

**FINLAND**  
**MATTI KÄÄRIÄINEN, Head of Delegation**

I have great pleasure to address this distinguished audience today on behalf of my Government. I will join my colleagues in expressing my delegation's gratitude to the city of Honolulu and the Hawaiian and United States governments for their hospitality.

The past year has been a successful one for the Asian Development Bank (ADB). ADB's task is to generate growth, pro-poor growth. But we have to remember that economic growth and poverty reduction are far from being entirely synonymous. A precondition to pro-poor growth is an enabling environment. We think that the ADB ought to be in the forefront supporting policies leading to equitable economic growth and sustainable environment.

We commend ADB's steps in moving forward with the implementation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy. We believe also that the national poverty reduction strategies are key instruments for achieving a locally owned and participatory development process at the country level. Capacity building to support national efforts in this area is important.

We congratulate ADB for completing the long-term strategy framework (LTSF). The LTSF is a compromise, but as a compromise we can be satisfied with the result. We hope that it gives a solid base for successful medium-term strategies. We are particularly happy that environmental sustainability is now an integral part of the LTSF.

We, in particular, welcome that the LTSF is closely aligned with achieving the International Development Goals by 2015. Full commitment and cooperation by all relevant institutions toward reaching these targets is essential. In this regard, we hope that, in addition to already existing agreements, the memorandum of understanding between ADB and the World Bank will be signed soon.

Globalization challenges nations to seek new forms of interaction between governments, private sector, and civil society. It is important that capacities and capabilities of the developing countries are strengthened in order to secure their full participation in this process.

Information and communication technologies (ICT) deserve here a special mention. The ICT sector is one of the leading forces behind globalization. However, at its worst it can also lead to the marginalization of less-favored countries, communities, and people. At its best, ICT is a major tool and instrument to manage globalization, to establish partnerships, to empower the poor, and in general, to ensure that the benefits of the new economy are shared by all.

Finland has regularly stressed the importance of supporting the most vulnerable groups in development processes, particularly the disabled. We encourage ADB to allocate adequate resources for this purpose.

We were also pleased to note that the special theme chosen in ADB's new annual report is "Develop a Child, Develop a Nation." ADB has taken up this extremely important issue and recognized human development as a cornerstone of overall social and economic development. We commend the fact that ADB's focus on poverty has increased support especially to women and children.

We are pleased that ADB is reviewing its existing institutional arrangements for cooperation with the nongovernment organizations. Widest possible participation by all stakeholders, as well as open and transparent decision-making processes, are key elements for increasing effectiveness and ensuring sustainability of ADB's operations. We hope that, within the LTSF, ADB will be able to realize its vision and find its proper role in responding to challenges of achieving sustained and equitable development in Asia.