

22 December 2000

Professor Kader Asmal  
Chair, World Commission on Dams

Dear Sir,

Subject: World Commission on Dams (WCD) - Dams and Development

I would like to express my personal thanks to you for inviting me to attend the launch of the Commission's report, *Dams and Development* in London on 16 November 2000. Unfortunately, I was not able to attend, but Preben Nielsen, Deputy Director of our Infrastructure, Energy and Financial Sectors (West) Department represented ADB. ADB is proud to have played a role in the work of WCD as a member of the Forum, a participant in, and commentator on the thematic reviews, funder of the fourth regional consultation held in Hanoi, and contributor to the Commission's knowledge base as a result of our own case studies. These were undertaken as part of ADB's regional technical assistance program, the final report of which will be issued shortly. We note that, although dams have been the vehicle for WCD's work, the findings are applicable to many of ADB's major infrastructure projects.

I share your view that publication of *Dams and Development* is only the end of the beginning. We have listened as the Commission has told its story and accept that future progress is "up to us." I would therefore like to outline our proposals to help disseminate the findings and recommendations in the report. Firstly, we have distributed the report to individual ADB staff. Secondly, Jeremy Bird of the WCD Secretariat made a very valuable presentation in Manila on 29 November, which drew a great deal of interest from a wide range of ADB staff. Thirdly, we have allocated a budget which we will use for two regional dissemination meetings directed at senior government officials, utility managers, academic staff, and NGOs. The first will be held at ADB Headquarters in mid February 2001 and the second will be a follow-up workshop later in the year. It is heartening to note that the Commission recommends that more attention should be paid to the rights and risks of vulnerable groups, when development projects are being planned. The report provides valuable, concrete information to support ADB's increased focus on (i) poverty reduction, (ii) the participatory process in development, and (iii) concern for gender and environmental issues. As for dams themselves, the WCD clearly acknowledges that dams are one of the options to be considered in meeting various development objectives. Comparison of alternatives must include sufficient and early recognition of all the costs and impacts and with due consideration for equitable sharing of costs and benefits between all stakeholders for the selected alternative. ADB will re-examine its own procedures, including our environment and social development policies, and determine the extent to which the report's recommendations may necessitate changes in these procedures. We will also encourage our member countries to do the same.

Yours sincerely,

Tadao Chino  
President