

**ADB Water Week
26-30 January 2004
WATER FOR THE POOR - SETTING THE RULES AND FINDING THE MONEY**

Welcome Remarks

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Excellencies, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to warmly welcome you all to the Asian Development Bank for ADB's Water Week. Thank you for taking the time to participate in this activity and to contribute your knowledge, experience, and views. For those of you who have come from overseas, I wish you a pleasant and rewarding stay in the Philippines.

This is the second time Water Week has been organized by ADB's Water Sector Committee to offer our staff and colleagues from development partners and stakeholders an opportunity to meet and share information and experience on very critical issues: the governance of, and financing for water. Our objectives are clear yet challenging: setting the rules, and finding the money that will allow the poor to enjoy access to adequate water and sanitation services and more generally to improve their water security.

The stark realities are that one in three Asians does not have safe drinking water, and one in two does not have adequate sanitation facilities. The poor are hardest hit by water scarcity, pollution and floods. Ineffective water governance, and inadequate financing are keeping the poor from having access to safe water.

At ADB, we regard water as a resource and as a service. The sustainable management of water resources needs to go hand in hand with the efficient delivery of water services, including drinking water supply and sanitation, and irrigation and drainage.

In the next three days, you will have the opportunity to explore the inadequacies in water governance and financing that have contributed to the current water crisis, and think beyond conventional causes and solutions with a view to increasing the poor's access to water.

There are two main parts to the program. The first part will explore why adequate water services continue to elude the poor. Have the poor actually been disadvantaged by well-intentioned measures meant to help them? And, can regulation help to make safe water accessible to the poor? We look to regulation as a means of eradicating biases against the poor, as well as increasing overall water market efficiency. But how can we make regulation fulfill these aspirations, more so, be specifically pro-poor?

The second half of our discussions will examine in detail various innovative governance and financing practices. We will discuss, among other things, about the need to work with the right information and partners, the roles civil society can assume to catalyze reforms, the pursuit of credible regulation, and the need for greater water investments. In the process, we will tackle some of the myths and misconceptions that have burdened the water sector for too long.

The discussions in the next days will be enriched by the diverse group of participants gathered here for Water Week.

We appreciate the presence of our keynote speakers who have generously agreed to share their experiences and insights with us—Mr. Michel Camdessus, Ms. Erna Witoelar, and Mr. Ravi Narayanan—their efforts at carving a brighter future for the water sector are well known in the region.

I also want to thank the twelve session presenters for sharing their expertise in development work with us this week to improve water security for the poor.

A special welcome to the representatives from national and local governments in our developing member countries. They bring a wealth of real life experience in tackling the problems that we will deliberate on. We expect to learn many valuable lessons from your experience.

We welcome ambassadors and colleagues representing development financing agencies, the academe, as well as representatives of the private sector.

I also welcome our many long-time development partners who are here with us once again at the Water Week. We look forward to continuing to work in partnership with you to achieve our shared goals and aspirations in the region.

We are pleased that many NGO representatives are participating in Water Week, including those who participated yesterday in the ADB-NGO Dialogue on Water. We hope that your participation will further strengthen our collaboration.

We are also pleased to have in our midst several organizations that feature in our Water Voices documentary series, I am sure your work will be an inspiration to all who watch the documentary series.

I would like to acknowledge our colleagues from the Netherlands Government. The generous support provided by the Government of the Netherlands and the Government of Norway to ADB through the Cooperation Fund for the Water Sector, and through extensive cofinancing of water projects and technical assistance, has made it possible for us to further our agenda for safe water for the poor.

And last but not least, we are happy to welcome our journalist friends. We are specially pleased to have you with us because all of us who work in the challenging, but often intimidating, task of addressing the needs of the poor need all the help we can get to spread the word and garner support through greater visibility.

In conclusion, let me say that all of us here today—whether we are from the government, private sector, academe, community, civil society, or development financing institutions—are in the business of change for more effective development. That is what the ADB Water Week is about. Discussing the necessary changes in our region and in our work will take center stage these days in connection with water management.

I encourage you all to take a hard look at your current paradigms and practices, and be open to consider new ideas and solutions, leadership challenges, and other changes. Just as stagnant water breeds disease, stagnant attitudes breed complacency and inefficiency. Continuous adaptation is needed to meet changing needs. Water Week is an opportunity to experience flow and changing direction to move towards our goals more effectively and efficiently.

We are confident that the deliberations in the next few days will lead to a better understanding of the factors that keep the poor from the water benefits they need, and useful discussions on effecting changes in the way we work to improve the water security of the poor in this region.

Once again, a warm welcome to all of you, and I wish you all success in having frank and useful discussions.