

The BRICS NDB:

Four principles to make the New Development Bank truly new

This week government delegations from Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa convene at the BRICS Summit in Ufa, Russia, to launch the New Development Bank (NDB). We, the undersigned civil society groups and social movements, agree with the need for a new kind of development. The existing development model in force in many emerging and developing countries is one that favors export-oriented, commodity driven strategies and policies that are socially harmful, environmentally unsustainable and have led to greater inequalities between and within countries. If the New Development Bank is going to break with this history, it must commit itself to the following four principles:

1) Promote development for all.

Investment cannot bring development if it does not meet people's needs. The NDB should support inclusive, accessible, participative development that is driven by communities, addresses poverty and inequality, removes barriers to access and opportunity, and respects human rights, local cultures, and the environment. It should promote transformational investment that moves beyond centralized, large-scale megaprojects, and instead focuses on social infrastructure that serves the most poor and disenfranchised populations, providing access to services, housing, education, and supporting local economies.

2) Be transparent and democratic.

An institution dedicated to the public interest must be accessible to the public. Therefore the NDB should ensure that its documentation, policy development, and operations are transparent, accessible, and participative so that those communities who will be most impacted by NDB activities have access to information and the ability to influence and shape development investments and decisions.

The NDB must build governance structures that are democratic, transparent, and representative and guarantee that providers and beneficiaries are treated equally and in a non-discriminatory way. Development is not solely the domain of governments, though governments are ultimately accountable for it. The NDB must provide formal avenues for other constituencies - including but not limited to trade unions, social movements, communities, and NGOs – to play a role in choosing, designing, implementing, and monitoring NDB projects.

3) Set strong standards and make sure they're followed.

The NDB should adopt strong standards to ensure that local communities and the environment benefit, rather than are harmed by NDB-financed activities. NDB's own policies and procedures should be informed by the highest internationally available standards on human rights and environmental protection, and as a minimum, should be consistent with international law. Where a host country's domestic legislation differs from the NDB's policies, the standard which provides the highest level of protection for communities and the environment should apply.

The NDB should also develop systems and mechanisms for greater accountability, including independent mechanisms that hold the NDB accountable, deliver remedy to communities if projects cause harm, and ensure that the institution is able to learn from its investments and continually improve. The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights provide a good starting point with their Effectiveness Criteria for Non-Judicial Grievance Mechanisms.

4) Promote sustainable development.

Sustainable development is central to the NDB's mandate. Given the reality of climate change and the dire impact it is having and will increasingly have on prospects for development, the NDB's investments should promote environmentally sustainable, long-term solutions and resilience. This means respecting communities' rights to their lands, resources and a clean environment, and breaking away from the model of polluting, resource-intensive, predatory extraction which has long been the reality in developing countries.

If the BRICS can help create an institution that lives up to the above principles, they will have done the cause of international cooperation a great service, true to the name "New Development Bank". This is what we, the undersigned civil society groups and social movements, expect from the BRICS, and we are eager to collaborate to make the NDB a vehicle for a new development model.

Signed,

Conectas Direitos Humanos – Brazil

Friends of the Siberian Forests - Russia

Centre for Applied Legal Studies - South Africa

Ecoa - Ecologia e Ação - Brazil

Consumer Unity and Trust Society (CUTS International) – India

OT Watch - Mongolia

Foundation for Environmental Rights, Advocacy & Development (FENRAD) - Nigeria

Jamaa Resource Initiatives - Kenya

ActionAid International

Rivers without Boundaries - Mongolia

Vasudha Foundation - India

Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights - USA and Switzerland

Global Network for Good Governance (GNGG) - Cameroon

Plataforma de Direitos Humanos – Dhesca - Brazil

Friends of the Earth US - USA

Foundation For The Conservation Of The Earth (FOCONE)- Nigeria

Asociación Ambiente y Sociedad - Colombia

Foro Ciudadano de Participación por la Justicia y los Derechos Humanos - Argentina

Instituto de Pesquisa e Formação Indígena (Iepé) - Brazil

Social Justice Connection - Canada

Coordinadora de Comunidades Afectadas por la Construcción de la Hidroeléctrica Chixoy (COCAHICH) - Guatemala

Fundar, Centro de Análisis e Investigación - Mexico

Actions pour les Droits, l'Environnement et la Vie (ADEV) - Democratic Republic of the Congo

CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation - South Africa

Peoples Front Against IFIs - India

Fórum da Amazônia Oriental (FAOR) - Brazil

Movimiento Ciudadano frente al Cambio Climático (MOCICC) - Peru

International Rivers – International

Fundación para el Desarrollo de Políticas Sustentables (FUNDEPS) - Argentina

Otros Mundos - Mexico

Haldia Dock Complex Contractor Shramik Union (HDCCSU) - India

Sexual Minorities Uganda (SMUG) - Uganda

Asociación Interamericana para la Defensa del Ambiente (AIDA)- Regional

Rede de Cooperação Amazônica (RCA) – Brazil

Red Mexicana de Afectados por la Minería (REMA) - Mexico

Lumière Synergie pour le Développement - Senegal

Derecho, Ambiente y Recursos Naturales (DAR) - Peru

Centro Terra Viva- Estudos e Advocacia Ambiental - Mozambique

Indian Social Action Forum (INSAF) - India

Inclusive Development International – USA

Fundación Ambiente y Recursos Naturales - Argentina

FIAN International – Brazil

Accountability Counsel – USA

JUSTICIA Asbl - Democratic Republic of the Congo

L'Association des Jeunes Filles pour la Promotion de L'Espace Francophone – Guinea –
Conakry

Forest Peoples Programme – UK

Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND) – Lebanon

International Accountability Project

Southern African Faith Communities' Environment Institute – South Africa

ONG HADASSA – Gabon

Institute for Economic Research on Innovation - South Africa

Amnesty International

Progressive Plantation Workers Union (PPWU) - India

Rede Brasileira Pela Integração dos Povos (REBRIP) - Brazil