



BELGIUM

Ronald De Swert, Temporary Alternate Governor

Mr. Chairman of the Board of Governors,

Mr. President Nakao,

Honorable governors,

Distinguished guests,

Impressive growth allowed to significantly reduce absolute poverty. But our work is far from finished. Numerous challenges are piling up and need to be addressed in the coming decade if one wishes to keep alive the prospects of prosperity, inclusiveness, resilience, and sustainability which are key to achieving the ultimate goal of a region free of poverty.

Belgium welcomes the seven operational priorities of the ADB in the new Strategy, and in particular the emphasis on climate change, where ADB is significantly boosting its efforts. The track record of PSOD in renewable energy is commendable, as is the goal of 75% of operations involving climate. Beyond expanding in renewables, promoting innovative technologies and phasing out fossil fuels, other fields of activity should be explored, like energy efficiency or the way we move and live. In this regard, we recall the need for a comprehensive review of the Bank's Energy policy to ensure the ability of the ADB to meet the Global Agenda on Climate Change.

Belgium attaches great importance to gender equality and women's empowerment, in particular in Central Asia, as these are fundamental cornerstones of sustainable and equitable development. Women constitute half of our populations. To leave this rich source of talent underused is bad policy. ADB should focus more on their inclusion in the financial system. The number of women in the region having access to their own bank account is markedly inferior to that of men and this makes them more vulnerable. Access to technology is a key instrument to fill this gap, which needs to be reduced to achieve gender equality, one of the 17 SDGs clearly in need of more attention, as it remains rather superficial in the operational plans under ADB's Strategy 2030.

Lastly, on ADF, Belgium seizes this opportunity to remind that the new ADF is a part of the reaction to the downward pressure on regular donor contributions that called for a new way to cover the needs of concessional financing. The main beneficiaries will soon become Afghanistan and small states, in particular Pacific Island States. We look forward to the day when Ordinary capital resources will generate enough resources to allow ADB to take care of them and when our annual meeting of ADF donors will become a specific meeting of governors discussing the activities of ADB in concessional resources.

Of course, I cannot end my intervention before thanking the Government of Fiji for hosting this annual meeting and for giving us the opportunity to meet your warm and hospitable people.

Thank you.