

To: World Bank Executive Directors
Cc: World Bank Management
Date: 3 May 2021

Re: Africa Energy Approach paper discussion

Dear World Bank Executive Directors,

In the midst of the unprecedented challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the need for a just, sustainable energy transition is even more urgent. As such the World Bank Group must strive to ensure climate considerations form a key pillar of the Bank's response. For us, this means the Bank must cease investing in fossil fuels, [scale up investments](#) in decentralized renewable energy, and expand finance for energy access, including clean cooking, while embedding these efforts in a much wider 'just recovery' from the COVID-19 crisis, that can serve as a bridge to a 'just transition' to a zero-carbon future, more generally. The upcoming discussion around World Bank's engagement in the African continent to support borrowing countries energy sector represents a huge opportunity for the Bank to walk the talk when it comes to climate solutions and increasing the Bank's share in supporting energy access projects, given the existing global financing gap for energy access, particularly for the least cost solutions needed by people living in energy poverty (SEforALL, 2019).

At the 6 March 2020 meeting between European Executive Directors (EDs) and civil society representatives in Brussels, EDs indicated that the World Bank would undertake an Africa energy strategy review in that year. The management of the Bank also informed civil society of similar plans in May 2020. Both the management and the EDs promised that this review would be inclusive and participatory to harness the views of civil society and energy-poor communities. This process was delayed into 2021 due to COVID-19 pandemic.

The World Bank must ensure that investments in renewable energy (i.e. solar and wind) and energy storage are prioritised in this strategy, and that there is a clear strategy for supporting energy access in African states. Not only can energy access have important implications for reducing poverty by catalysing income-generating activities and employment, it is vital in order to ensure electrification of healthcare facilities in more remote regions – as already had been well-documented by the Bank's research prior to the current pandemic. Thus, investing in energy access can be seen as part of a broader strategy of building greater resilience, particularly in Sub-Saharan African countries where access needs remain acute.

At this stage, civil society organizations are unclear if and when the Bank management plans to open a process to consult with civil society groups on this important Bank policy document. As such, we demand again from the management and Bank's executive directors to keep their word and put in place an open and transparent process that will enable civil society to provide input that will shape this new Bank approach and ensure integrated energy planning that is

responsive to citizens' wider development needs and inclusive in line with the demands of our partners in Africa and beyond.

To start this open and transparent process, we request information on the following initially:

1. When will the World Bank publicly disclose the Africa Energy Approach paper that is to be discussed with the Board on May 4th, 2021?
2. What is the specific purpose of the Africa Energy Approach paper?
3. Is the May 4th version of the Africa Energy Approach paper a draft? How will the World Bank incorporate the civil society input to this paper, especially from African civil society organizations?
4. Will the approach paper be followed by an Africa Energy Strategy? If so, what is the timeline and consultation process?

The World Bank Group has been a major supporter of fossil fuel projects over the 75 years of its existence and provided [over \\$12 billion to fossil fuel projects](#) in the last 5 years. The Bank should send a clear and unambiguous signal to other public finance institutions, the private sector, and markets that it will respond to the climate emergency we find ourselves in by unequivocally ending support for fossil fuel-based development and promoting renewable-based energy access solutions. The World Bank should at least match the level of ambition e.g. in the [Energy Lending Policy](#) of the European Investment Bank. This new policy should be used as such an opportunity for the Bank.

We remain available and ready to engage in an open and transparent consultation process in the weeks ahead.

Signatories:

Alliance of CSOs for Clean Energy Access (ACCESS)
AbibiNsroma Foundation, Ghana
Africa Coal Network
African Coalition for Sustainable Energy and Access
Asian Energy Network (AEN)
Bank Information Center, US
Big Shift Global
Bretton Woods Project, UK
Centre for Capacity Improvement for the Well-being of the vulnerable-CIWED, Ghana
Centre for Citizens Conserving (CECIC), Uganda
Christian Aid
Earthlife Africa Jhb, South Africa
Earthlife Namibia, Namibia
Friends of the Earth U.S.
Green Advocates, Liberia
Greenpeace

Initiative for Right View, Bangladesh
Jamaa Resource Initiatives, Kenya
Lumière Synergie pour le développement, Senegal
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
NGO Forum on ADB
Oil Change International
Recourse, The Netherlands
Save Lamu, Kenya
South Durban Community Environmental Alliance, South Africa
Swedish Society for Nature Conservation, Sweden
urgewald, Germany
Witness Radio Organisation, Uganda
ZERO Regional Environment Organization, Zimbabwe
350.org