The Programming Committee of the Board met on 23 June 2009 to consider the country strategy with Belize for 2008-2012, which as Management indicated would have the objectives of ensuring sound fiscal Management and transparency in the public sector, creating and restoring the conditions for sustainable private-sector driven growth, reforming policies on human capital formation, particularly for the most vulnerable population groups, and rehabilitating basic infrastructure that had been adversely affected by floods in November 2008.

The Committee commended Management for the quality of the document, noting that the strategy was fully aligned with the government’s program owing to the excellent process of dialogue that existed, particularly between the Country Office and the authorities. A number of Executive Directors commented that they had been able to confirm this situation during a recent visit of the Board to Belize. On their visit, they had had an opportunity to exchange views with the national authorities on the Bank’s activities in the country.

During the discussion, the Committee referred to the close cooperation between the Bank and other donors active in the country, and suggested that the results matrix would show the efforts of these donors thus reflecting the level of coordination that had been achieved. Also, the Committee recalled that the one of the recommendations OVE has made in its evaluation of the country program with Belize concerned the need for a specialist at the Country Office who could address issues affecting the private sector. The presence of a specialist was felt to be indispensable in view of the objective of the strategy and the government itself of having the private sector fulfill an essential function in the country’s economic development.

The Directors acknowledged that this strategy was the first to have a development effectiveness matrix, which would permit more effective evaluations in the future.

As to the operations program with Belize for 2008-2009, which had been distributed to the Directors for their information as document GN-2520-1, the Committee discussed its inclusion in the strategy (GN-2520). In my capacity as Chairperson of the Committee, I referred to the guidelines approved for the preparation of country strategies, which needed to have a pipeline for the first two years of the strategy. I also mentioned that at the strategy was being designed such a pipeline was strictly indicative. The Committee concurred that the various implications of including operating programs in country strategies required a legal opinion and further discussion to clarify doubts about consideration and approval of such programs and the operations listed. Since Annex I of document GN-2520 already presented a portion of the 2008-2009 operating program, the Committee agreed to complement such information with the most recent information presented in document GN-2520-1. Accordingly, a revised version of document GN-2520 was distributed.
In my capacity as Chairperson of the Committee, I recommend that the Board approve the Bank’s country strategy with Belize, as described in document GN-2520-2, the revised version that I have reviewed.