

6 November 2007

Mr. Hemantha Withanage
Executive Director
NGO Forum on ADB
85-A Masikap Extension, Central District, Diliman
Quezon City 1101, Philippines

Dear Mr. Withanage,

Thank you for forwarding the two letters of 24 and 25 October 2007 from several civil society organizations (CSOs) expressing concerns about the consultation workshops for the Safeguard Policy Update (SPU). Specifically, these concerns relate to the following four issues (i) rescheduling of the consultation workshops; (ii) translation of the Consultation Draft of the Safeguard Policy Statement (SPS); (iii) request for full participants lists to be disclosed; and (iv) structure and format of the consultation process.

We enjoyed meeting with you and CSO colleagues on 12 October 2007 and would have been pleased to have had a more detailed discussion of the consultation process at that time. In any case, we appreciate greatly your meeting with us at ADB on 26 October 2007 to clarify the points made in your letters of 24 and 25 October 2007, and for helping to coordinate ADB's follow-up teleconference with 12 NGOs colleagues on 30 October 2007.

As you know, details of the overall SPU consultation process, including consultation drafts, timelines, comments and workshop formats are posted on ADB's SPU website. I would like to reiterate that ADB is committed to a broad-based, transparent and inclusive consultation process for the SPU, including the multi-stakeholder workshops to be convened over the next few months. We have reviewed your requests with a view to seeking solutions and would like to provide the following responses.

Consultation Workshop Schedules. Your letters request the postponement of Southeast Asia, East Asia and Mekong regional consultation workshops due to a scheduling conflict with the 13th Conference of the Parties (COP) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change on 3-14 December in Bali, and postponement of the Central and West Asian consultation workshop to ensure availability of Russian translation of the consultation draft of the SPS.

We recognize that many advocacy NGOs will be involved in the Bali meetings. We can confirm that the two subregional consultation workshops originally scheduled for 6-7 December in Beijing (East Asia) and 13-14 December in Hanoi (Mekong) are being rescheduled for the first quarter of 2008. With regard to the Manila consultation workshop (Southeast Asia) on 28-29 November, we understand that several Indonesian NGOs have planned UNFCCC preparatory meetings on those dates. We therefore propose to accommodate Indonesian participants in the Hanoi workshop in 2008 rather than the Manila workshop.

With regard to the Central and West Asia workshop on 14-15 November, you will appreciate that preparations are at an advanced stage. We are receiving confirmations from major stakeholders including government, academe, multilateral financial institutions, and operational and advocacy NGOs. We have also received the registration-confirmation forms from three of the organizations whose representatives have signed your letter of 24 October 2007. From the subsequent teleconference with NGO Forum on ADB members from Central and West Asia (Ms. Maya Eralieva and Ms. Kalia Moldogazieva) on 2 November 2007 we understand that participation will be possible. Following the teleconference, we have

sent invitations to additional NGO participants they have identified. You will also note that the Russian translation of the Consultation Draft of the Safeguard Policy Statement has been available on ADB's SPU website since 30 October 2007.

We are also fully prepared to schedule a separate civil society consultation workshop in early 2008. We agree that this workshop will provide a focused opportunity for dialogue between civil society and ADB on the SPU, in addition to opportunities already provided at the multi-stakeholder workshops. In addition, it might be noted that NGOs who were not able to attend the subregional workshops will have the opportunity to attend this workshop. Indigenous peoples have requested a separate workshop and this will take place on 26-27 November 2007 in Manila as already agreed with indigenous peoples groups.

We welcome your views on the proposed new dates for the proposed workshops:

East Asia	23-24 January 2008
Civil Society Organizations	mid-February 2008
Mekong + Indonesia	5-6 March 2008

Translation of Consultation Draft of SPS. You have requested that the Consultation Draft of the Safeguard Policy Statement be translated into Bahasa and Vietnamese, in addition to Russian, which is already on ADB's website, and Mandarin, which is in process of being finalized. We are pleased to confirm our intention to provide translations in widely-used languages for participants in the consultation workshops, including Bahasa and Vietnamese.

Lists of Participants. You have requested full participants' lists for the consultation workshops. As discussed, the list of potential invitees can be made available and certainly the lists of confirmed participants will be part of the consultation workshop proceedings. We confirm that we plan 40-50 participants for each workshop. We are applying a one-third proportion for each of CSOs, government and other relevant stakeholders (including multilateral and bilateral agencies, professional associations, academe and private sector). We have provided Ms. Maya Eralieva and Ms. Kalia Moldogazieva with a list of confirmed participants for the Central and West Asia consultation in Bishkek. We agree that CSOs can self-nominate, as the other stakeholder groups have their own nomination and pre-selection process which we respect. The CSO consultation will be open to as many participants as are interested among the self-funded members of your networks.

Structure and Format of the Consultation Process. The draft consultation format and agenda have been made available on ADB's safeguard policy update website. We continue to welcome suggestions for the format and agenda, which we expect will continue to evolve based on suggestions and lessons learned from each successive consultation workshop.

We look forward to constructive discussions on the SPU as we proceed with the consultations, including consultation workshops, and the more than 90-day comment period on the Consultation Draft of the Safeguard Policy Statement posted on ADB's website on 12 October 2007. On the basis of the consultation workshops and comments received during the comment period, a draft SPU working paper will be prepared and this draft too will be placed on ADB's website along with a matrix of comments and responses. As such, I trust you will have ample opportunities to continue to engage with ADB on this important initiative.

Sincerely yours,

for 
Nessim J. Ahmad
Director

Environment and Social Safeguard Division
Regional and Sustainable Development Department