



Asociación Interamericana para la Defensa del Ambiente
Interamerican Association for Environmental Defense

Mexico City, October 23, 2013

DR. JIM YONG KIM
PRESIDENT
THE WORLD BANK GROUP

Dear Dr. Kim:

We are writing to express our deepest concern regarding the World Bank Group decision to start financing and promoting large hydroelectric projects as “sustainable energy.” We urge you to review the information about negative impacts that large dams have had on the environment and human rights in the Americas, and to reconsider that decision.

Large dams commonly cause severe harm to the environment. Underwater decomposition of trees and plants releases major quantities of methane, contributing to climate change. Large dams degrade water quality and sanitation both upstream and downstream from the artificial modification of river systems. Degradation of aquatic ecosystems leads to loss of biodiversity. Seismic instability is another common consequence of dam construction.

These environmental harms often violate human rights protected by international legal instruments. These projects repeatedly generate health risks, block access to traditional food sources, and interfere with the ability to earn a livelihood. They displace entire communities, interfering with the human rights to freedom of movement, property, housing, and just compensation. State sponsors of large dams routinely fail to produce comprehensive environmental and social impact assessments, which are required by international law. Access to the information that should be provided by such an assessment is essential to ensuring the human rights to informed consent and prior consultation. Specific international laws and standards that apply to indigenous, afro-descendant and tribal peoples are routinely ignored. In some cases, public protest to ill-considered dam projects is criminalized, contrary to international human rights law.

Many organizations and institutions, including the World Commission on Dams, have identified these negative consequences. AIDA has also produced a report analyzing the effects of large dams on the environment and human rights, “Large Dams in the Americas.” The executive summary of the report (in English) and the full version (in Spanish) are attached to this letter.

AIDA stands with the World Bank Group in supporting development in Latin America. But that development should be sustainable. It should not come at the expense of the environment and human rights. Promotion of truly renewable resources, including wind, solar, and geothermal energy, can also encourage development that sustains growing economies, thriving environments, and respect for human rights.

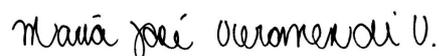
We insist that the World Bank Group finance only projects that abide by international law and standards, and give due and full consideration to alternative energy sources and efficiency measures. We would be more than happy to help the World Bank Group to drive true, sustainable development and to promote projects that increase human well-being while also protecting the environment and human rights.

We hope you find this information useful and incorporate it into World Bank policy.

Sincerely,



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