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Speech given by FMO's CIO Linda Broekhuizen at the European Parliament on 20 April 2016

Dear family and friends of Berta Cáceres, Tomás García and Nelson García, dear representatives of other organizations present, dear Members of the European Parliament. I would like to thank you for the opportunity given at this hearing of the Subcommittee on Human Rights to share our views with you.

First of all, I would like to express that I deeply regret the events leading to the brutal deaths of Berta Cáceres, Tomás García and Nelson García.

I extend my sincere condolences to the families and friends they leave behind. The loss you have suffered is beyond comprehension. FMO has called upon the Honduran government for a thorough investigation of the events and to hold those responsible to account. On behalf of the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Dutch Ambassador to Costa Rica and Honduras met with government officials to urge for an independent investigation and for improvement of the human rights situation in Honduras in general.

Let me make it very clear that the right of speech for those who stand for their rights and livelihoods of people are of very high value to me and to FMO. Every individual should be able to feel safe when defending their position. FMO rejects and condemns any violence against those individuals or groups.

FMO is a longtime investor in the private sector in Honduras. Through our work, our goal is to support people to improve their lives. We give the highest priority to carefully engage all involved parties, both supporters and opponents, in our projects through intensive dialogue and consultation. We do this to make sure that our investments positively contribute to as many people as possible.

FMO's human rights due diligence with respect to clients is guided by its Environmental and Social Policy, which is based on the IFC Performance Standards. The IFC Performance Standards support the private sector's human rights responsibility. We further support the approach outlined in the United Nations Protect, Respect and Remedy Framework and the supporting Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

Please allow me to show an [animation](#) to illustrate how these processes were undertaken in the case of the Agua Zarca project in Honduras.

FMO is deeply concerned by the human rights situation in Honduras and is in full support of the joint motion for a resolution, passed last week in the European Parliament, on the situation of Human rights defenders in Honduras.

Given the current situation, with ongoing violence, FMO decided to suspend our activities in Honduras. This means that FMO will not engage in new projects or commitments in Honduras. No disbursements will be made, including the Agua Zarca project, until thorough investigations have been conducted.

Considering the current circumstances, the question if FMO will exit from the Agua Zarca project is a legitimate one to ask. It is also a question we ask ourselves. We strongly believe that all concerns raised in the protests around the project have been met through a thorough redesign and the numerous consultation and dialogue processes that our client, independent advisors and our own staff have undertaken with the local population.



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Yet, unrest continues. Therefore we organize an extensive mission to Honduras, which will include FMO's CEO to travel to Honduras to get a complete understanding of the local situation. This mission will be undertaken as soon as the safety requirements allow us.

As a development bank, we operate in developing countries with highly complex environments. Therefore, FMO gives the highest priority to carefully engage all involved stakeholders in its projects through intensive dialogue and consultation, not to deprive people who suffer damage and are entitled to it of a fair and righteous compensation and to make sure that the investments contribute to local job generation and the fight against poverty.

In the end, I am convinced that our interests are aligned. We all want to alleviate poverty, we all want a better future for our children and we all want a better life for the people of Honduras. Therefore, FMO welcomes involvement and input from external stakeholders, including NGO's, to make sure our processes are performed well. An appointment has been scheduled for next week to meet in the Netherlands with Ms. Cáceres and the members of COPINH where we will listen to their concerns. We like to invite all stakeholders to engage with us in an open and constructive dialogue and welcome any suggestion for improvement.