

## Example of an expert panel

### Expert panel report on the concept of environmental Assessment

#### Example

Example taken from "Year 2000 Meeting of the IAIA", World Bank, 2000.

#### Background

Set up of a panel dedicated to provide feedback from the perspectives of several outstanding personalities, representing multi and bi-lateral organisations, on World Bank efforts to develop good practice regarding safeguard policies, and also to receive indications on how other donors see the safeguard policies and whether they encounter similarities or differences in other organisations.

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## EXPERT PANEL

*Chairperson: Maria Partidario, Professor, University of Lisbon, former president of IAIA.*

### FINAL PANEL – KEY POINTS

1. At the end of the day, stimulated by challenging and innovative ideas generated by breakout groups, a panel was convened to provide feedback from the perspectives of several outstanding personalities, representing multi and bi-lateral organizations, on World Bank efforts to develop good practice regarding safeguard policies, and also to receive indications on how other donors see the safeguard policies and whether they encounter similarities or differences in other organizations.
  2. Panel members included Dr. William Kennedy, from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, who also offered the perspective on other multi-lateral banks; Mr. Peter Croal, from the Canadian International Development Agency and Dr. Jules Scholten from the Dutch Environmental Impact Assessment Commission. The panel was chaired by Dr. Maria do Rosário Partidário, past-President of the IAIA (1997-1998).
  3. Panel members were invited to address some, or all, of the following key points:
    - ◇ The concept of environmental assessment as an umbrella, or comprehensive policy, that integrates environmental, social and health issues;
    - ◇ The triggers for concepts such as appreciable or significant;
    - ◇ The client capacity to respond;
    - ◇ Independent review functions in environmental assessment;
    - ◇ Need for management support of environmental assessment work, that is, need for political commitment from borrowers.
  4. The panel raised key and important aspects related to World Bank leadership in the proliferation of EA systems in the world, in which it was followed by other donors, and the great impact that this process has had on borrowers regarding the prioritization of environmental concerns, and willingness to consider the bigger picture in an integrated manner. The point was made that different donors represent different systems and consequently different clients, with Bill Kennedy pointing to the fact that banks lend money and therefore should not be seen as “donors;” this has an important effect on the perception of clients as to their responsibility regarding the application, and multiplying effect, of investments. Other key points raised included the notions of reputational risk among banks and donors, the public role of donors as many represent public funds, this being a major
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issue in Canada, as reported by Peter Croal, and the issue of accountability and how important that tends to become, namely with the evolving concept of economic valuation of environmental and natural capital. Finally, Jules Scholten reaffirmed the importance of independent review on the effectiveness of EA processes and improved quality of final decisions, reminding of the need to launch an International Committee on Impact Assessment, an idea raised a couple of years ago in the context of IAIA and still waiting to become a reality.

5. The points raised by the panel stimulated an interesting discussion in the room, with a lot of pragmatism from the audience and a good sense of reality on the need to pursue the efforts without losing sight of the functions and objectives that each have, both donors and recipients, bankers and borrowers.

#### REMARKS BY WILLIAM KENNEDY, EBRD

##### *Evolution of EA Requirements at the European Bank for Reconstruction & Development, Update on the Work of the Inter-Multilateral Group on EA*

Dr. William Kennedy, Senior Environmental Adviser at the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), spoke about the way in which the EBRD and a number of regional development banks such as the Asian, African and Inter-American Development Banks had instituted and implemented procedures for environmental assessment. In doing so, he drew three main conclusions:

First, the need for EA has now been recognized throughout the “community” of multilateral financial institutions. Procedures for its implementation have been established and, over time, tailored to individual bank policies and operations. More importantly, it would appear that bank operations teams and project sponsors (i.e. borrowers) have also accepted the need for, and usefulness of, EA.

Second, although the quality of EAs being prepared is improving, the emphasis on application has been at the “project preparation” level. For environmental concerns to become truly integrated into investment decision-making, it will be necessary to move EA both “upstream” and “downstream.” That is to say, more attention will need to be given to Strategic Environmental Assessment, which examines the environmental implications of development policies, plans and programs as well as the actual implementation of environmental management plans associated with projects on the ground.

Third, it is probably safe to say that the quality and usefulness of any particular EA is more dependent on the quality of the individuals who prepare it than on the adherence to a particular procedure or the application of a particular set of methodologies or approaches. This, by extension, means that the practice of EA will improve as greater use is made of well-qualified, local environmental expertise in its preparation and implementation together with increased consultation with affected parties and other interested groups as well as NGOs throughout the EA process.

## REMARKS BY JULES SCHOLTEN, NETHERLANDS EIA COMMISSION

*Importance and Relevance of the Independent Review*

The safeguard policies of the World Bank have been introduced for the environmental, social, cultural and legal appraisal of requests on loans for development activities. The application of the safeguard policies improves the quality of decision-making by the World Bank and thereby reduces the risk that the World Bank is taking decisions that would be detrimental to the ecological, social and cultural environment of the project or plan area. The application of the safeguard policies is an internal requirement of the World Bank that is subject to internal procedures. It is argued that in environmentally, socially and culturally complex situations an external independent review of the environmental, social and cultural information, including proper application of the safeguard policies, will improve the quality of the decision-making. External and independent review will also increase the credibility of these safeguard policies. By way of example, reference is made to the review of the environmental assessments of the Chad oil export project that was carried out between July 1998 and February 2000 by the Commission for EIA in the Netherlands<sup>1</sup>. That review was prepared at the request of the Dutch minister for development co-operation in order to substantiate the position of The Netherlands on the board of directors of the World Bank. In its review the Commission for EIA in the Netherlands found that some sections of the assessment and the procedure did not comply with World Bank standards as laid down in the Environmental Assessment Sourcebook and some of the Operational Directives. The findings of the review were made available to the World Bank and contributed to the quality of the decision-making process.

It is suggested, as an extra safeguard to the application of the safeguard policies of the World Bank, to subject all Category A projects that require a full EA to external independent review. In this context reference is made to a recommendation by the World Commission on Environment and Development (“The Brundtland Commission”) in its report entitled: “Our Common Future” in 1987. That recommendation states that “Interested governments should create an independent assessment body to help developing countries, upon request, evaluate the environmental impact and sustainability of planned development projects.”

## REMARKS BY PETER CROAL, CIDA

*Evolution of EA Requirements, Senior Management Support and Accountability for EA work at CIDA*

CIDA takes its EA commitments seriously. We must abide by our Canadian Law (CEAA) which stipulates that EA is to be applied to development projects, as well as our environmental policy, sustainable development strategy and the conventions that address EA (Climate Change, CBD and Desertification). CIDA recently audited itself to see how we were complying with our own law (CEAA). Results showed that there was room for improvements—two significant modifications include putting our CEAA EA forms in our SAP workflow program and requiring each Vice President to report on CEAA compliance

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<sup>1</sup> Advisory review of the draft environmental assessment of the Chad oil export project in Chad and Cameroon, Utrecht, the Netherlands 2 July 1998; Advisory review of the final environmental assessment of the Chad oil export project in Chad and Cameroon, Utrecht 22 October 1999; Advisory review of the General Oil Spill Plan, Chad oil export project in Chad and Cameroon, Utrecht 22 February 2000.

on a monthly basis to our president. Canada and the United States are the only two countries that have a law stipulating that EA must be done for federal spending, including aid, that is spent outside of the country.

CIDA Vice Presidents have countless issues to address. They are to be congratulated for taking the results of the audit and the compliance plan so seriously. Full compliance is to be reached by July 1, 2000. CIDA must keep a public registry under CEEA that permits, by law, anyone from the public to get access to any material related to an EA done under CEEA. If we are to make the efforts of the World Bank on EA more effective, then it is incumbent upon each country to ensure that its respective Executive Director has good briefings on EA so that their votes and deliberations can be more current and effective.