

For Immediate Release
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CSOs Urge AfDB to Promote the Interests of Ordinary Africans over Mega Investors at its Annual Meetings

Busan, South Korea. As the African Development Bank (AfDB) meets in Busan, South Korea from May 21-25 to discuss *Industrialising Africa*, Civil society Organisations (CSOs) from across the continent organizing around the Bank's CSO Forum, red flagged the Bank's steer towards mega investments without a clear action plan for human centred inclusive development.

Civil Society Groups issued a [collective statement](#) urging the Bank to put people at the centre of industrialization by investing in African owned business and local Small and Medium Enterprises that are driving sustainable development in their communities. They rejected the Bank's approach that drums the "privatising development" narrative, such as the pursuit of mega Public Private Partnerships, which tend to skew benefits to the wealthy top, while passing down risks to the poor and vulnerable bottom.

"While recent pronouncements by the AfDB Leadership particularly the Bank President Akiwumi Adesina point towards making 'Africa a landing strip for foreign investment', equally, the bank should provide a clear roadmap on how these investments will promote inclusive growth and not trample over the rights of poor people," said Apollos Nwafor, Oxfam International Pan Africa Director.

The groups urged the Bank to critically review its strategies and adopt inclusive development models that address the growing inequality crisis in Africa.

"We commend the Bank's ambitious commitments to reach universal access to energy by 2025, but now the Bank must consider the use of clean and affordable energy sources instead of coal and

harmful hydro. Increasing evidence points to the fact that Energy projects like Grand Inga are too costly and lock away resources that could be used for other much needed services, and yet, once connected, these would not increase access for the majority, who are not connected to the grid,” said Rudo Sanyanga of International Rivers.

In order to reach the Bank’s targets, Thuli Makama of Oil Change International said *“The AfDB should devote at least a third of its energy budget for clean cooking and renewable energy that will benefit rural communities living beyond the grid.”*

The groups called on the Bank to improve civil society and community participation in the selection, design and implementation of projects, and highlighted the need for broader consultations on key Bank policies such as the gender strategy, the social and environmental safeguards system, and the accountability mechanism.

“While the Bank has taken initial steps to open to civil society through platforms like the recent civil society dialogue forum and inviting the participation of civil society members to some of its meetings, there is still room for improvement, especially at country level. Too often communities lack proper information, which is why we have been calling for the Bank to ensure meaningful consultation with communities, to open its country offices to civil society through Open Days, and ensure national consultation during country strategy development,” said Tirivangani Mutazu with African Forum and Network on Debt and Development (AFRODAD), speaking from Busan.

“Communities that are impacted by AfDB-financed projects too often lack access to remedy. Free Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) and respect for human rights are often ignored at some stage in these development projects,” said John Nimly Brownell of Green Advocates International – Liberia.

“The AfDB needs to move from being ‘business between the bank, multinational corporations and

governments,' but rather take the bank to the African people for community-led development involving CSOs participation."

"The AfDB is promoting the High 5 as its core strategy to transform Africa, but within those High 5, critical issues of gender, governance and accountability are still missed," said Aly Sagne, of Lumière Synergie pour le Développement. "This is why CSOs are very concerned."

Read the full Civil Society Statement in English and French here:

<https://rightsindevelopment.org/news/civil-society-recommendations-on-the-afdb/> *Issued as part of a civil society strategy meeting on the sidelines of the 2018 Civil Society Forum at AfDB headquarters Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire just prior to the Annual Meetings in Busan.

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