



THE NETHERLANDS

Frans van der Straaten, Temporary Alternate Governor

Chairman Sayed-Khaiyum, President Nakao, distinguished Governors and Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Government of the Netherlands, I would like to express my deep appreciation to the Government of Fiji for hosting us this year, and for their warm hospitality.

For fifty-three years, the Asian Development Bank has improved millions of lives and contributed to the sustainable socio-economic development of Asia and the Pacific. Over recent years, the regional developmental progress has been impressive. Absolute poverty numbers in the region have decreased significantly, and many ADB member countries have graduated to middle- and upper middle-income status.

Still, many challenges remain. Nearly half of the world's poorest people live in Asia, and the disaster proneness of the region, both natural and manmade, jeopardizes the sometimes fragile progress. That is why the Netherlands remains committed to the Asian Development Bank as one of its key development partners in fostering sustainable, green and inclusive economic growth throughout the region.

In my statement, I would like to address three important topics for the Netherlands.

1. Differentiated approaches according to income level and development stage

In line with the economic development of the region, we aspire a gradual transformation of the Bank towards a role beyond the one of the traditional financier. Given the different stages of development of countries in Asia and the Pacific, one step in this transformation-process lies in differentiated approaches for different country groups. In this context, we welcome the discussions on price differentiation to increase the envelope for the poorest, most vulnerable countries while remaining the trusted partner of choice for the richer ones. Accordingly, we encourage the ADB to step up efforts on this issue and follow suit with discussions on price differentiation in other IFIs such as the World Bank Group. Furthermore, we believe that the ADB's role in the richer countries should increasingly focus on knowledge sharing, technical advice and capacity development. In the long term, the main asset of the ADB for the region lies in the role of knowledge provider, fueled by decades of regional developmental experience. Close attention to the strategic and transparent allocation of funds for Technical Assistance should go hand in hand with this, whilst ensuring a cross-departmental flow of knowledge throughout the Bank. This also allows for a flexible and speedy response by the Bank to emerging new priorities in the region. In this regard, we believe that cross-departmental learning and incentives for staff to share knowledge should be further encouraged. It is also important to further enhance the Bank's role

in more sophisticated and innovative projects in areas such as integrated water resource management and flood protection.

2. Ambitious climate targets and effective implementation

We very much welcome the ADB's ambitious climate change policy, as set forth in Strategy 2030. Indeed, scaling up climate-related operations to 75% of the total commitments by 2030 is a laudable target. The same goes for a cumulative 2019-30 commitment of USD 80 billion from ADB's own resources for climate finance. Further to the purely financial commitments, we believe the ADB has a major role to play in supporting countries to raise their climate ambitions and become early adopters of emerging global innovations in low carbon climate resilient development pathways. This means active engagement of the ADB in policy dialogue and development of the necessary enabling environment for climate investment.

A clear articulation of how to achieve these ambitions is key. We look forward to a robust operational plan for this crucial pillar of ADB's strategy 2030, clearly stipulating ADB's niche and laying out a targeted and innovative approach beyond the financial numbers. An update of the energy strategy would logically feed into this process.

An integral part of the operational plan should be ADB's support to the DMCs' Nationally Determined Contributions and action plans, aligning investments with the objectives of the Paris Agreement. Together with Costa Rica, the Netherlands co-chairs the NDC Partnership. This partnership aims to build capacity and mobilize the necessary resources for countries to scale up climate action, reducing emissions and become climate resilient. In this capacity, we strongly encourage the ADB to demonstrate climate leadership in the region.

3. Strengthening the gender focus and SEAH

Investing in development and growth means investing in women and girls. We commend the ADB for the attention it is giving to this important topic and call on the Bank to put gender equality also institutionally on top of the agenda. This aligns with a continuing priority of the Netherlands: addressing sexual exploitation, abuse and sexual harassment (SEAH) in the development sector. I would like to underscore the importance of effective policies to prevent, mitigate and report gender-based violence throughout all the work of the Bank, both internally and in operations at all levels and stages of the project cycle. A key aspect of providing a safe (working) environment for all is a transparent system for reporting and investigating allegations and clear communication on these issues, including to shareholders. The occurrence of SEAH, and more importantly the lack of proper follow-up on allegations, bears a significant risk for the reputation of the development and humanitarian sector. The Netherlands therefore has a zero-tolerance policy for non-action, and requires all development partners, including the ADB, to give adequate follow-up to all allegations.

In conclusion, I would like to thank President Nakao, ADB management and staff for their continuing efforts to help achieving the SDGs and contributing to the Paris agreement, making sure to “leave no one behind”. The Bank should continue to strengthen its comparative advantages, adapting strategies and interventions to emerging challenges, to remain the trusted partner of choice for development. The elaboration of the seven operational plans under Strategy 2030 provides us with an excellent opportunity to do just that, and we look forward to continuing our long-standing partnership on our joint commitment to the sustainable development of Asia and the Pacific.

Thank you.