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Written Statement of the European Investment Bank for the thematic session on promoting the principles of the Aarhus Convention in International Forums

Twenty-second meeting of the Working Group of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention  
Geneva, 19–21 June 2018

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The European Investment Bank (EIB) is very grateful for this invitation to provide a statement at this Working Group of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention, in particular at this thematic segment on the promotion of the Convention's principles in International Forums.

It is my pleasure to provide an update on behalf of the EIB on the developments and progress made in terms of the three pillars to the Aarhus Convention.

I will begin with an update on Public Access to Information about the environment.

Openness and Transparency are key EU concepts, enshrined in the EU Treaty and Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. The EIB considers that as a bank and a public institution, openness on how it makes decisions, works and implements EU policies, strengthens its credibility and its accountability to citizens. Transparency also contributes to increasing the efficiency and sustainability of the Bank's operations, and enhances its relations with external stakeholders.

In fulfilment of the EU applicable framework, the EIB set-up a Public Register on 2nd January 2014 in order to proactively disclose its environmental and social information.

The first challenge was to define the scope of the environmental information held by the EIB. This was not a simple task, given that the definition of "environment" can be interpreted in a rather broad sense.

The EIB has systematically published since the setup of the register its environmental and social data sheets (ESDSs). These are documents produced by the EIB's team of project specialists and which summarise the EIB's environmental and social due diligence of the individual projects it finances.

The ESDS details any potential environmental hurdles which may be encountered during the project set-up, any mitigation measures necessary, as well as positive expected environmental outcomes. The ESDS describes any environmental and social conditions attached to the project being financed that need to be incorporated into the finance contract.

The EIB has also from the beginning published the Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) and Non-Technical Summaries (NTS) associated with its projects, received from project Promoters. Additionally the EIB publishes its key environmental policy documents, reports, and guidelines. These documents include EIB's Environmental and Social Handbook, and its Carbon Footprint Reports.

The EIB then widened the scope to include social documentation, such as Livelihood and Compensation Plans, Resettlement Action Plans, Stakeholder Engagement Plans, and Gender Action Plans.

The EIB has very recently decided to also proactively publish in the register its final audited climate action database. The climate action database contains climate action target data related to the investments financed by the EIB.

The EIB continues to look at the scope of its environmental information in order to promote as much access as possible to the public.

To provide you with some figures: The EIB's public register currently contains 1797 ESDSs, 1467 EIA/NTS, 35 social documents, and 30 policy documents.

Moving to the topic of Public Participation in environmental decision making, I am pleased to announce that the EIB is in the process of updating its overarching environmental and social policy, currently called "EIB

Statement on Environmental and Social Principles and Standards, approved by EIB's Board of Directors back in 2009. The process will include an extensive internal and external public consultation procedure that is very likely to be launched in 2019. A detailed stakeholders' consultation plan will be disclosed to the public, once available. We invite you to follow our webpage and social media to follow the progress of this consultation procedure, and at a later stage to be actively involved in the process once it has been launched.

Lastly, on behalf of our head of Complaints Mechanism I would also like to share with you an update on developments and progress made in terms of Access to Justice.

The Review of the Complaints Mechanism is ongoing. The EIB is pleased to note the interest that the revision of the policy has attracted from members of the public and civil society in general. By the end of September 2017, the EIB had received written contributions from 30 organizations and individuals, providing the Bank with rich and diverse feedback and suggestions for the review. Contributions came from representatives of non-governmental organizations and networks, as well as from individual stakeholders. The review is ongoing, and the Bank is carefully taking into account the contributions received.

The revised draft is currently scheduled to be presented to the Board for its approval during Q3 of 2018.

The new policy will become effective after Board approval.

In conclusion, access to environmental information, and information in more general terms is a matter that the EIB takes very seriously and we take pride in proactively providing this information as well as responding to any requests for information in a timely manner. I encourage you to consult our public register at <http://www.eib.org/infocentre/registers/index.htm> and we welcome any suggestions for improvements to it.

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P. Laloux on behalf of European Investment Bank

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