Rights of Nepalese Indigenous Peoples, Nepal.
NGO Forum on ADB, Philippines
Oxfam Australia
Shimin Gaikou Centre, Japan
Solidarity Workshop, Bangladesh
Tebtebba (Indigenous Peoples' International Centre for Policy Research and Education),
Philippines
Sri Lankan Working Group on Trade and IFIs
Urban Research Centre, India
Urgewald, Germany

Cc:

ADB Board of Directors.
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Xiaoying Ma, SPU Team Leader, RSES.
Bart Edes, Head, ADB NGO Center.
Staff that resigned on July 12.