

Birdsall joins chorus for Wolfowitz to quit

By Krishna Guha in Washington

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The head of the leading US development think tank on Friday joined a growing chorus of US figures calling on Paul Wolfowitz to quit as president of the World Bank.

Nancy Birdsall, the president of the center for global development, wrote on her blog "it would be better now for Mr. Wolfowitz to resign -- for the benefit of the institution that he serves, and for the billions of people that that it serves."

Ms Birdsall, a former vice-president of the Inter-American Development Bank and a former director of the World Bank's research department, said "He has become a distraction not a leader at a moment when leadership is sorely needed."

She added: "With shareholders and staff questioning his judgment on the conflict of interest issue he cannot lead by influence and inspiration, as the World Bank's global mission so obviously requires."

Ms Birdsall urged Mr. Wolfowitz to "rescue for himself a lasting legacy" by calling for an open competitive process to replace him "in which it is merit not politics and power that matter."

The comments from Ms Birdsall will not be ignored by Mr Wolfowitz, who respects Ms Birdsall and has regular contact with her.

They demonstrate how hard it will be at a personal level for Mr Wolfowitz to continue in his role, in which he would have to deal with many people who have now publically called for his resignation.