



World Bank Holds Consultation on Future Environment Strategy in Paris

25 February 2010

On 25 February 2010, the World Bank held a consultative meeting on its Environment Strategy 2010. The meeting was held at Sciences Po - *Institut d'Études Politiques de Paris* - and was attended by various members of civil society. The conference was chaired by Laurence Tubiana, founder of the Institute for Sustainable Development and International Relations (IDDRI) and Director of the Department for Sustainable Development at Sciences Po.

Consultation highlights

Urvashi Narain, Senior Environmental Economist and co-team leader of the new Environment Strategy, presented the background and objectives of the new strategy. She explained that the Bank sees environment as a cross-cutting sector as there are many areas – energy, agriculture, water and sanitation and transport – which impact on the environment. Therefore, mainstreaming the environmental aspects between the sectoral strategies is crucial for the Environment Strategy 2010. The World Bank sees climate change as a particular challenge for development. It has estimated that developing countries will bear 70-80 percent of costs of damages caused by climate change. Urbanisation is another environmental challenge - for the first time more people live in cities than in rural areas. As economic growth alone is unlikely to counter threats, especially if it remains carbon intensive, there is an urgent need for climate-smart development.

Participants in the consultation noted that the World Bank's role in sustainable development is to assist countries in policy development and technology transfer in various domains such as investment in new energy resources and transport systems. An efficient poverty reduction strategy for the poorest countries has to involve assistance for debt reduction. Representatives from Veolia Environment and the WWF called for more investments in rural areas, which could partly remedy the problem of migration. Another representative from Friends of the Earth encouraged the Bank to invest more in renewable energy sources in developing countries rather than to resort to investments in coal plants, emphasising that developing countries are not obliged to follow the same coal-based path as developed countries. Another participant stressed the importance of soil protection.

Mrs. Narain stated that access to energy is critical for growth and that World Bank investments in coal plants is a last resource after all other options have been explored. She highlighted the importance of civil society consultation in the elaboration of the new strategy in order to push the World Bank towards new ways of thinking about development.

The second phase of global consultations on the draft Environment Strategy 2010 is planned for August 2010.

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