



**Bank
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President Tadao Chino
Asian Development Bank
P.O. Box 789
0980 Manila, Philippines

Re: Review of ADB Information Policy and Strategy

Dear President Chino,

It is our understanding that in the coming months the Asian Development Bank (ADB) intends to initiate a review of its Information Policy and Strategy. We are writing to put forward recommendations that we believe will help to ensure meaningful civil society participation in the review process. We look forward to hearing your views on the recommendations outlined below and would like to request a meeting with relevant ADB staff to discuss this matter in more detail.

The consultations surrounding the ADB's Inspection Function provide a useful precedent upon which to draw lessons for the forthcoming Information Policy and Strategy review. As proposed changes to the Inspection Function have evolved, many of the bank's stakeholders have been afforded opportunities to comment. We hope this interactive and transparent approach to policy development will serve as a minimum benchmark for improving future policy reviews. Those involved in the Inspection Function review should be commended for their efforts.

Like the Inspection Function, the Information Policy and Strategy helps to define the ADB's relationship with civil society organizations and citizens in member countries. The Information Policy plays an essential role in determining how citizens understand and relate to the ADB. In this sense, it is essential that the Information Policy review be given the same care and attention that was afforded the Inspection Function.

We believe that the adoption of the following recommendations, which are largely consistent with the approach taken during the Inspection Function review, will lay the foundation for meaningful civil society participation in the upcoming review of the Information Policy and Strategy.

Notice of Consultation and Provisional Workplan:

The ADB should disclose a notice informing outside actors of its intention to review its Information Policy and Strategy. This notice should invite comment on the existing policy for a period of 90 days and should be accompanied by a provisional workplan outlining the proposed timetable, procedures, and consultation plan for the entire review process.

To ensure full stakeholder participation, the ADB should post the notice on a specially created, dedicated space on its website. This space should be utilized throughout the review process to updates interested parties on the status of the review and the timing of next steps. This dedicated space can also provide links to relevant policy documents and public comments.

The Bank should also send letters and emails to external contacts by making use of the contacts gathered by external affairs, resident missions and the Publications Unit. The ADB should also utilize local media and NGO communication channels to inform interested parties of its intent to review the Policy.

Initial Consultation:

During the above mentioned 90-day comment period, the ADB should hold an initial face-to-face consultation to solicit comments on the current Information Policy and Strategy, as well as expectations for the review process. Much like the Manila consultation during the ADB's Inspection Function Review, the ADB should work to bring together participants from all over the region. This would include representatives from member governments, interested members of civil society, including academia and non-governmental organizations, and members of the general public. Resources should be made available to help ensure broad participation.

First Draft of New Information Policy and Strategy:

Based on written comments received and the outcome of the initial face-to-face consultation, the ADB should prepare and disclose a first draft of a new Information Policy and Strategy. This draft Policy should be accompanied by a summary of key recommendations received during the initial consultation period as well as specific responses to those recommendations.

The ADB should then announce a second 90 day comment period, this time to allow interested parties to comment on the new draft Policy. This announcement, which should be proactively disseminated in a manner similar to the initial notice, should reiterate the workplan, procedures and timeline to be applied to the remainder of the review and consultation process.

Consultations on the draft Policy:

The ADB should hold a minimum of six face-to-face consultations on the draft information policy in a cross-section of both borrowing and donor member countries (the ADB held a total of 10 consultations during the inspection policy review). Adequate resources should be made available for groups to travel to the consultations from neighboring countries and documents used during the consultations should be translated into appropriate languages and provided well in advance. The consultations should include translation services into relevant languages. Possible languages include Japanese, Khmer, Hindi, Bahasa, Bangla, Russian, Chinese, Nepali, Vietnamese, Urdu, Lao, Thai, Persian, Pashtou, Arabic, Uzbek, Turkish and English.

Policy Approval:

Based on the comments received, the ADB should revise its new draft Policy and send a final draft Policy to the Board of Executive Directors for discussion and approval. This final draft should be disclosed to the public at the same time that it is distributed to the Board and be posted on the website. This will give stakeholders an opportunity to understand how their input was used and to contact their representatives to provide final comments on the text.

The ADB should provide the Board of Executive Directors with both a summary and a complete copy of the comments received during the consultations, including a list of key recommendations and a clear response to each recommendation. These documents should be posted on the website and be publicly disclosed at the same time they are presented to the Board. This should be as early as, and no later than, when the final policy draft is sent to the Board.

Working Group on the Information Policy and Strategy Review:

We would also recommend that the ADB establish a Working Group on the Information Policy and Strategy Review process. The Working Group would be responsible for establishing the parameters of the consultations and ensuring maximum participation in the consultative process. In order to draw on a diverse range of expertise, the Working Group should include representatives from outside of the ADB.

We hope that the above recommendations will help the ADB to design and implement a thorough and participatory review process. We look forward to discussing these recommendations with the ADB in the near future.

Sincerely,

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