

**Asian Development Bank
External Forum on Gender and Development
Eighth Session, 28-30 May 2007
Outcome of Meetings**

I. Introduction

1. The External Forum on Gender and Development (EFG) of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) held its eighth session at ADB Headquarters on 28-30 May 2007. During this session, the EFG met with members of ADB's Management and with staff from several departments. The EFG also conducted a seminar for ADB staff and attended the Eminent Speaker's Forum lecture by Ms. Noeleen Heyzer, Executive Director of the United Nations Development Fund for Women. The final agenda for the session is included in Annex 1. This document reports on the main outcomes of the session and related recommendations.

2. We would like to thank the Vice Presidents, the Managing Director General, and senior staff from the Regional and Sustainable Development Department (RSDD), Strategy and Policy Department, regional departments, and the Human Resources Division (BPHR) for taking the time to meet with us. We appreciated the opportunity to discuss issues of mutual concern related to the implementation of ADB's Policy on Gender and Development (GAD). We also appreciated the chance to meet with two of the gender specialist consultants from ADB's resident missions, who presented recent case studies on mainstreaming gender concerns in ADB-supported projects. In addition, we commend ADB for inviting Noeleen Heyzer to speak to ADB staff and guests on the important topic of gender, migration and human trafficking in Asia and the Pacific.

3. During this session, we were asked to focus and comment in particular on two key documents: (a) the recent report of the Eminent Persons Group, "Toward a New Asian Development Bank in a New Asia," and (b) the draft GAD Policy Plan of Action (2007-2010).¹ We have provided detailed comments on each of these documents in separate letters to the Vice President (Knowledge Management and Sustainable Development) and to the Director of the Gender, Social Development and Civil Society Division (RSGS). These comment letters are briefly summarized below and attached as Annexes 2 and 3.

II. Eminent Persons Group Report and New Long-Term Strategic Framework

4. As explained further in Annex 2, we are concerned about the narrow focus in the Eminent Persons Group (EPG) report on economic growth as the main measure of development in Asia and the Pacific. The report also pays limited attention to the social impacts of rapid economic growth and to the continuing problems of poverty, social exclusion and gender inequality in the region. We therefore encourage ADB to seek out views from a more diverse range of stakeholders as it prepares its new Long-Term Strategic Framework (LTSF), including experts on poverty, human development and gender equality, as well as women's organizations and other civil society groups addressing poverty and social exclusion. We also strongly recommend that ADB retain gender equality as a cross-cutting theme in the new LTSF, and that it continue to build on its past successes in mainstreaming gender concerns in a wide

¹ The draft GAD Policy Plan of Action was not yet available when we met at ADB headquarters, but we were briefed on its main features, and the draft was provided to us for review following the meetings.

range of sectors. At a time when other development organizations are launching new action plans to strengthen their gender mainstreaming work, it would be most unfortunate if ADB lost focus and momentum in this important area.

III. Gender Mainstreaming

A. ADB's Recent Performance

5. We received useful briefings from RSGS on recent trends in gender mainstreaming in ADB operations, including loan and grant projects, technical assistance and gender-related publications. We were concerned to learn that the percentage of approved loan and grant projects with GAD themes dropped substantially in 2006 (to 10%, compared with 23% in 2005), although the percentage of other projects with gender mainstreaming features increased (to 22% in 2006, compared with 17% in 2005). We are pleased that the proposed GAD Policy Plan of Action (discussed further below) aims to ensure that at least 40% of projects approved during the plan period have a GAD theme or other substantial gender mainstreaming elements, which is more in line with previous years.

6. We received excellent briefings on the integration of gender concerns in particular country programs and projects. We were impressed by the process used to develop the country partnership strategy for Uzbekistan, which included gender diagnostics, consultations with business women and other civil society groups, inclusion of gender-related objectives in three of the four priority areas in the strategy, and related activities proposed for several future projects. The gender specialists from ADB's resident missions in Bangladesh and Cambodia also gave enlightening presentations on their recent gender mainstreaming work in agriculture and governance. In the Bangladesh Crop Diversification Project, for example, a gender action plan has been used very effectively to incorporate gender-related activities in the design of the project and to guide implementation. In Cambodia, a rapid gender assessment of the Commune Council Project led to very successful technical assistance to build the capacity of female commune council members, and to improvements in the design of a subsequent project. These two case studies also illustrate the innovative and locally grounded work of the gender specialists in ADB's resident missions, who continue to play a critical role in advancing ADB's gender mainstreaming agenda.

7. The briefings on particular ADB operations illustrate ADB's growing experience in integrating gender concerns in country strategies and in projects across a range of sectors. Particularly in light of its general commitment to knowledge management, we encourage ADB to explore opportunities to share its gender expertise and experience more widely with other development partners at the international, regional and national levels. For example, ADB could consider contributing a paper or presentation on good practices in gender mainstreaming at the spring 2008 session of the Commission on the Status of Women, where the theme will be "Financing for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women." ADB could also disseminate its high-quality gender publications – including country gender assessments, rapid gender assessments of projects, and resources such as its gender/sector checklists and new toolkit on gender, law and policy – more widely, and ensure that ADB staff and consultants make greater use of these materials.

8. We were delighted to meet the senior gender consultant who recently joined RSGS. We were also very pleased to hear that ADB is continuing to search for a candidate to fill the principal gender specialist position in RSGS. Strong gender expertise and experience within

RSGS will be critical as this division takes the lead in implementing the new GAD Policy Plan of Action.

B. New GAD Policy Plan of Action (2007-2010)

9. We are pleased that the draft GAD Policy Plan of Action builds on most of the key recommendations from the recent implementation review of ADB's GAD Policy. We commend RSGS for developing a results matrix for the Plan of Action, including monitorable performance indicators, allocation of responsibilities, and reporting requirements. In Annex 3, we provide some specific comments and suggestions for further strengthening the Plan of Action:

- In **lending operations**, we recommend that the Plan of Action build on ADB's past successes in gender mainstreaming, but recognize the need for continued attention even in areas where progress has already been made – for example, in the design of projects, and in sectors such as agriculture, education, health, governance, and urban and rural development (including water and sanitation).
- In **policy dialogue**, we suggest that the Plan of Action place more emphasis on involving the national focal agencies for gender and women's organizations (as well as other civil society groups working on gender issues) in consultations on ADB's country partnership strategies and in other policy discussions, with appropriate performance indicators.
- In the area of **organizational effectiveness**, we recommend that the Plan of Action (a) broaden its focus from gender-related "knowledge products" to "knowledge sharing"; (b) include more concrete activities and indicators related to gender training (e.g., core gender briefings for ADB managers, new ADB staff, and key government counterparts);² and (c) include indicators related to the staffing of GAD specialists and gender focal points in the regional departments.³ It would also be helpful for the Plan of Action to clarify the respective roles of the gender specialists in RSGS, the gender specialists and gender focal points in the regional departments, and the restructured committee and community of practice on gender and social development in ensuring compliance with ADB's GAD Policy, sharing good practices related to gender mainstreaming, and disseminating gender-related publications and other materials.
- The Plan of Action also provides that the activities of the EFG "will be anchored more robustly into the operational priorities of the ADB." We welcome suggestions from RSGS on how we can better share expertise and provide constructive feedback on the integration of gender concerns in key areas of ADB's operations.

IV. Internal Gender Issues

10. We appreciated the briefing by the Director and staff of BPHR on recent developments related to gender in ADB staffing. We understand that women now represent 29-30% of professional staff and 13% of senior staff, and commend ADB on the increase in senior women (from 11% in 2006). However, we learned that women only represent 21% of new professional

² For example, we learned that ADB's staff induction program has not included a GAD module for the last two years. We understand that this omission is being corrected in future programs, but we suggest that this area be monitored through the Plan of Action.

³ These requirements are mentioned under "Implementation Arrangements" but not in the results matrix.

staff recruited thus far in 2007, which continues the decline in recruitment from a high of 49% in 1999. We were also advised that the new internal Gender Action Plan III (GAP III), which is still being finalized, is likely to set fairly conservative targets for further improving the gender balance among professional staff.

11. We encourage BPHR to include more ambitious targets in the GAP III for improving the gender balance among professional staff, including at senior levels. We also encourage BPHR and the relevant hiring departments to be more proactive in recruiting female professionals. We are concerned that a continuing slump in recruitment, and modest targets in the GAP III, will limit ADB's ability to catch up with its comparator institutions as well as many developing member governments in terms of gender balance in staffing. As we have suggested previously, BPHR could intensify its outreach to graduate schools and professional societies, and also consider targeted use of internships and scholarships to recruit more women from technical fields. Other international organizations and governments, including APEC and the governments of Australia and the Philippines, have also made effective use of resume banks to fill technical posts.

V. EFG Role and Activities

A. Seminars and Other Recent Activities

12. During the past year, EFG members participated in ADB-sponsored events in Bangladesh, the Philippines and Sri Lanka. Savitri Goonesekere also made presentations to ADB staff and other development organizations on Sri Lanka's Women's Rights Bill and Domestic Violence Act 2005, and highlighted ADB's new toolkit on gender, law and policy at a recent meeting of senior lawyers and policymakers sponsored by UNESCAP. In September 2006, Andrew Byrnes organized events in Australia for the chair and associate secretary of ADB's Compliance Review Panel.

13. The EFG organized a seminar for ADB staff in conjunction with its recent session at ADB headquarters. In the seminar, new members of the EFG shared good practices for gender mainstreaming in public sector planning and budgeting, rural and urban infrastructure development, and small business development.

B. New Members and Administrative Matters

14. Four new members joined the EFG at its latest session: Aurora Javate-de Dios from the Philippines, Vanessa Griffen from Fiji, Md. Wahidur Rahman from Bangladesh, and Eugene Ryazanov from the Kyrgyz Republic.⁴ These new members bring a wealth of experience in promoting gender equality in different countries and sectors. We wish to thank Imrana Jalal, Patricia Licuanan and Dono Abdurazakova, who finished their terms on the EFG during the past year. These three original members (two of whom also served as chairpersons) were instrumental in leading the EFG and informing its work, and we wish them well.

⁴ Profiles of the new EFG members are available at <http://www.adb.org/gender/forum/members.asp>. Ms. Griffen is currently based in Thailand as Chief of the Gender and Development Section in the Emerging Social Issues Division of UNESCAP.

15. We are grateful to Savitri Goonesekere for kindly serving as acting chairperson at our recent meetings and for sending follow-up comments to ADB officials on our behalf.⁵ We tentatively agreed to hold our next session at ADB headquarters in May/June 2008.

C. Future Work

16. As ADB prepares its new LTSF and begins to implement its new GAD Policy Plan of Action, we welcome additional opportunities to contribute to ADB's gender-related work. Several EFG members have been invited to attend the upcoming country consultations on the new LTSF, and look forward to participating in these important dialogues. Individual EFG members will continue to be available to participate in workshops, panel discussions, consultations and training events held at ADB headquarters, resident missions or representative offices. We would appreciate assistance from RSGS in identifying additional activities that we could support, particularly in ADB's developing member countries. As we have suggested previously, we would also be happy to supplement our annual session at ADB headquarters with other more focused activities during the year, such as a visit by a few EFG members to a resident mission and selected project sites in a particular country.

17. At our next session, proposed for May/June 2008, we look forward to meeting again with ADB's Vice Presidents, Managing Director General, and staff. Subject to his travel schedule, we would also appreciate the opportunity to meet with the President, whom we have not met previously. Particular areas of interest for our next session would include (a) the new LTSF, (b) initial implementation of the GAD Policy Plan of Action, and (c) developments related to the new internal GAP III. We will also confer with RSGS about future seminars that we might organize for ADB staff in conjunction with the next session.

⁵ Smita Notosusanto, the current chairperson of the EFG, could not attend the recent session because of a family health emergency.

ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK
8TH MEETING OF THE EXTERNAL FORUM ON GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT (EFG)
RSDD Conference Room 4654 East Core, ADB Headquarters, Manila
28-30 May 2007

Monday, 28 May 2007

- 9:00 am *Welcome and Introductions*
 Mr. Shyam Bajpai, Acting Director General, Regional and Sustainable Development Department (RSDD)
 Mr. Robert J. Dobias, Director, Gender, Social Development and Civil Society Division (RSGS)
 Ms. Shireen Lateef, Director, Social Sector Division, Southeast Asia Department and Chair, Gender and Social Development Community of Practice (CoP)
- 9:15 am *Goals of Meeting and ADB's Response to EFG's 2006 Recommendations*
 Director, RSGS
- 9:25 am *Proposed Agenda*
 Ms. Eugenia McGill, Facilitator for EFG Meeting
- 9:30 am *Gender and Development (GAD) Retrospective, 2006 Loan/Grant Portfolio, and GAD Policy Plan of Action (2007-2010)*
 Mr. Francesco Tornieri, RSGS
 Ms. Ines Smyth, RSGS
- 11:30 am *Introductory Meeting with Ms. Ursula Schaefer-Preuss, Vice-President (Knowledge Management and Sustainable Development)*
- 12:00 noon *Welcome Lunch hosted by Acting Director General, RSDD (Private Dining Room 6)*
- 1:30 pm *Selected Gender-Related Activities*
 Ms. Padmini Desikachar, Central and West Asia Department
 Ms. Rokeya Khatun, Bangladesh Resident Mission
 Ms. Kheng Samvada, Cambodia Resident Mission
- 3:30 pm *Report on the Eminent Persons Group and ADB's New Long-Term Strategic Framework*
 Ms. Shigeko Hattori, Strategy and Policy Department
- 4:30 pm *EFG Feedback on Briefings and Discussion*
- 6:30 pm *Pick-up at hotel lobby for dinner hosted by Ms. Aurora Javate – de Dios*
 La Vista Subdivision, Quezon City

Tuesday, 29 May 2007

- 9:00 am *Dialogue with Vice-President (Operations 1) and Representatives of the Central/West Asia and South Asia Departments*
Mr. Liqun Jin, Vice-President (Operations 1)
Ms. Yukiko Kojima, Director, Operations Coordination Division, South Asia Dept.
Ms. Rie Hiraoka, Social Sector Division, Central/West Asia Dept.
- 11:00 am *Representatives of Professional Women's Committee*
Ms. Andrea Iffland, Central Operations Services Office
Ms. Clare Wee, Assistant General Counsel
- 12:15 pm *Lunch hosted by Vice-President Schaefer-Preuss for Ms. Noeleen Heyzer, Executive Director of UNIFEM, and EFG Members (Private Dining Room 6)*
- 2:00 pm *Eminent Speaker's Forum Lecture by Ms. Noeleen Heyzer on Gender, Migration and Human Trafficking (attended by EFG Members)*
- 3:30 pm *Dialogue with Representatives of the East Asia, Pacific and Southeast Asia Departments*
Mr. Klaus Gerhaeusser, Deputy Director General, East Asia Department
Mr. Robert Wihtol, Director, Social Sector Division, East Asia Department
Mr. Kuniki Nakamori, Deputy Director General, Southeast Asia Department
Ms. Shireen Lateef, Director, Social Sector Division, Southeast Asia Department
Mr. Eugene Zhukov, Director, Pacific Department (Area A)
- 4:30 pm *Follow-up Meeting with Vice President Schaefer-Preuss*
- 7:00 pm *Pick-up at hotel lobby for dinner hosted by Mr. Robert Dobias Valle Verde, Pasig City*

Wednesday, 30 May 2007

- 9:00 am *Mr. Rajat Nag, Managing Director General*
- 10:00 am *ADB's Internal Gender Action Plan (GAP) II and Plans for GAP III*
Mr. Hyong-Jong Yu, Director, Human Resources Division (BPHR)
Ms. Rosario Abad Santos, Head, Policy and Recruitment Planning Unit, BPHR
Ms. Mary Clarke, BPHR
- 11:00 am *EFG Working Session*
- 12:00 noon *EFG Lunch Seminar: Gender Mainstreaming in "Hard" Sectors and Diverse Regions (RSDD Conference Room 4654 East Core)*
- 2:00 pm *Mr. Bindu Lohani, Vice-President (Finance and Administration)*
- 3:00 pm *EFG Working Session, continued*
- 4:00 pm *EFG Feedback to RSDD and Gender and Social Development CoP*

15 June 2007

Ms. Ursula Schaefer-Preuss
Vice President (Knowledge Management and Sustainable Development)
Asian Development Bank
6 ADB Avenue
Mandaluyong City, Metro-Manila
Philippines

Re: ADB Eminent Persons Group Report and New Long-Term Strategic Framework

Dear Vice-President Schaefer-Preuss:

On behalf of ADB's External Forum on Gender and Development, thank you for taking the time to meet with us during our recent session at ADB Headquarters. We appreciated the opportunity to share our perspectives on ADB's gender-related work and related developments at ADB. As in the past, we are summarizing the results of our meetings in an outcome document, which we will send to you shortly for consideration. In the meantime, we would like to respond to the invitation to comment on the report of the Eminent Persons Group (EPG), "Toward a New Asian Development Bank in a New Asia," as well as the new Long-Term Strategic Framework (LTSF) that ADB is now preparing.

As explained to us in several meetings, the EPG report is only one of many inputs to ADB's new LTSF. However, it was also described as the "point of departure" for preparing the new LTSF, and therefore frames the discussion of ADB's future strategic direction and priorities. The following comments are provided with this in mind. These comments also reflect our appreciation of ADB's leading role among the multilateral development banks in mainstreaming gender concerns in its operations, and our desire to see ADB continue and strengthen its gender-related work.

The Eminent Persons Group Report

In general, we are concerned about the EPG report's narrow focus on economic growth as the main measure of development in Asia and the Pacific, and as a basis for charting the region's future prospects as well as ADB's future role as a development institution. We are of the view that this approach is not in harmony with broader concepts of development – including rights-based and inclusive human development – which have evolved over the past several decades and are now widely accepted both internationally and in the region.⁶ Even within an economic framework, we believe that the past and future performance of the region needs to be assessed in terms of the distributional consequences and social implications of rapid economic growth for all segments of the population. We were therefore surprised to find that the report includes no reference to gender disparities or other gender issues, and little discussion of other issues of development justice. These omissions, and the report's limited attention to the

⁶ The primary focus on per capita Gross Domestic Product (GDP) also ignores broader indicators that are now commonly used by development organizations and countries in the region, such as the Human Development Index, Gender Development Index, Gender Empowerment Measure, and Millennium Development Goals (and related targets and indicators).

continuing challenge of poverty in the region, raise questions about the report's forecasts and related recommendations for ADB.

The report's projections for 2020 present an extremely optimistic scenario and focus only on the reduction of extreme poverty (measured by \$1 per day). As ADB's Chief Economist recently noted, future progress in reducing poverty in Asia and the Pacific will depend largely on how well the fruits of economic growth are distributed. If other poverty measures are used (such as \$2 a day), the forecast is quite different. Under alternative scenarios, the Chief Economist estimates that the number of Asians living on \$1 a day or less in 2020 could be between 78 and 391 million. Under the same scenarios, the number living on \$2 a day or less could be between 974 million and 1.6 billion.⁷ Based on these estimates, it seems clear that income poverty will continue to be a fundamental challenge for many countries in the region. References in the EPG report to "pockets of poverty" seem problematic given the absolute numbers involved. They also do not convey the diverse forms of exclusion that are experienced by politically marginalized groups such as women, ethnic minorities and disadvantaged castes, migrants and displaced people, the disabled and others in poor communities and areas.

We are also somewhat surprised that the EPG could not find "any reliable projections of the region's likely performance in non-income Millennium Development Goals in 2020" and therefore felt unable to comment on this.⁸ The UN Millennium Project, the World Bank, UNESCAP (in collaboration with ADB and UNDP), and others have all produced forecasts on the performance of Asian and Pacific countries under the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to 2015. The EPG could presumably have requested ADB staff or others to extend some of these forecasts to 2020, as they did for projections of GDP. The omission of data on the region's performance on the non-income MDGs leaves a skewed picture of the region's overall development status and prospects. For example, the latest regional monitoring report on the MDGs, co-authored by ADB, notes that many countries in the region are likely to miss vital targets in 2015, and that the five largest developing countries in the region – Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia and Pakistan – are making slow progress or regressing on at least some targets.⁹ Lack of consideration of the non-income MDGs is also problematic since ADB's own research has confirmed that rapid economic growth does not necessarily lead to better outcomes in terms of human development and gender equality. In China, for example, health outcomes have actually slowed and huge disparities have emerged between rural and urban areas in the post-reform period.¹⁰ In China and India, deteriorating sex ratios even in prosperous areas demonstrate that economic growth in itself does not undo deep-seated gender biases and discrimination.¹¹

The EPG's prediction of a transformed Asia and Pacific region in 2020 also seems to be driven mainly by its economic forecasts for a relatively small number of middle-income and near-middle-income countries in Southeast and South Asia. The EPG report includes no analysis of trends in Central Asia or the Pacific, and only a few general references to the

⁷ Ifzal Ali. 2007. *Pro-Poor to Inclusive Growth: Asian Prescriptions*. ERD Policy Brief Series No. 48. Manila: ADB.

⁸ EPG Report, p. 10.

⁹ ADB, UNDP and UNESCAP. *The Millennium Development Goals: Progress in Asia and the Pacific 2006*.

¹⁰ Ajay Tandon and Juzhong Zhuang. 2007. *Inclusiveness of Economic Growth in the People's Republic of China: What Do Population Health Outcomes Tell Us?* ERD Policy Brief Series No. 47. Manila: ADB.

¹¹ ADB, UNDP and UNESCAP. 2006. *Pursuing Gender Equality through the Millennium Development Goals in Asia and the Pacific*, p. 8. Manila: ADB.

ongoing development challenges of “low-income and small (often island) economies”.¹² This raises a question as to whether the EPG’s vision of a “totally transformed Asia” in 2020 is truly representative, assuming Asia is defined to include all of ADB’s developing member countries.

The EPG report touches on a number of risks and challenges facing developing countries in the region, including the rising disparities between and within countries and the unfinished poverty agenda in most countries. We believe these are critical issues that ADB will need to consider in greater depth in charting its future direction. One fundamental question is how future economic growth in the region will be achieved. The current patterns of rapid growth in countries such as China and India have widened rather than narrowed disparities between rural and urban areas and between rich and poor households. Regional trade and economic integration have created enormous opportunities, but the main benefits appear to be going to those with higher levels of education and technical skills, and greater access to resources and networks. Another factor underpinning economic growth and integration in the region is migration, both from rural to urban areas and from low-growth to high-growth countries. While migration can expand opportunities for large numbers of poor households and individuals, including women, it also entails significant social costs in terms of personal risks to the migrants themselves, increasing work and household responsibilities for family members who remain behind, and the disruption of families and communities. Empirical studies demonstrate that these trends can have different impacts on men and women, and that trade-openness and regional integration do not necessarily lead to more gender-equitable outcomes.¹³

Turning to the EPG’s recommendations for “the new ADB,” we note in particular the recommendation to shift the strategic focus from poverty reduction to “inclusive growth.” As mentioned above, poverty will continue to be a major challenge for most developing countries in the region, and future progress in reducing poverty will hinge in large part on the type of growth strategies that these countries pursue. Whether these growth strategies are characterized as “pro-poor” or “inclusive,” poverty reduction is likely to remain a key development objective of most developing countries in the region. If “inclusive growth” is adopted as a new focus, much will depend on how it is defined and translated into ADB’s operations. We believe strongly that any growth or other development strategy cannot be “inclusive” in a meaningful sense if it does not include a strong cross-cutting commitment to gender equality and women’s empowerment (MDG 3). This is reflected, for example, in India’s 11th Five Year Plan, which is highlighted in the EPG report.¹⁴ Inclusive growth strategies also must incorporate strong social policies and social protection mechanisms to counter the exclusionary effects of market-led growth. This is also reflected in the 11th Plan.¹⁵

¹² EPG Report, p. 7

¹³ For example, while the expansion of export manufacturing and call centers has increased job opportunities for women in some countries, studies from countries such as India and the Republic of Korea indicate that increased trade in goods and services has not reduced the gender wage gap. See, e.g., Günseli Berik, Yana van der Meulen Rodgers and Joseph E. Zveglic, “International Trade and Gender Wage Discrimination: Evidence from East Asia,” *Review of Development Economics* 8(2), pp. 237-254 (2004); Jayati Ghosh, “Globalization, Export-Oriented Employment for Women and Social Policy: A Case Study of India,” *Social Scientist* 30(11/12), pp. 17-60 (2002).

¹⁴ Government of India Planning Commission. 2006. *Toward Faster and More Inclusive Growth: An Approach to the 11th Five Year Plan*, p. 2.

¹⁵ The EPG report states that “[t]he concept of more inclusive growth avoids targeting any specific income groups for special treatment” (p. 16). This is actually inconsistent with India’s 11th Plan, which includes a wide range of targeted programs to assist the rural and urban poor, disadvantaged castes and tribes, bonded laborers, internally displaced persons, the elderly and other vulnerable groups (and initiatives to address the needs and constraints of women within these groups).

The EPG also recommends that ADB shift its strategic focus more toward environmentally sustainable growth and regional economic cooperation and integration. We support greater emphasis on environmentally sustainable development, and note that there are strong gender dimensions in all of the environmental issues identified by the EPG for future attention, including climate change, clean energy, water resource management and deforestation. In terms of regional cooperation and integration, it will be important for ADB to also promote greater equity between and within economies in the region, and to help its developing members address the social risks associated with regional integration, such as unsafe migration and human trafficking.

In terms of operational priorities, the EPG recommends a significant shift in ADB's activities, with continuing support for infrastructure and greater emphasis on financial sector development, energy and environment, technology, regional integration and knowledge management. The EPG also recommends reducing or phasing out support for some sectors, which we understand could include agriculture, education, health and/or governance. We recognize the need for ADB to promote innovation, prioritize its activities and anticipate the future development needs of its member countries. For example, knowledge management – one of the priorities recommended by the EPG – is increasingly relevant to developing countries in the region. ADB can play an important role in facilitating the sharing of expertise and experience at policy, institutional and project/program levels, including good practices related to gender mainstreaming. However, there is little question that sectors such as agriculture, education, health and governance will remain critical to poverty reduction, achievement of the MDGs and sustainable growth in all of ADB's developing member countries, including the high-growth countries. In many Asian countries, for example, agriculture will remain a key sector both in terms of its contribution to GDP and its importance as a source of livelihoods for the rural poor. As noted above, India's 11th Plan provides an example of a country pursuing economic growth while still prioritizing these sectors.

Given the tremendous diversity within the region, the internal and external challenges facing ADB's developing members, and the uncertainties involved in forecasting where these countries will be in 2020, we wonder whether a sharp narrowing of ADB's sector support is in the long-term interest of all of its developing member countries and their diverse populations. Assuming ADB does shift its operations toward the areas identified by the EPG, there are likely to be consequences for the poor, women and other groups that are already marginalized in the development process. We encourage ADB to carry out appropriate research and analysis to understand the gender-differentiated and other social impacts of the EPG's recommendations, and to continue to address the gender and other social inequalities that affect large numbers of people in Asia and the Pacific.

ADB's New Long-Term Strategic Framework

In light of our concerns about the narrow focus of the EPG report, we were pleased to hear that the process for preparing a new LTSF will be more open and inclusive, including country consultations. We encourage ADB to seek out views from a diverse range of stakeholders, including experts on poverty reduction, human development, and gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as civil society groups that represent marginalized groups including women's organizations.

Based on our discussions with you and other members of ADB's Management, we understand there is an awareness of the need for ADB's new LTSF to be based on a broad

concept of development (including human development) and to take into account the development prospects and needs of all ADB's developing members (not only the largest and most prosperous). As noted above, we believe that poverty will continue to be a development challenge for most of ADB's developing members, and therefore recommend that it continue to be a central focus of ADB's work. If ADB shifts its strategic direction more toward "pro-poor" or "inclusive" growth, we strongly recommend that ADB continue to support the MDGs, which virtually all of its developing members have "localized" and incorporated in their own development plans.

Whether ADB retains its current strategic focus on poverty reduction, or shifts its focus to "pro-poor" or "inclusive" growth, we also strongly recommend that ADB retain gender equality as a cross-cutting theme and gender mainstreaming as an operational approach in its new LTSF. ADB's enhanced Poverty Reduction Strategy recognizes that progress toward gender equality is essential to poverty reduction, and therefore includes gender equality as a thematic priority.¹⁶ Likewise, any meaningful "pro-poor" or "inclusive" growth strategy of ADB should include gender equality as a cross-cutting priority, reflecting the gender equality goals and commitments of ADB's developing members, which ADB and other development partners should continue to support.¹⁷

In terms of sector activities, we understand that the new LTSF is likely to continue the trend begun in ADB's second Medium-Term Strategy (MTS II) of shifting resources toward sectors identified as higher priorities. We expressed concern earlier about a shift away from sectors such as agriculture, education, health and governance, which are critical to poverty reduction, achievement of the MDGs, and "pro-poor" or "inclusive" growth. If ADB does continue to shift its operations toward the "Group I" sectors highlighted in the MTS II, including infrastructure and financial sector development, or to other areas such as regional integration, clean energy or technology, we recommend that ADB continue to mainstream gender considerations in its work in these sectors. Development activities in all of these sectors have gender and social implications that should be examined and addressed. ADB's very effective work in integrating gender concerns in the design and implementation of rural and urban infrastructure projects, and the positive results that have been reported, demonstrate the continuing relevance of gender mainstreaming even in the "hard" sectors.¹⁸ In areas where ADB has limited experience to date in gender mainstreaming, it could (1) look to the experience of other development agencies, (2) carry out focused research where knowledge of gender-related issues and impacts is limited, and (3) support pilot activities to generate good practices.¹⁹ At a minimum, ADB should ensure that the gender-differentiated impacts of projects are monitored through gender-related indicators and collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated data.

¹⁶ ADB. 2004. *Enhancing the Fight Against Poverty in Asia and the Pacific: The Poverty Reduction Strategy of the Asian Development Bank*. Manila: ADB.

¹⁷ These goals and commitments are found, for example, in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action, and the MDGs, which virtually all of ADB's developing member countries have ratified (or otherwise endorsed) and incorporated in their own laws, policies and development plans.

¹⁸ In our recent meetings at ADB Headquarters, for example, we heard presentations by Ms. Rokeya Khatun, the gender specialist in ADB's resident mission in Bangladesh, as well as Mr. Md. Wahidur Rahman, a member of our External Forum and an official in the Local Government Engineering Department in Bangladesh, about the very effective integration of gender concerns in various rural and urban infrastructure projects supported by ADB in Bangladesh.

¹⁹ In the outcome document from our 2006 session, we included more specific recommendations along these lines for the energy sector and for private sector development.

It is worth noting that ADB has been a leader among the multilateral development banks in translating the general principles of gender mainstreaming into its lending operations. It has done this through the use of country gender assessments and strategies, gender checklists for designing projects in key sectors, gender action plans included in project designs, and technical gender support, particularly from the gender specialists in ADB's resident missions and on project design and implementation teams. With very limited resources, ADB has moved well beyond the "rhetoric" of gender mainstreaming to concrete actions and results. We encourage ADB to build on these past achievements in gender mainstreaming under its new LTSF. This is a time when other development partners – such as the World Bank, UNDP, AusAID, Norad and UK-DFID – are launching new action plans to improve the effectiveness of their gender mainstreaming work.²⁰ At this juncture, it would be most unfortunate if ADB lost focus and momentum, or reduced its gender mainstreaming activities to mere rhetoric.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment on the EPG report and the new LTSF. We would appreciate it if you would share these comments with other members of ADB's Management and with the LTSF steering committee. We look forward to seeing the new LTSF and continuing to support ADB's gender-related work in the future.

Very truly yours,



Savitri Goonesekere
Acting Chair²¹
External Forum on Gender and
Development

cc: Mr. S. Bajpai
Mr. R. J. Dobias
Ms. S. Lateef
External Forum members

²⁰ See, e.g., World Bank, *Gender Equality as Smart Economics: A World Bank Group Gender Action Plan (Fiscal Years 2007-2010)*; UNDP, *Gender Action Plan (2006-2007)*; AusAID, *Gender Equality in Australia's Aid Programme: How and Why (2007)*; Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Action Plan for Women's Rights and Gender Equality in Development Cooperation (2007-2009)*; UK-DFID, *Gender Equality Action Plan: Making Faster Progress to Gender Equality (2007)*.

²¹ Smita Notosusanto, the current Chair of the EFG, could not attend the EFG's recent meetings at ADB headquarters because of a family health emergency.

25 July 2007

Mr. Robert J. Dobias
Director
Gender, Social Development and Civil Society Division
Asian Development Bank
6 ADB Avenue
Mandaluyong City, Metro-Manila
Philippines

Re: ADB's Gender and Development Policy Plan of Action (2007-2010)

Dear Bob:

On behalf of ADB's External Forum on Gender and Development (EFG), thank you for inviting our review and comment on the draft Gender and Development (GAD) Policy Plan of Action. We are pleased to see that it builds on most of the key findings and recommendations from the recent implementation review of ADB's GAD Policy. We commend the Gender, Social Development and Civil Society Division (RSGS) for preparing a plan that includes performance indicators, allocations of responsibility, and provisions for periodic monitoring and reporting. The plan also correctly emphasizes the importance of commitment by ADB's Management and senior staff to provide adequate financial and technical support and appropriate incentives to support its implementation.

In the interest of strengthening the implementation of the Plan of Action, we would like to offer the following suggestions:

Section I.A. (ADB's Performance – Lending Operations): It would be useful to also provide some information on the gender composition of ADB's loan/grant portfolio by sector, based on the findings in the implementation review of the GAD Policy. As noted below, we have some concerns about the distinction drawn between "traditional" and "non-traditional" sectors. This distinction seems to ignore key sectors such as agriculture, urban development and rural development (including water and sanitation), where ADB has made significant progress in gender mainstreaming and can further strengthen its performance.

Section II.D. (Opportunities and Constraints – Lending Operations): We support the minimum target of 40% of ADB's future loan/grant portfolio having either a GAD theme or effective gender mainstreaming elements. However, we reiterate our concern about the distinction drawn between "traditional" and "non-traditional" sectors. We recommend that ADB continue to integrate gender considerations in the sectors where it has made significant progress already – including not just education and health, but also agriculture, urban development and rural development (including water and sanitation) – while also seeking opportunities to address gender issues in more challenging sectors such as heavy infrastructure, trade facilitation and financial sector development. We support the emphasis on strengthening implementation of project gender action plans and related project features. In this regard, the disaggregation of data by sex and other relevant categories (such as ethnicity and

income level) should also be a key ingredient in project performance monitoring systems.²² RSGS could also consider piloting the use of common gender-related indicators in projects in one of two sectors, which would permit cross-project and cross-country comparisons of gender-related results.

As we were advised during our recent meetings at ADB headquarters, attention still needs to be paid to ensuring the quality of gender action plans and other provisions at the design stage of projects. RSGS still has a critical role to play in ensuring quality and consistency in the gender dimensions of project designs across the different regional departments, as well as promoting and monitoring other aspects of the Plan of Action.

Section II.E. (Opportunities and Constraints – Policy Dialogue): We strongly endorse this area of focus in the Plan of Action. We recommend that greater emphasis be placed on involving national focal agencies on gender and civil society groups working on gender issues in policy dialogue, especially in connection with the development of ADB’s country partnership strategies. Raising gender issues in policy dialogue with ministries of planning and finance would be particularly important, since these ministries are extremely influential but do not always consider the gender-related implications of policy decisions. We also encourage ADB to continue to provide selective gender support to national focal agencies on gender, sector ministries and local governments. (These activities are mentioned in the results matrix for the Plan of Action, but not in this section.)

Section II.F (Opportunities and Constraints – Organizational Effectiveness): This is a critical section of the Plan of Action, and therefore we encourage RSGS to include a full discussion of the issues and alternatives here:

- We strongly endorse focused and operationally relevant training activities for ADB managers and staff. As noted below, we suggest that core GAD training activities (e.g., gender briefings for ADB managers, new ADB staff, and government officials) and related indicators be included in the matrix for the Plan of Action.
- In terms of gender-related knowledge, we encourage ADB to broaden its focus from “knowledge products” to “knowledge sharing”. As discussed in our recent meetings at ADB headquarters, there is a recognized need for ADB to improve the dissemination and use of its high-quality gender publications. However, ADB is also in a position to share its experience in gender mainstreaming, and to facilitate the sharing of gender expertise and experience, through other means. At an international level, for example, we recommend that ADB consider participating in the 2008 session of the Commission on the Status of Women, where the theme will be “Financing for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.” We think participants and observers at the session would be very interested in ADB’s experience in gender mainstreaming in loan and grant projects, which could be shared through a short background paper or through organizing or participating in a panel discussion or other event. At regional and country levels, ADB’s reorganized community of practice on gender and social development, including the gender specialists in its resident missions, could be leveraged to provide greater support for “knowledge sharing” on gender issues through vehicles such as thematic workshops and lateral learning events. In terms

²² This would apply to “gender-neutral” targets and indicators (such as school enrollment, access to credit or employment, or participation in training activities), as well as “gender-specific” targets and indicators (such as formation of women’s self-help groups, awareness-raising on domestic violence, or gender-awareness training for government officials).

of content, we think that ADB could provide valuable support for the exchange of gender-related expertise and experience on three complementary levels: (1) gender-related policy-making; (2) gender mainstreaming in key institutions; and (3) gender mainstreaming in development projects, especially at the field level.

- We also strongly endorse the recommendation to increase the number of gender specialists in the resident missions, and to strengthen the terms of reference of gender specialists across ADB. In the interest of completeness, this section could also mention the dedicated GAD specialists and gender focal points in the regional departments,²³ as well as the gender and social development committee and community of practice.

Section III, Table 1 (Plan of Action Matrix): This matrix should be a very useful tool for guiding and monitoring implementation of the Plan of Action. We suggest the following adjustments in light of our previous comments on Section II:

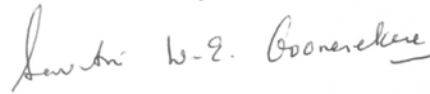
- Under “1. Lending Operations – Activity”, consider mentioning the collection of data disaggregated by sex and other relevant categories (e.g., ethnicity and income level).
- Under “2. Policy Dialogue – Performance Indicators”, consider adding performance indicators on (1) participation of national focal agencies on gender and women’s organizations in CPS consultations and (2) selective gender support for national focal agencies on gender, sector ministries and/or local governments.
- Under “3. Organizational Effectiveness – Activity and Performance Indicators,” consider mentioning (1) the requirements for dedicated GAD specialists and gender focal points in regional departments, and the roles of the gender and social development committee and community of practice; (2) core gender training and briefing sessions (e.g., for ADB managers, new ADB staff and government officials); and (3) “knowledge sharing” activities as well as production of “knowledge products”. Also consider adjusting performance indicators for gender specialists in resident missions to include continued participation in project design.

Section IV (Implementation Arrangements): As noted above, we strongly support the staffing requirements on dedicated GAD specialists and gender focal points in the regional departments. To guide implementation, it would also be useful to briefly mention the core responsibilities of RSGS, the regional departments, the resident missions, the gender and social development committee, the gender and social development community of practice, and ADB Management. We also note the recommendation to anchor the activities of the EFG “more robustly into the operational priorities of the ADB,” and would welcome your suggestions on how the EFG can most effectively support the Plan of Action and ADB’s future gender-related work.

²³ Requirements related to GAD specialists and gender focal points in the regional departments are mentioned in Section IV (Implementation Arrangements), but not in this section or in the results matrix.

Thank you again for this opportunity to comment on the draft Plan of Action. We look forward to seeing the final version, and to supporting its implementation in the future.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Savitri W. G. Goonesekere". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line under the last name.

Savitri Goonesekere
Acting Chair
External Forum on Gender and
Development

cc: Mr. S. Bajpai
Ms. S. Lateef
External Forum members

**Asian Development Bank
External Forum on Gender and Development
Indicative Program of Activities
(2007-8)**

Activity	EFG Focal Point	ADB Focal Point
Participate in country consultations on the new LTSF	Various members	ADB resident missions and offices
Respond to RSGS requests for technical input on gender-related activities, such as further refinement and implementation of the GAD Policy Plan of Action	Smita Notosusanto (EFG chair); other members	R.J. Dobias
Provide technical support to ADB gender training programs and other gender-related activities at ADB headquarters and resident missions	Various members	R.J. Dobias; RM gender specialists
Confer with RSGS regarding the timing and format of future meetings	Smita Notosusanto; other members	R.J. Dobias
Organize seminars for ADB staff on relevant gender-related topics	Various members	R.J. Dobias
Explore opportunities to facilitate greater sharing of gender-related expertise and experience by ADB with other international and regional organizations, and greater engagement with civil society groups on gender issues	Various members	R.J. Dobias; RM gender specialists