

**IMMEDIATE
ATTENTION**

EBD/05/17

March 7, 2005

To: Members of the Executive Board

From: The Secretary

Subject: **Proposed Procedures for Accreditation of Civil Society Organizations
to the Annual and Spring Meetings**

Attached for consideration by the Executive Directors is a note on proposed procedures for accreditation of Civil Society Organizations to the Annual and Spring Meetings, prepared by the External Relations Departments of the Fund and the Bank in consultation with the Offices of the Secretaries of the Fund and the Bank. This note is being simultaneously circulated to the Bank's Executive Directors for consideration.

It is not proposed to bring this matter to the agenda of the Executive Board for discussion unless an Executive Director so requests **by the close of business on Monday, March 14, 2005**. In the absence of such a request, the proposal will be deemed approved by the Executive Board and it will be so recorded in the minutes of the next meeting thereafter.

Questions may be referred in the Fund to Mr. M. Bell (ext. 38670) or Ms. Nardin (ext. 34899) and in the Bank to Ms. Reynolds (473-0049).

It is not intended that this document will be published.

This document will shortly be posted on the extranet, a secure website for Executive Directors and member country authorities.

Att: (1)

Other Distribution:
Department Heads

Proposed Procedures for Accreditation of Civil Society Organizations to the Annual and Spring Meetings

1. This note recommends changes in the procedures for handling the accreditation of civil society organizations (CSOs) to the Annual and Spring Meetings of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. The proposal has been developed by the External Affairs Vice Presidency (EXT) in the Bank and the External Relations (EXR) Department in the Fund, in consultation with the Secretaries of the Bank and the Fund, and the Joint Secretariat.
2. Both the Bank and Fund have taken steps in recent years to expand and deepen their engagement with CSOs in policy dialogue and poverty reduction efforts, in recognition of how such engagement can contribute to development effectiveness and persuasive policy advice in member countries. In January 2005, the Bank's Board endorsed a paper which reviews the Bank's experience in this area, and proposes a set of priority actions for strengthening Bank-CSO engagement in the future.¹ In 2003, the Fund's Board, in its review of external communications strategy, welcomed the development of guidelines for Fund staff outreach to CSOs.²
3. In conjunction with this deepening engagement by the Bank and Fund with CSOs around the globe, the dialogue with CSOs at the time of the Bank-Fund Annual and Spring Meetings has become increasingly significant, both in terms of the number of organization attending and the quality of the discussions.³ CSOs routinely participate in sessions of dialogue which are organized with Bank and Fund management and staff on different issues alongside the official Meetings. CSOs also participate as co-organizers of events, such as the joint Oxfam–World Bank launch of the Education For All initiative two years ago. Many Bank and Fund Executive Directors as well as Governors choose to hold meetings with CSOs during the Annual and Spring Meetings period.

¹ *Issues and Options for Improving Engagement Between the World Bank and Civil Society Organizations*, Board Reference #R2004-0201.

² *A Review of the Fund's External Communications Strategy*
<http://www.imf.org/external/np/exr/docs/2003/021303.htm> and *Guide for Staff Relations with Civil Society Organizations*
<http://www.imf.org/external/np/cso/eng/2003/101003.htm>

³ The number of CSOs granted accreditation at the 2004 Annual Meetings was 271, up from 2002's 211. Numbers of CSOs attending Annual Meetings overseas vary wildly, from 310 in Prague in 2000 to 73 in Dubai in 2003.

4. Both institutions have found CSO participation in the Meetings to be generally constructive, and to provide useful inputs to policy dialogue and project development. The fact that the institutions welcome and facilitate CSO participation also has helped to improve the institutions' public image, to defuse criticism and the likelihood of large protests, and to bring a number of critical organizations into a more effective dialogue. No security risks have been encountered with the accredited CSOs.
5. Currently, the attendance by representatives of CSOs are cleared on a case by case basis by Executive Directors, with the assistance of the Joint Secretariat. CSOs apply for accreditation electronically and these requests are then sent to the Executive Directors for clearance. CSOs who have been approved for the previous two Meetings are pre-approved on a no-objection basis.
6. Despite the increased openness and improved dialogue, the process of accreditation of CSOs to the Annual Meetings has itself become an issue of contention between the Bank/Fund and the CSOs. The process has been seen as lacking transparency or clear rules for accreditation, and has frequently led to substantial delays in accrediting CSO representatives, and has created the impression that there is not a level playing field for access to the Meetings by CSOs from different parts of the world.
7. These and other concerns were raised by CSOs at their town hall meeting with Messrs. Wolfensohn, Köhler, Brown and Manuel at the 2003 Annual Meetings in Dubai. For the 2004 Annual Meetings, some steps were taken jointly by the Bank and Fund to streamline the accreditation process. However, problems persisted and CSOs raised the issue once again at their town hall meeting with Messrs. Brown, de Rato, Manuel and Wolfensohn. Mr. Wolfensohn again pledged to address the problems.
8. The current CSO accreditation system continues to pose political and reputational risks for the institutions. We propose adapting the system to bring it into line with that already in place for press accreditation. Staff from EXT and EXR would take full responsibility for clearing the CSO representatives. The Joint Secretariat will create a new CSO badge, distinct from the Visitors badge that is currently given to CSOs. Requests for accreditation as a CSO would be assessed against information available to EXR/EXT. An important source of information would be the Bank's network of civil society officers, who are knowledgeable about the CSOs based in their countries. It would also be possible for EXR/EXT to consult Executive Directors' offices to seek information where necessary. EXR/EXT would also provide, for the information of Executive Directors, a complete list of participants in advance of the meetings.

9. These changes will result in a simpler, more efficient and more transparent process for all concerned. It would distinguish CSOs from other visitors, e.g., private sector. This distinction is justified, given both our different working relationships with CSOs, and the fact that CSO accreditation has become such a flashpoint of concern.
10. This proposal is fully consistent with the objective of ensuring a safe and secure environment for the conduct of the Annual and Spring Meetings. It will now be possible to ensure that more consistent standards for assessing requests for accreditation are being applied across the full spectrum of CSO representatives which request accreditation. EXT/EXR will coordinate closely with the Joint Secretariat and other Bank and Fund departments in implementing the new arrangements to ensure smooth implementation.
11. This proposal also reflects lessons learned from the CSO accreditation process for other multilateral organizations, including the WTO, multilateral development banks and the United Nations. For example, the WTO, which manages a much larger number of NGO representatives at their ministerial meetings (e.g., 1,700 in the 2003 Cancun ministerial) runs a system similar to that now proposed by staff. The WTO external relations department clears all requests and sends a list of CSO participants to member governments for information. WTO has reported that this simplifies the process for all stakeholders and also removes the potential for arbitrary denial. There is also a proposal now before the United Nations General Assembly to give the UN Secretariat primary responsibility for CSO accreditation.
12. If Executive Directors are in agreement with the proposal, staff of EXT and EXR would implement the new procedures for the 2005 Spring and Annual Meetings, in close cooperation and consultation with the Bank and Fund Secretaries Departments.