

PORTUGAL

EMANUEL SANTOS, Head of Delegation

It is a great honour to address this meeting on behalf of the Portuguese Government. I would like to begin by thanking the Spanish authorities and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) for the excellent organization of this meeting and their warm welcome.

As regards ADB's main developments in the last year, we welcome the recent approval by the Board of Directors of the long-term strategic framework (Strategy 2020), which resulted from an extensive process of internal and external consultations. The priority given to environmentally-sustainable growth represents a great step forward, especially for water management, climate change, and renewable and efficient energy. Delivering implementation will be essential. All in all, Strategy 2020 provides adequate guidelines for ADB's 2020 horizon, although flexibility in responding to emerging contingencies must be kept constantly in mind.

Some other challenges remain for the coming years. Higher efficiency in the management of both financial and human resources, which we believe has not yet reached its full potential, and greater coordination and cooperation with other multilateral development banks must also play an important role.

We also welcome ADB's strategic approach to weakly performing countries, which will allow an increase in the flexibility of business processes, adapting them to less easy environments while continuing to apply proper safeguard policies. Building capacity in these countries certainly needs an expanded use of grants and longer-term technical assistance. In this respect, we acknowledge the cautionary lending approach granted to Timor-Leste as it phases out from post-conflict assistance status. We believe that the significant grant share of the funding at Timor-Leste's disposal represents an important contribution to its peace and development.

We welcome the yearly results presented, which reflect an adequate financial management policy. ADB must continue to be selective in its lending and to give priority to operations with the greatest potential impact on poverty reduction and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

The implementation of the human resources strategy, despite the measures already adopted or announced by the Management, remains a challenge. We urge ADB to increase the transparency and decentralization of recruitment, as well as to involve staff in the process of reform implementation as a means of retaining world class professionals.

Asia and the Pacific region is home to two thirds of the world's poor. The elimination of poverty is a challenge we must pursue through inclusive growth and sustainable development, but also through education.

In this regard, we welcome the agreement reached here in Madrid regarding the ninth replenishment of the Asian Development Fund (ADF X). Portugal increased its contribution by 15%, stressing its deep dedication to poverty reduction.

I could not end without expressing our appreciation for the work carried out by President Kuroda. Changing the culture of an organization is neither easy nor fast, demanding a continuous effort at all levels of management.