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SPECIAL AMBASSADOR FOR THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

New York, November 13, 2005

To:

Kathryn E. Nelson
Lead Facilitator, ADB's Water
Policy Implementation Review

Dear Kathryn,

Thank you for reminding me to respond to the letter sent by a few Indian NGOs. My apologies for the delay in responding, as I was travelling to The Hague and New York these last few weeks.

I assure you that all the Panel members appreciate these NGOs' input, and understand that they have a right to their opinion, but we also think that the ADB management has the right too to decide on certain matters, including the choice and processes of the Review Panel. We're sorry to read that they doubt our independence, but we're afraid they just don't realize how people like us, who have accumulated our credibility bit by bit over such a long period of time, will never jeopardize it by compromising our integrity.

Likewise, I think we can also doubt their representativeness in writing that letter, as I know for sure that not all Indian NGOs present at the consultation shared that opinion, even more so regarding NGOs in Asia or even in Delhi alone. In fact, the next day after our consultation in Delhi, UNDP arranged for me to meet with a group of Indian NGOs. Approximately 60 representatives gathered to share their concerns on several different issues from poverty, health, education, governance, gender to water and the environment. Many were as critical of their government and multilateral agencies, but were more mature expressing their concerns. Similarly, as you know, we have heard many different positions and opinions of civil society and advocacy NGOs present during the other four country consultations for the review.

As for the issue of "not needing IFI intervention", again we need to appreciate their right to that opinion, as this is an issue constantly put forward by NGOs in many countries. Nevertheless, in these countries we've also heard different opinions from other stakeholders, welcoming this intervention to catalyse the country's development progress. Both are valid concerns, and ADB needs to be aware and responsive to the country's demand or refusal for this type of intervention. However, in the end, it is up to the country and the government to come to terms with this issue. ADB needs to maintain its sensitivity to the problems and challenges that trigger these concerns, and constantly try to improve the implementation of its policies, like this Review of the ADB's Water Policy implementation.

I hope this explains the Review Panel's position, and I wish you all the best with the civil society consultation in Manila.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Erna".

Erna Witoelar
Review Panel Chair