

GLOBAL TRANSPARENCY INITIATIVE

TRANSPARENCY CHARTER FOR INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS: *CLAIMING OUR RIGHT TO KNOW*

Preamble

The right to access information held by public bodies is a fundamental human right, set out in Article 19 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guarantees the right to “seek, receive and impart information and ideas”. This right applies to intergovernmental organisations, just as it does at the national level. Information has been described as the oxygen of democracy. Key elements of a rights-based approach are a true presumption of disclosure, generous automatic disclosure rules, a clear framework for processing requests for information, limited exceptions and a right to appeal refusals to disclose to an independent body. *This Charter elaborates the standards upon which the access to information policies of IFIs should be based. The Global Transparency Initiative (GTI) calls on all IFIs to amend their information disclosure policies to bring them into line with this Charter.*

Principles

Principle 1: The Right of Access

The right to access information is a fundamental human right which applies to, among other things, information held by IFIs, regardless of who produced the document and whether the information relates to a public or private actor.

Principle 2: Automatic Disclosure

IFIs should automatically disclose and broadly disseminate, for free, a wide range of information about their structures, finances, policies and procedures, decision-making processes, and country and project work.

Principle 3: Access to Decision-Making

IFIs should disseminate information which facilitates informed participation in decision-making in a timely fashion, including draft documents, and in a manner that ensures that those affected and interested stakeholders can effectively access and understand it; they should also establish a presumption of public access to key meetings.

Principle 4: The Right to Request Information

Everyone has the right to request and to receive information from IFIs, subject only to a limited regime of exceptions, and the procedures for processing such requests should be simple, quick and free or low-cost.

Principle 5: Limited Exceptions

The regime of exceptions should be based on the principle that access to information may be refused only where the international financial institution can demonstrate (i) that disclosure would cause serious harm to one of a set of clearly and narrowly defined, and broadly accepted, interests, which are specifically listed; and (ii) that the harm to this interest outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

Principle 6: Appeals

Anyone who believes that an IFI has failed to respect its access to information policy, including through a refusal to provide information in response to a request, has the right to have the matter reviewed by an independent and authoritative body.

Principle 7: Whistleblower Protection

Whistleblowers—individuals who in good faith disclose information revealing a concern about wrongdoing, corruption or other malpractices—should expressly be protected from any sanction, reprisal, or professional or personal detriment, as a result of having made that disclosure.

Principle 8: Promotion of Freedom of Information

IFIs should devote adequate resources and energy to ensuring effective implementation of their access to information policies, and to building a culture of openness.

Principle 9: Regular Review

Access to information policies should be subject to regular review to take into account changes in the nature of information held, and to implement best practice disclosure rules and approaches.

