



CEE Bankwatch Network
Na Rozcesti 1434/6
190 00 Praha 9 - Liben
Czech Republic
Email: main@bankwatch.org
http://www.bankwatch.org

Bulgaria:

Centre for Environmental
Information and Education
(CEIE)

Za Zemiata, For the Earth

Croatia:

Green Action

Czech Republic:

Centrum pro dopravu a
energetiku (CDE)

Hnutí DUHA

Estonia:

Estonian Green Movement-FoE

Georgia:

Green Alternative

Hungary:

National Society of
Conservationists - Friends of
the Earth Hungary (MTVSZ)

Latvia:

Latvian Green Movement

Lithuania:

Atgaja

Macedonia:

Eko-vest

Poland:

Polish Green Network (PGN)

Russia:

Sakhalin Environmental Watch

Serbia:

Center for Ecology and
Sustainable Development
(CEKOR)

Slovakia:

Friends of the Earth - Center
for Environmental Public
Advocacy (FoE-CEPA)

Ukraine:

National Ecological Centre of
Ukraine (NECU)

CEE Bankwatch Network's
mission is to prevent
environmentally and socially
harmful impacts of
international development
finance, and to promote
alternative solutions and
public participation.

FROM:

Mark Fodor
Executive Director
CEE Bankwatch Network
c/o MTVSZ, Üllői út 91b
1091 Budapest
Hungary

TO:

Sir Suma Chakrabarti
President, EBRD
One Exchange Square
London, EC2A 2JN
United Kingdom

Dear Suma,

It is with great concern that I see the EBRD opening up to Uzbekistan. In 2007, your bank took a commendable stance on human rights: By suspending your operations in the country in response to the human rights abuses there, you sent a powerful message. We see today that the bank is reconsidering its previous decision to suspend operations. While there is clearly an opportunity for the country to change with a new leader in place, the situation on the ground has yet to show any signs of improvement. The latest US State Department report on the human rights situation provides a detailed overview of how the situation has not improved; the Human Rights Watch summary on the country probably sums up the situation best:

"Uzbekistan's long-serving authoritarian ruler Islam Karimov died in fall 2016 following almost 27 years of rule. But his death and the installation of former Prime Minister Shavkat Mirziyoyev as president failed to usher in any meaningful improvements in Uzbekistan's abysmal human rights record. Thousands of people are imprisoned on politically motivated charges. Torture is endemic in the criminal justice system. Authorities continue to crackdown on civil society activists, opposition members, and journalists. Muslims and Christians who practice their religion outside strict state controls are persecuted, and freedom of expression is severely limited. The government forces more than a million adults and some children to harvest cotton under abusive conditions. Authorities still deny justice for the 2005 Andijan massacre, in which government forces shot and killed hundreds of protesters. Lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgender people face deep-rooted homophobia and discrimination." - Human Rights Watch <https://www.hrw.org/europe/central-asia/uzbekistan>

The premise for the suspension of the EBRD's activities in Uzbekistan remains unchanged and I would like to express my deepest concern at the message you would be sending if you were to resume operations at this time. The change of leadership does, however, provide you with an opportunity to use your leverage with Uzbek authorities to push for benchmarking in terms of key human rights reforms as a precondition to a resumption of operations. We would very much encourage such an approach and equally encourage you to start a dialogue with your colleagues at other IFIs about them using their own leverage at this key moment in the country's history to ensure a future that benefits the people of Uzbekistan.

In 2003, the EBRD approved country strategy linking investments to the following benchmarks:

- Ensuring greater political openness of the system and freedom of media. A multi-party democracy and a pluralistic society requiring greater pluralism of opinions.

- Opening up the political processes to a variety of interests. Ensuring free functioning of civil society organisations, including independent local NGOs in the areas of rule of law and protection of human rights.
- Improving the country's human rights record, including measures directed at implementation of the recommendations made by the UN Special Rapporteur on the elimination of systematic torture.

In 2005, the EBRD's country strategy made it clear that no progress was made in any of these areas. We believe that assessment of changes in these areas should be done and published before the Bank will resume operations in the country.

Further, in approaching work on Uzbekistan - it is imperative that you redouble your efforts to align your work with the values set out in your founding documents and policies by:

- Ensuring that EBRD operations are not associated with adverse human rights impacts by considering all projects in Uzbekistan category A, due to the heightened risk for human rights abuses, and conducting robust human rights due diligence of all investments,
- Providing for a comprehensive assessment of the potential human rights impacts of every project the EBRD considers in Uzbekistan, in line with international human rights standards,
- Ensuring the conditions are in place around EBRD projects to allow for full public participation, including in particular proper and timely disclosure of documentation and necessary measures to ensure safe space for project affected people to raise their concerns.
- Requiring EBRD's clients in Uzbekistan to comply with international human rights law, especially in the absence of sufficient legal protection of human rights under national law,
- Requiring EBRD's clients in Uzbekistan to have in place strategies and measures to protect and promote rights in their operations, demonstrating best practice for industry, as the implementation of these measures should be monitored by the EBRD,
- Setting out clear internal procedures requiring the EBRD to intervene immediately and effectively at the highest level when allegations of human rights abuse around EBRD investments are brought to the bank's attention.

Budapest, 11 April 2017.

Sincerely,



Mark Fodor, Executive Director, CEE Bankwatch Network