Opening Remarks

Tetsushi Sonobe
Dean and CEO, Asian Development Bank Institute (ADBI)

Tetsushi Sonobe is the Dean and CEO of the Asian Development Bank Institute (ADBI), the Tokyo-based think tank of the Asian Development Bank that promotes the realization of a prosperous, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable Asia and the Pacific through policy research and capacity building. Born in 1960 in Tokyo, Dean Sonobe obtained his PhD in economics from Yale University and BA in economics from the University of Tokyo. His research interests are centered on the empirics of economic development, particularly the roles of industrial clusters, human capital, social capital, management practices, and market competition in industrial development in developing Asia and other regions.

Before joining ADBI in April 2020, Dean Sonobe served for six years as a vice president of the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (GRIPS) in Tokyo and taught economics for thirty years at Tokyo Metropolitan University and GRIPS. Dean Sonobe is a recipient of the Nikkei Book Publication Prize and the Masayoshi Ohira Memorial Prize, and a founding board member of the Japanese Association for Development Economics.
Session One

Sania Nishtar  
Federal Minister, Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety; Chairperson, BISP; Founder of Ehsaas, Government of Pakistan

Senator Dr. Sania Nishtar is a member of the Senate of Pakistan. She is the Special Assistant of the Prime Minister of Pakistan with the status of Federal Minister. She has the Cabinet portfolio of Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety. She is the founder of Ehsaas, the Government’s flagship social protection program, and leads its implementation. She also chairs the Benazir Income Support Program and the Government of Pakistan’s Council on Poverty Alleviation.

Dr. Sania Nishtar is a member of the United Nations Global Alliance on Poverty Eradication. She is the former co-chair of World Health Organization’s High-Level Commission on Non-communicable diseases along with the presidents of Uruguay, Finland and Sri Lanka. She is also a member and former chair of the World Economic Forum’s Global Agenda Council on the Future of Healthcare and has recently chaired the U.S National Academy of Sciences Global Study on the Quality of Healthcare in low and middle-income countries. In addition, she also chairs the United Nations International Institute for Global Health’s Advisory Committee. She has founded the NGO Heartfile in Pakistan and has also previously served as a federal minister in the Pakistan government in 2013.

In 2017, she was Pakistan’s nominee for Director-General of the World Health Organisation and was in the final shortlist of three. Earlier she was also founding Chair of the UN Secretary General’s Independent Accountability Panel for Women’s and Children’s health and chaired WHO’s Commission on Ending Childhood Obesity. She has received many international awards for her work and is widely published. Sania Nishtar graduated from Khyber Medical University as the best graduate in 1986. She is a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians and took a Ph.D at Kings College London. On October 16, 2019, Kings College London honoured Dr. Sania with a Doctorate in Science, Honoris, Causa.

Session Two

Linda Arthur  
Senior Specialist, Asian Development Bank Institute

Linda Arthur is a senior specialist at the Asian Development Bank Institute. She works with government officials by designing knowledge products to strengthen policy making and implementation across a range of priority areas for developing and emerging Asia, including use of strategic foresight for inclusive recovery policies; innovation ecosystems to spur green growth; and leveraging behavioral insight to augment development impact. She is seconded from the Asian Development Bank, where she has worked since 2003, in various positions, including field assignments in Afghanistan and Pakistan. She holds a PhD from Oxford University and an MA and BA from the University of Toronto.
Anir Chowdhury
Policy Advisor, Aspire to Innovate (a2i) Programme, Cabinet Division/ICT Division, United Nations Development Programme Bangladesh

Anir Chowdhury is the Policy Advisor of the a2i Programme of the ICT Division and the Cabinet Division of the Government of Bangladesh supported by the UNDP. In this capacity, he leads the formation of a whole-of-society innovation ecosystem in Bangladesh through massive technology deployment, extensive capacity development, integrated policy formulation, whole-of-government institutional reform, and an Innovation Fund. His work on innovation in public service has developed interesting and replicable models of service delivery decentralization, public-private partnerships, and transformation of a traditional bureaucracy into a forward-looking, citizen-centric service provider.

Huck-ju Kwon
Professor, Asia Development Institute, Graduate School of Public Administration, Seoul National University

Huck-ju Kwon is Professor at Graduate School of Public Administration, and the Asia Development Institute, Seoul National University and Fulbright-Democracy Visiting Fellow, Harvard Kennedy School. He was the President of the Korean Association of International Development and Cooperation (2019-2020) and the Harvard-Yenching Scholar, Harvard University (2013-14). Kwon also worked at the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) as Research Coordinator (2002-2005). He was Co-editor of Global Social Policy. His research interest is in governance, global social policy, and international development cooperation.


Michiel Van der Auwera
Senior Social Development Specialist (Social Protection), Social Development Thematic Group, Asian Development Bank

Michiel Van der Auwera is Senior Social Development Specialist (Social Protection) in the Social Development Thematic Group, Sustainable Development and Climate Change Department. He supports ADB’s goal to tackle remaining poverty and reducing inequality through the enhancement of social protection for all, the generation of quality jobs and the reduction of inequality in access to opportunities. His area of expertise is social protection, which includes pensions and social insurance, labor market interventions, and targeted social interventions. He is the team leader for technical assistance programs on social protection and quality jobs. He promotes the disability inclusion agenda. Michiel holds master’s degrees in European Social Security and Social Protection Financing.