



Communique

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) from the BRICS countries and other developing countries, including members of BRICS Feminist Watch (BFW) met with the Senior Management and staff of the New Development Bank (NDB) for the Second NDB-CSO Dialogue on November 22, 2018. The meeting was held at the NDB headquarters in Shanghai, and included discussions on human resources, environment and social aspects of NDB's operations, sustainable infrastructure, strategy and partnerships, and sustainable development financing. The cross-cutting themes included compliance, gender, information disclosure, country systems, and mechanisms to strengthen civil society engagement with the Bank.

The NDB Management, led by Vice-President and Chief Administrative Officer Vladimir Kazbekov and Vice-President and Chief Risk Officer Sarquis Jose Buainain Sarquis, updated civil society on the expansion of the NDB's portfolio and partnerships over the past year. They also shared their progress on issues of sustainability, transparency, accountability, and gender, some of which were based on the key asks presented by CSOs at the First NDB-CSO Dialogue held in October 2017 and sent to the Bank in subsequent communications.

The NDB apprised CSOs of the steps that they have taken to improve the gender composition of the staff such as increasing maternity benefits, providing a lactation room within the NDB headquarters, and introducing education allowance for kindergarteners. However, they admitted to facing challenges in ensuring female staff at the higher levels such as Director General and above.

With reference to the three main asks of BFW and other feminist groups (which were presented to the Bank in a letter submitted to them at last year's meeting and were endorsed by more than 100 feminist organisations and activists), the Bank has not made much headway. The NDB has not adopted a gender policy yet, instead referring to their Diversity Policy on gender issues, have not constituted a gender unit or hired a gender expert, and have not set up an external gender advisory committee. Moreover, the Bank communicated that they are currently focused on strengthening the core business functions of the bank such as project operations, treasury, and communications, and would consider our three recommendations at some point in the future.

We would like to reiterate that gender responsiveness is critical to the bank's success in ensuring inclusive and sustainable development, and therefore, cannot be considered as an afterthought. The Bank must adopt a mandatory gender policy which informs its HR and all aspects of operations such as project selection, lending, monitoring, and grievance redressal. It is imperative for the Bank to go beyond its do no harm approach and take additional measures such as priority lending to women's groups and promoting gender responsive infrastructure to ensure women's rights and empowerment.

The NDB reaffirmed their commitment to country systems, upon which they are dependent for ensuring local ownership, reducing delays in project implementation, reducing transaction costs, strengthening country institutions, and capacity of NDB clients. While appreciating the Bank's efforts to upholding country systems, we would like to emphasise that country systems should guide and supplement the



NDB's policies and safeguards, and therefore NDB must urgently strengthen its own policies and systems. This includes ensuring information disclosure, engaging with stakeholders in a free, prior, and informed manner, especially local community representatives, incorporating robust socio-environmental standards in all stages of the project cycle, and integrating gender into all aspects of NDB's structure and operations.

The Bank also shared plans for the forthcoming 4th Annual General Meeting in Cape Town, South Africa in April 2019 and extended an invite to CSOs to co-create the agenda for a seminar on the sideline. They suggested the inclusion of Gender and International Financial Institutions (IFIs) as one of the panel topics. We would like to reiterate our request to the Bank to co-host a day long seminar on Gender and IFIs, as it would contribute to collective learning from other IFIs and gender experts and would support the NDB in integrating gender holistically into its policies and structure.

We thank the NDB for inviting and hosting the CSO representatives. We believe that an open and inclusive process of engaging with civil society is necessary for the transparent and accountable functioning of a public institution like the NDB. We therefore, hope that the NDB would take steps towards institutionalising NDB-CSO engagement in a manner is representative of civil society diversity of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), women's groups, academia, social movements, and affected communities.

We further hope to see the Bank engage and respond to civil society demands more pro-actively, including the main asks put forth by the BFW: -

1. Set up an external multi-stakeholder gender advisor committee
2. Develop a comprehensive, mandatory gender policy to guide all NDB's structure, governance, and operations.
3. Set up an internal gender unit with senior feminist experts within NDB to lead these processes.

We also look forward to working more closely with NDB officials, civil society, media, and government representatives to realise the transformative and sustainable development which is NDB's mandate.