

Welcome address by Benjamin Cayetano, Governor of Hawai'i

President Chino, Secretary O'Neil, Distinguished Delegates and Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:

On behalf of the people of Hawaii – I want to thank the ADB for holding its first meeting of the new Millennium in our beautiful state. This 34th Annual Meeting of the Board of Governors is the first in the United States in more than twenty years – and we are pleased the ADB chose Hawaii.

For those who have come to Hawaii for the very first time, I want to express a special aloha from the people of Hawaii. We hope you will open your hearts to our culture and our people – and take with you a little bit of Hawaii when you return home.

Hawaii is a unique American state. It is the only state, which was once governed by a monarchy. Unlike most American states, which reflect the cultures of Western Europe, Mexico and South America – Hawaii finds its roots in the Pacific and Asia.

Our ties to the Pacific and Asia are deep. Sun Yet Sen once called Hawaii home, having lived, studied and worked here. Hawaii was a second home to Syngman Rhee, as well.

Nearly 70 percent of our residents trace their ethnic heritage to the Pacific and Asia.

For example, the first Asian American to sit in the United States Senate was a Chinese-American from Hawaii. Today, a Japanese American and a Native Hawaiian represent Hawaii in the U.S. Senate. The Chief Justice of our highest court is a Korean American. The first Japanese and Polynesian Americans to sit as governors of an American state are from Hawaii. My father was a native of the Philippines.

This ethnic diversity permeates virtually every aspect of life in Hawaii.

We are all very proud of Hawaii's multicultural society. We have the highest percentage of interracial marriages in the world. We produce the most beautiful children one could find anywhere.

For Pacific Islanders and Asians, Hawaii is the embodiment of the promise of America. In no other American state, have Pacific Islanders and Asians had the kind of equal opportunities as they have had in Hawaii.

Because of our location and multicultural society – we see Hawaii as America’s window to the Asia and the Pacific. Or perhaps, Asia and the Pacific’s window to America.

Many of you know Hawaii as one of the top visitor destinations in the world.

Indeed, Hawaii’s tourist industry has done such a great job of marketing Hawaii as a tourist destination that many people are surprised to find Hawaii as an excellent place to do business, to pursue scientific research and academic scholarship.

Hawaii is much more than sand, surf and sunshine. There is another Hawaii I’d like to tell you more about.

Hawaii is a modern American state – with outstanding assets. It is not only a beautiful place to visit – it is a great place to live, to raise a family, to teach, to learn and to do business.

Because of Hawaii’s isolation in the middle of the Pacific, modern Hawaii has been forced to rely on telecommunications and high technology to reduce the disadvantage of distance.

As a result, Hawaii’ state government and business have worked hard to develop one of the finest telecommunication infrastructure in the United States. Today, Hawaii is a diversified hub of trans-Pacific fiber optic cables, satellite links and cellular wireless networks.

We have some excellent universities. The University of Hawaii, for example, is one of 88 Carnegie One Research universities – and is a world leader in Astronomy, Ocean Marine Sciences, Asian-Pacific studies and languages, Tropical Agriculture.

The University’s College of Business is a national leader in international business – especially in Asia-Pacific, and the university’s colleges of engineering and computer science is the best in the Pacific region.

Recently, U.S. News & World Report ranked the University of Hawaii at Hilo as the third best public liberal arts college in the Western United States.

And our private universities are excellent too.

All of our universities – public and private -- have one thing in common – their student bodies draw heavy enrollments of students from the Pacific and Asia.

Hawaii’s East-West Center is the only institution of its kind in the United States. Among the nearly 48,000 East West Center fellows – many – such as the former

president of Taipei,China and some of the delegates here today --hold high leadership posts in politics and business in the Pacific Islands and all of Asia.

These links have enabled Hawaii to build a strong network of support for business in the Pacific and Asia, which few states can match.

Yes, Hawaii is a great place for fun and recreation -- but it is a good place to do serious business as well. While you are here, I invite you to explore doing business in our state.

You may be pleasantly surprised to find it is cheaper to do business from Hawaii than New York, San Francisco, Tokyo or Hong Kong. You will find that Hawaii's strategic time zone location allows more hours to do business with New York and Tokyo in the same business day.

You will also find Hawaii's multicultural workforce to be well educated, ranking above the national average in education, hardworking and very loyal to good employers.

And you will love Hawaii's biggest asset, its unsurpassed high quality of life.

Hawaii is America's leading health state. Our residents live longer and healthier lives than anywhere in the United States.

Hawaii's hospitals and physicians are among the finest in the world. Coupled with our beautiful environment, it is no surprise that healthcare is Hawaii's second largest industry and Hawaii is fast becoming the Healthcare Center of the Pacific.

But the key to Hawaii's high quality of life is the Aloha Spirit – a great gift passed on to all of us from our native Hawaiians.

It is the reason Hawaii is such a great place to live, to teach, to learn, to work, to play and raise families.

You have already experienced the Aloha Spirit. It is the reason an overwhelming majority of our visitors return to Hawaii again and again.

It is why John F. Kennedy described Hawaii as “what the rest of the world is trying to become...”

And it is the reason why I predict the demonstrations and riots, which disrupted the WTO in Seattle and the conferences in Quebec and Davos, will not happen here today.

Finally, let me conclude with these thoughts.

Like many organizations which seek to do good in this world, the Asian Development Bank is not perfect. Mistakes have been made and there seem to be no shortage of critics.

But what impresses most, is that the ADB continues to be steadfast in its mission to reduce world poverty through sustained growth, equitable income distribution, social mobility, gender and racial equality.

Overall, the ADB has been a success. Because of ADB loans and technical assistance to nations in Asia and the Pacific, more people now enjoy better education, healthcare, greater opportunities for better jobs and an improvement in their quality of life.

President Tadao Chino has set an ambitious goal in vowing to eliminate poverty in Asia and the Pacific by 2015.

We applaud the President for his vision and leadership. And we applaud you, the distinguished delegates of the ADB, for your great work in helping to build a better world.

And we urge you to stay the course and to continue your great work.

We are honored by your presence. We thank you for choosing Hawaii. We wish you a productive conference. And we invite you to come back again.

Aloha.