

Civil society demands the end of the 'gentleman's agreement' and calls for merit-based, open and transparent World Bank presidential selection process

Via e-mail

To: World Bank executive directors

Cc: World Bank President, David Malpass; Managing Director of Operations, Axel van Trotsenburg; Managing Director and World Bank Group Chief Financial Officer, Anshula Kant; Managing Director and World Bank Group Chief Administrative Officer, Shaolin Yang; Acting Managing Director, Development Policy and Partnerships, Mamta Murthi; Senior Vice President and WBG General Counsel and Vice President, Compliance, Christopher Stephebens; Senior Vice President and World Bank Group Chief Economist, Indermit Gill

The undersigned organisations and individuals write to demand that the [World Bank](#) use the opportunity of the resignation of President David Malpass to heed long-standing calls from global civil society and countries from the **Global South**, and ensure the next World Bank president is selected in accordance with a merit-based, open and transparent process, underpinned by well-defined and publicly available selection criteria and civil society engagement with the candidates. The time has surely come to put an end to the archaic gentleman's agreement, which has its origins in the times of empire and continues to damage the institution's standing and legitimacy.

The selection of the **World Bank's** next president takes place at a time of mounting global challenges, such as the existential [climate](#) and nature crisis, rising inequality, increasing debt distress and the related increase in social and political instability. It also occurs against the backdrop of increasing threats of fragmentation of the multilateral order. The proposed expansion of the BRICS grouping and the establishment of the New Development Bank and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank are clear evidence of the frustration with and consequences of the continued lack of democratic legitimacy of the Bretton Woods Institutions, and the need for an urgent change in their governance structure.

Discussions about the World Bank's evolution roadmap, the G20 MDBs' capital adequacy frameworks, alongside the Bridgetown Initiative and commitments made at COP26 to meet global goals for **nature**, climate and people, are signs of a recognition that the World Bank must change if it is to rise to the occasion, meet its development mandate and gain the trust of the population and states of the Global South.

The next president must have the qualifications, experience and commitment to integrity to ensure that the Bank's policies and approaches seriously engage with the vast academic and civil society literature that documents the need for urgent reform. The president must ensure reforms are the result of a clear, critical and evidence-based analysis of the serious flaws and shortcomings of the World Bank's approach to date.

As the world commemorates the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of **Human**

Civil society demands the end of the 'gentleman's agreement' and calls for merit-based, open and transparent World Bank presidential selection process

Rights and the 50th anniversary of the UN General Assembly Declaration on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order, we demand that the criteria for the next World Bank president include:

Minimum of 20 years of professional work experience in the field of sustainable **economic** and social development, including at international and country levels;

A demonstrated commitment to international human rights law and standards, to ensure that the World Bank does not work against human **rights** but to advance prosperity for all, including by developing a human rights policy for the institution and helping to deliver the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment;

A demonstrated understanding and commitment to urgently tackle climate change and ensure development supports nature, peoples and the planet;

Sufficient experience in development issues to lead a critical analysis of the Bank's development approach and private sector bias to date;

An understanding of and commitment to feminist principles, equitable development and the **green** and just transition;

A commitment to ensuring that World Bank policies and programmes advance community-led development, are truly country-led and support ending poverty, reducing inequality and creating shared prosperity for all, as well as the economic transformation necessary for a global green and just transition;

A commitment to engagement with global civil **society** and, importantly, civil society at the country and local levels, and with under-represented communities, as core to its mission.

We also demand that the selection process be open and **transparent** and includes an opportunity for civil society to engage with the candidates. In that regard, we demand that:

The World Bank publishes the revised and detailed selection criteria, including the minimum standards outlined above;

Shareholder votes are made public;

The World Bank hosts exchanges between candidates and civil society at the upcoming Spring Meetings in Washington DC.

The process used to select the next **World Bank** president will speak volumes about whether the reforms undertaken under the banner of an 'evolution' of the Bank will result in urgently needed change in policies and approach, and thus enable it to play a positive role in supporting an equitable, feminist, green and just transition, or will rather result in a little



Civil society demands the end of the 'gentleman's agreement' and calls for merit-based, open and transparent World Bank presidential selection process

changed, but marginally better resourced, institution.

Source: [bretton woods project](#)