

NGO Forum on ADB  
c/o Rayyan Hassan, Executive Director  
85 A Masikap Extension  
Diliman  
Quezon City  
Philippines

27 March 2017

Dear Mr. Hassan,

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) would like to thank the NGO Forum on ADB (the Forum), and its network members, for its written submission on its review of the Public Communications Policy (PCP) received in December 2016 by the Department of External Relations. We also appreciate the Forum's participation in external consultations on the Draft Public Communications Policy Update held in a number of countries around the region.

In light of your extensive comments and feedback from others, we have decided to extend the review and consultation process. The exact timeline to complete the review has not yet been firmed up and will depend on further internal and external consultations. The PCP review website (<https://www.adb.org/site/disclosure/pcp-review>) provides useful information and will be updated again with further details on timing as soon as available.

With regards to the Forum's submission, we note that the concerns you have raised generally fall under the following six key areas:

**1. The legal and operational importance of transparency**

We agree with your points on the importance of meeting international norms on disclosure and transparency to improve project outcomes and work towards ADB's goal of ending poverty. ADB is committed to transparency in our operations following international best practice and recognizes the importance of engaging and consulting with stakeholders.

**2. Reduced disclosure under a principles-based policy**

We recognize your concern but our view is that a principles-based underlines more firmly the presumption in favor of disclosure. The current list of documents that ADB requires staff to disclose will still be a mandatory requirement. A principles-based policy will go much further than this list of documents, in that all documents that ADB produces or

requires to be produced, are subject to disclosure unless they meet any of the policy exceptions to disclosure. This meets the highest standards for international organizations and was widely supported during the consultations in December 2016. Monitoring and capacity building will continue to ensure that the disclosure requirements are followed.

### **3. Ongoing gaps in ADB disclosure**

We agree that there are some gaps in implementation of the disclosure requirements. We are carefully reviewing your detailed comments covering these topics, including: the content and updating schedule for the Project Data Sheet (PDS), the timing of disclosure of documents, and additional documents to be disclosed. We look at the performance of disclosure on an annual basis in the PCP Annual Report and are continuously looking for ways to address these gaps including through increased training.

### **4. Disclosure to and communication with affected people**

Providing information to project-affected people, including Indigenous Peoples, is indeed important. We also note the importance of having a focal point or several focal points and/or other information points that can be the locus for queries from affected people on the ground or stakeholders elsewhere. Separate staff instructions on how to implement the new PCP will clarify disclosure and communication requirements alongside the Safeguard Policy Statement.

### **5. Meaningful consultation on PCP provisions**

ADB appreciates the extent and quality of the feedback from its many stakeholders and, because of that, will be conducting additional consultations in and outside the region. We will inform you as soon as we can and we would appreciate your help in identifying participants. Going forward, we intend to continue monitoring the PCP implementation.

### **6. Limitations on information requests**

We understand your concerns about “unreasonable” information requests but want to be clear that ADB cannot provide information that does not exist and will need to withhold exchanges, for example, that are part of ADB’s deliberative thinking. We are also reviewing your comments on the list of exceptions, appeals, and overrides and we believe that we can clarify this and other issues when we next meet.





Due to the complexity of all the issues, we would like to meet your team to discuss the above issues and other concerns in more detail. Our Managing Director General, Mr. Juan Miranda, who you met in February to discuss your submission and other issues, has now retired. His post as chair of the ADB Steering Committee leading the review has been taken by the ADB Secretary, Mr. WooChong Um. Mr. Um also looks forward to further discussions with the Forum.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K Lane', written over the printed name 'Karen Lane'.

Karen Lane

Senior External Relations Specialist

Department of External Relations, Asian Development Bank