

ASAD ALAM
Regional Director

May 22, 2012

Ms. Ketevan Tsikhelashvili
Chairwoman of the Coordination Council
Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum Georgian National Platform
Tbilisi, Georgia

Dear Ms. Tsikhelashvili:

*Re: Your Letter of May 11, 2012
on the Law on Amendments to Some Legislative Acts of Georgia*

Thank you for your letter of 11 May, 2012, addressed to Mr. Robert B. Zoellick, President of the World Bank. On behalf of the World Bank, we welcome your interest in environmental protection in Georgia and believe that active engagement by the NGO sector can play an important role in strengthening the environmental management system. We also note the concerns you have highlighted in connection with the recent amendments to the environmental policies in Georgia. We are also following these developments closely, including how the legal and regulatory changes are applied.

With respect to your concern over the possible adverse environmental and social impacts of some development projects and programs, the World Bank Group—as you know—maintains high standards with respect to its own environmental and social safeguard policies. All *investment operations* need to abide by these policies to ensure that any potential significant damage is avoided or mitigated. Our current portfolio of projects—in roads, regional, and municipal development—conform to the same policy. In addition, through these investment projects, we have sought to strengthen the relevant environmental frameworks and bring clear benefits to the population in terms of job creation, improvement in access and quality of municipal and social services, reduction in transport times and costs, and general improvement in the quality of life of beneficiaries.

As for our *development policy operations*, these are also prepared in line with our operational policies, including with respect to the environment. We are required to determine whether specific country policies supported by the Bank-financed operation are likely to cause significant effects on the country's environment, forests, and other natural resources. For country policies with likely significant effects, the Bank assesses in the Program Document the borrower's systems for reducing such adverse effects and enhancing positive effects, drawing on relevant country-level or sectoral environmental analysis. If there are significant gaps in the analysis or shortcomings in the borrower's systems, the Bank describes in the Program Document how such gaps or shortcomings would be addressed before or during program implementation, as appropriate.

We appreciate you sharing your concerns on environmental issues with us, and look forward to continuing our dialogue with civil society on Georgia's development prospects, opportunities, and challenges. We also promote full compliance by governments to their obligations under international treaties. Our country partnership strategy also supports Georgia's greater integration with the EU as

well as with the global economy, which we believe is a key driver for the country's development. Please also note that all documents related to Bank-financed operations—and Bank policies—are available on our website (www.worldbank.org) for easy access and reference.

Yours sincerely,

Asad Alam

cc: Mr. Dimitri Gvindadze, Minister of Finance
Mr. Rudolf Jan Treffers, Executive Director for Georgia, the World Bank