



STAFF ASSOCIATION

# update

## Open Letter to the Executive Directors on Presidential Succession Process

August 8, 2016

Dear Executive Directors,

The five-year term of World Bank Group President, Dr. Jim Yong Kim, ends in June 2017. While this is many months away, we understand that active discussions on the leadership transition are now taking place. It is our hope and expectation that these discussions include a serious conversation about implementing the *new process* for selecting the individual who will lead us for the next five years.

The World Bank Group Staff Association, as representatives of over 15,000 staff, requests that you adopt a search and selection process that ensures we will be led by the best the world has to offer. Let us explain why and how.

### Living up to our principles

At the World Bank Group we preach principles of good governance, transparency, diversity, international competition, and merit-based selection. Unfortunately, none of these principles have applied to the appointment of past World Bank Group Presidents.

Instead, we have accepted decades of backroom deals which, twelve times in a row, selected an American male.

This must change.

We are encouraged that there are strong voices among Board members to consider a selection process focused on merit, and underpinned by an open, transparent, international competition.

We came close in 2012. The year before, an April 2011 [report](#) by the joint Fund/Bank Development Committee responded to the Governors' calls for an "open, merit-based, and transparent process" with the agreement that the new "selection process of the President will be implemented for the next Presidential selection round." Several candidates were identified to succeed Mr. Zoellick and, to staff's surprise and delight, there was an unprecedented global conversation around who would best lead the World Bank Group. However, in the end we reverted to the status quo.

### With transparency comes legitimacy

The world has changed, and we must change with it. Unless we revisit the rules-of-the-game, the World Bank Group faces the real possibility of becoming an anachronism on the

international stage. We have now operated for 70 years with an arcane and outdated process. The United Nations, also 70-years-old, is ahead of us with a laudable [selection procedure](#) guided by principles of transparency and inclusivity, and explicit diversity objectives.

Diversity of background and nationality is at the core of what makes the World Bank Group strong, influential, and effective. When recruiting staff, we are studiously careful that short-lists contain qualified women (this is, after all, 2016). We agonize over the diversity of our staff, for good reason and with concrete results to show for our efforts. We should similarly strive for diversity at the very top.

### **Staff and our clients deserve the best that the world can offer**

Our annual Employee Engagement Survey has, for two years running, made it painfully clear that the World Bank Group is experiencing a crisis of leadership. Four out of five staff affirm that we clearly understand and embrace the institution's overall goals. However, in stark contrast, only one in three understand where the senior management team is leading us. Even fewer believe that our senior management creates a culture of openness and trust.

Let there be an international call for candidates, women and men, with clear qualification criteria, followed by nominations and a long-listing process handled by a credible search committee, together with a transparent interview and selection process.

This is not too much to ask. Staff and clients of the World Bank Group alike demand nothing less than the best the world can offer. We ask you, the Executive Directors, to help us achieve this.

Signed,

Executive Committee  
World Bank Group Staff Association

P.S. – As usual, the Staff Association welcomes comments from staff. Share them with us [HERE](#).

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T 202.473.9000

E [staffassociation@worldbank.org](mailto:staffassociation@worldbank.org)

[sa.worldbank.org](http://sa.worldbank.org)