



**NORWAY**

**INGRID GLAD, Head of Delegation**

Let me begin by thanking the authorities of the People's Republic of China for hosting this year's annual meeting in the historic city of Shanghai—which also happens to be the friendship city of Norway's capital, Oslo. I would like to add, on a personal note, that after spending 4 happy years here some 30 years ago, and giving birth to a son in Beijing, I am extremely pleased to be back in the People's Republic of China.

Mr. President, I would like to thank you personally for your excellent leadership during your first term in office. We are very pleased that the fight against poverty has become the number one priority of this institution. The recent strategies and policies, reorganization, and decentralization of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) are proof of this. Your resolute leadership has also been noteworthy in dealing with Afghanistan.

The reconstruction process in Afghanistan is a litmus test for the international community, particularly as regards aid coordination and collaboration. We appreciate ADB's proactive role in the establishment of the multidonor reconstruction fund for Afghanistan. As chair of the Afghanistan Support Group, Norway is concentrating on facilitating Afghan leadership and ownership of the reconstruction process, which will preferentially be based on local Afghan capacity and expertise. We are confident that ADB's work in the country is also based on this principle. As the President so eloquently expressed in the seminar on Afghanistan the other day: "The assistance must be given in a way that nurtures the spirit of the Afghan people."

The Millennium Development Goals have triggered a political debate on development policy, and Norway strongly believes that the regional development banks have a key role to play in assisting the developing member countries to operationalize these goals and adapt them to the regional context.

To reach the goals, we urge ADB to continue working with other multilateral development banks on policy coherence and harmonization of practices and procedures to reduce the administrative burden on the borrowing countries. We would like to underscore once again that ADB's country strategies and programs must be based on nationally owned development plans or poverty reduction strategies where these exist. Bilateral donor strategies and assistance should be fully aligned with these approaches.

On the basis of the recent Monterrey consensus, the international agenda must now move from words to action. Monitoring progress must be our focus. Making our investment more effective in terms of development is a major challenge for all stakeholders. We welcome the recently established Development Effectiveness Committee. The Inspection Function is also an important element in supporting development effectiveness as well as internal governance. We look forward to the review of the Inspection Function being completed and this function improved.

The alignment of monitoring and evaluation systems, and the use of common benchmarks and indicators will be a more effective means of measuring the impact of activities on development in the region. Strengthening the evaluation capacity in the borrowing countries themselves will be critical in this respect. The forthcoming World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg will provide an opportunity to further operationalize the Millennium Development Goals.

ADB has taken important steps to address the gender imbalance in the institution, and the target set in the recent Gender Action Program has been met. However, if we look beyond the numerical target, there is an alarming gender gap at the senior staff and management levels. Men occupy more than 93% of senior staff positions and 100% of Management positions.

In this context, we would like to underscore that our work at the country level is influenced by the culture of our own institutions. If gender equality does not prevail in our own institutions, this will often affect the incentive to pursue gender equality in country programming. We urge ADB to initiate a second phase of the Gender Action Program and establish concrete targets for getting more women into the senior staff and management positions, and to commit itself to creating a climate where gender equality is respected and internalized by all staff.

We are pleased that ADB has developed a framework for multidonor funds, which provides a unique opportunity for us, the donors, to harmonize and simplify our cofinancing procedures. ADB's policies will govern these funds and consequently reduce donor trust fund proliferation and increase ADB's own leadership and ownership. Norway believes this is the way forward and we are prepared to use this cofinancing practice together with ADB and hopefully other assistance agencies in the near future.

Norway would like to see ADB play a more prominent role in placing the rapidly growing HIV/AIDS crisis on the regional agenda. We do not believe that HIV/AIDS should be another priority area of ADB. However, ADB needs a more systematic and strategic approach. Key elements should be increased attention to this problem in ADB's overall work as well as building political commitment and partnerships.

Finally, Mr. President, we would urge ADB to finalize the study on its future resource requirements for ordinary operations as soon as possible, so this can be clarified and addressed.