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African Development Bank: Openness Proposals Fall Short

The African Development Bank (AfDB) is currently reviewing its 2005 access to information policy. As part of the process of consultation, the Bank posted a new draft policy document, the *African Development Bank Group Policy on Disclosure and Access to Information*, on its website in June 2011. The Global Transparency Initiative (GTI), a global network of civil society organisations advocating for greater transparency at the international financial institutions, of which CLD is a member, has submitted a set of Comments on the draft Policy.

“CLD welcomes this policy review by the AfDB,” said Toby Mendel, Executive Director of CLD. *“But the AfDB will need to introduce some significant changes to its policy to bring it more closely into line with the transparency practices of other development banks and the GTI’s Transparency Charter for International Financial Institutions. The new draft Policy takes some steps in this direction, but much more is needed.”*

The GTI Comments welcomes the AfDB’s commitment to move to a proper presumption of disclosure, as well as its proposal to establish both internal and external appeals mechanisms. At the same time, serious problems remain with the draft Policy, including:

- the complete absence of a positive list of documents scheduled for automatic or proactive disclosure;
- the very weak commitment to disclose information to facilitate participation in decision-making;
- the complete absence of rules regarding the processing of requests;
- the vastly overbroad and vague regime of exceptions;
- the lack of strong guarantees regarding the independence and powers of the external oversight body; and
- the absence of some key promotional measures.

CLD calls on the AfDB to take the GTI’s recommendations seriously and to make the necessary changes to bring the new policy into line with better international practice.

The full commentary is available at:

http://www.ifitransparency.org/uploads/7f12423bd48c10f788a1abf37ccfae2b/AFDB_Comments_Aug11_final.pdf.

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