Joint statement of civil society organisations to the Board of Directors regarding the bank's priorities in 2015

The undersigned civil society organisations highlight the following key challenges facing the EIB in 2015. In connection to those challenges, CSOs offer recommendations for the Board of Directors.

Ensuring stronger accountability towards European institutions and citizens

We welcome the announcement of the revision of the EIB complaints mechanism in the second half of 2015. We believe that this revision will lead to genuine and necessary improvements, and we encourage the Board to actively take part in this revision process.

The Complaints Mechanism was created to enable any stakeholder to lodge a complaint if s/he feels the bank failed to comply with its commitments or if it acted unfairly or unlawfully. The scope of those complaints relates to, among other issues, the social, environmental and human rights impacts of projects, access to information and public participation.

Experience shows that despite its efforts, the office of the complaint mechanism seems unable to achieve its mission independently, efficiently and in a meaningful way for those impacted by EIB operations. For instance, there is no system of formal relations between the EIB Board of Directors and the mechanism, and the mechanism remains under pressure from EIB management. In recent cases (including the Mopani project in Zambia and public procurement in Bosnia), EIB management openly ignored the recommendations of the complaints mechanism, highlighting how the mechanism remains removed from decision-makers within the bank. The European Ombudsman, after ruling maladministration by the EIB in the Bosnian case, announced that she would look into the possibility of opening an own-initiative inquiry into the systemic issues underlying the EIB’s handling of the case.

We are concerned that the Board of Directors is generally unaware about the cases that are dealt with by the complaints mechanism and the Ombudsman even though the Board approves all bank operations. Such a situation prevents genuine accountability of the EIB and the ability to take corrective actions in a timely manner.

Ensuring quality investments by the new European Fund For Strategic Investments

In the framework of the EU Invest Package, the EIB will partner with the European Commission to establish a European Fund for Strategic Investment (EFSI). This fund will finance selected projects with higher social and economic value in parallel to projects currently financed by the EIB. The legislative proposal presented by the Commission in January 2015 referenced some EIB policies as relevant to the functioning of the EFSI, namely the Transparency Policy, Non-Compliant Jurisdiction Policy and the Anti-Fraud Policy. We believe that the lack of reference to other important policies like
the Complaints Mechanism, the Energy Policy and Transport Policy is a serious oversight and we ask the Board of Directors to ensure that these policies are fully respected for projects financed by the EFSI.

We also ask for greater transparency than is usually applied by the EIB to its projects. Full transparency should be ensured for the project pipeline, and all relevant information, analysis and appraisal reports for each project should be publicly disclosed before project approval. In addition, we would like to stress that this investment plan represents a unique opportunity to strengthen the accountability, transparency and compliance functions of the EIB.

**Increasing and improving engagement with CSOs**

Dialogue between the EIB and CSOs has positively evolved to include forums in different countries, public consultations on EIB policies, project-related meetings and the annual EIB Board of Directors Seminar with civil society.

The event this year will take place for the fourth time, and CSOs appreciate the participatory process in preparing the event and the possibility for in-depth discussion on selected themes related to EIB policies and operational procedures. Bearing in mind the statutory role of the Board of Directors and with reference to best practice at other multilateral financial institutions, we would like to propose improvements to the format of this meeting for the future.

In order to focus on key policy topics, we would like to limit participation in the meeting with the board to CSOs and representatives of the management committee. Currently this session – the most important for civil society – lacks clear goals in terms of the expected inputs from Board members. We believe that a renewed format would also positively influence the importance of this meeting for CSOs and the Board of Directors.

We look forward to working with you to ensure that the EIB operates in a responsible manner and fully contributes to a sustainable future for all citizens.

Sincerely,

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