

## **NORDIC MEMBER COUNTRIES**

**Inger Buxton**, Temporary Alternate Governor for Sweden

(On behalf of Governors from Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden)

Chairman Sayed-Khaiyum, President Nakao, Distinguished Governors, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the four Nordic countries – Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden – let me express our sincere appreciation to the Republic of Fiji and the town of Nadi for hosting the Asian Development Bank's 52<sup>nd</sup> Annual Meeting. We would also like to thank ADB management and staff for the excellent preparations for this event.

The major global commitments – as laid out in the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda – will depend on the success of the Asia-Pacific region. We are therefore pleased to see that ADB's new Strategy 2030 is well-grounded in these global commitments.

Going forward, we would like to highlight three important aspects from the strategy that should be integrated through-out the work of ADB in order to make a sustainable contribution to our joint commitments, namely; i) tackling climate change, building climate and disaster resilience, ii) strengthening private sector operations and iii) accelerating progress in gender equality.

The first of these aspects is ADB's work on **tackling climate change and building climate and disaster resilience**. Being here in a country that has experienced the full and dramatic economic, social and environmental consequences of climate change clearly shows the importance of transition to fossil free societies. Fiji and other SIDS are at the very frontline of climate change, but it is evident that we are all in the same canoe in the fight against climate change.

We commend the ambitious target set out in Strategy 2030 that at least 75% of the Bank's operations will support climate change mitigation and adaptation by 2030, and we welcome ADB's commitment to reach \$80 billion in climate finance from its own resources during the period 2019–2030.

We believe that ADB can and should play a leadership role in tackling climate change. ADB should strive to become the greenest of the development banks. As Asia's total emissions of greenhouse gases continues to grow, ADB's operations need to increase its focus on supporting low-carbon transition in all sectors, and to establish ambitious targets to reduce gross and net emissions. In this regard, we look forward to ADB's first report on the institution's overall carbon footprint.

Moreover, we believe it is key that ADB continues to promote clean energy, and that investments in and support to fossil energy are phased out. A time bound plan for this should be presented. Moving away from non-renewable energy sources goes hand-in-hand with an update of the 2009 Energy Policy.

Second, we continue to stress the importance of **expanding private sector operations**. We appreciate the bold target that private sector operations will reach one-third of ADB operations in number by 2024. Increased private sector engagement, including in challenging environments and frontier markets, will play a crucial role in forwarding this region's development and in securing financing for the SDGs. Enhancing collaboration with other MDBs and DFIs is vital to strengthen mobilization of private capital.

At the same time, it is crucial that ADB's private sector projects can demonstrate clear development impact, and we would encourage a strong emphasis to be put on this important matter in project selection. As the Bank continues to expand the private sector portfolio and invest in more complex and riskier deals, it is important that ADB remains vigilant and undertakes necessary measures to contain and mitigate this risk.

ADB can play an important role in de-risking projects which will allow the crowding in of private capital, and the Bank has an important role in de-risking the business environments by creating better conditions for the private sector through policy based lending.

Last, but not least, we underline the importance of **accelerating progress in gender equality** and narrowing the gender gap. We welcome ADB's ambition to promote gender equality in 75% of its projects by 2030. We congratulate ADB on earning the second level of certification for workplace gender equality from the Economic Dividends for Gender Equality (EDGE), thus becoming the first IFI to achieve this recognition.

These are clearly steps in the right direction. However, the struggle to reach gender equality and empower women and girls is still far from over, and we underline the importance of continued efforts in this critical area. An important step in this regard would be to improve the gender balance within ADB. Great strides have been made to address the organizational gender inequalities, but more needs to be done. We expect the ADB to hire, promote and retain more international staff and continue to make itself a more attractive workplace for women.

But it is not only the Bank that should translate words into action. As Governors, we have a key role in promoting gender diversity at the Board of Directors. At present, there is *one* female Board member out of 24. Study after study shows that a more diverse Board enhances the quality of decision making, and it is clear that we collectively must do better and recognize the importance of gender diversity when considering candidates for the Board.

President Nakao, fellow governors. The right ambitions and the right words are clearly in place. Now the critical time starts as it is time to move from words to deeds, and ensure that the implementation of the Strategy has a solid and sustainable development impact. An impact that supports gender equity, fights climate change and is super charged by the private sector. You can trust that the Nordic countries will remain an honest and critical friend and supporter in this endeavor.

On behalf of Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden I can assure you of our steadfast commitment to the ADB as we work together towards a prosperous, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable Asia and Pacific.

Chairman Sayed-Khaiyum, Mr President, fellow Governors. *Vinaka vaka levu* for your time and attention.