



## News Release

### **ASIAN AND PACIFIC GOVERNMENTS ADOPT REGIONAL PLAN TO FIGHT CORRUPTION**

TOKYO, JAPAN (30 November 2001) – Seventeen Asian and Pacific governments today endorsed a regional action plan to fight corruption.

The joint action came at the end of the Third Annual Conference of the ADB/OECD Anti-Corruption Initiative for Asia-Pacific, hosted by the Government of Japan and organized by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). More than 150 people participated in the meeting, including representatives of governments, businesses, media, international agencies and nongovernment organizations (NGOs).

In his welcoming remarks, Shomei Yokouchi, Senior Vice Minister of Justice, Japan, stated that, “corruption is the most serious obstacle to democracy and the sustainable development of society.” Toshio Kojima, Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Japan, highlighted the need to fight corruption throughout the Asia-Pacific region in the conference’s keynote address.

The action plan reflects shared concerns and aims of governments, civil society and the private sector in Asia and the Pacific. It provides for a comprehensive set of actions which governments will take to develop effective and transparent systems for public service; strengthen anti-bribery actions and promote integrity in business operations; and support active public involvement.

"The countries of the region have collaborated to produce a common strategy to tackle corruption," said Shoji Nishimoto, Director of ADB’s Strategy and Policy Department. "The endorsing governments have publicly declared their political will to implement policy reforms aimed at curbing bribery and other unethical behavior. This action plan builds on ADB’s commitment to combat corruption, as set forth in its Anti-Corruption Policy," he added.

Countries endorsing the action plan are Bangladesh, Cook Islands, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Kyrgyz Republic, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Samoa, Singapore, Vanuatu.

"We expect other countries to adopt the plan in the months ahead," said Rainer Geiger, Deputy Director, Directorate for Financial, Fiscal and Enterprise Affairs, OECD. "Corruption is a complicated phenomenon that varies in character from place to place. Countries have to generate the domestic will and move at their own pace to address it effectively. The international community is prepared to support governments as they move against corruption."

Experience from the Asia-Pacific region has shown that corruption harms the economy, undermines the rule of law and weakens public trust in government. Given their dependence on public services, the poor are the hardest hit. Studies have shown that corruption can cost up to 17 percent of a country's gross domestic product, robbing the population of resources that can be used to reduce poverty and promote sustainable development. By endorsing the action plan, governments recognize that curbing corruption is an integral part of the regional effort to alleviate poverty.

"Corruption is a cancer which affects all elements of society, especially the poor, and significantly hampers business activity and economic development," said Robert G. Lees, Secretary General, Pacific Basin Economic Council. "The business leaders of the Pacific Basin stand firmly behind this important document, and look forward to supporting the efforts of ADB and OECD in implementing this ground-breaking initiative."

The action plan was drafted by regional experts with the assistance of ADB and OECD, which together launched an initiative in 1999 to address bribery and other unethical behavior in Asia and the Pacific. Together with other international agencies, the private sector and civil society, ADB and OECD will support countries in the implementation of the action plan and will regularly review progress.

Under the action plan, governments choose from a menu of anti-corruption actions that meet their particular needs. Among the possible actions is the creation of public sector recruiting systems that assure openness, equity and efficiency and promote the recruitment of individuals of the highest levels of competence and integrity. Other steps include adopting public sector auditing practices, establishing transparent procedures for public procurement that promote fair competition, and promoting the public right of access to government information.

Governments are also encouraged to adopt legislation with dissuasive sanctions against the bribery of public officials, support corporate responsibility and accountability on the basis of international standards, and promote good corporate governance. The action plan foresees a prominent role for NGOs and the private sector in raising public awareness and encouraging reform in cooperation with governments. It also emphasizes civil society's role in monitoring the progress of public sector programs and activities.

"Transparency International welcomes the action plan and its focus on identifying national priorities for action by governments with the support of business and civil society," said Tunku Abdul Aziz, Vice-Chairman, Transparency International.

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