

High-Level Closing Ceremony

Remarks by John Versantvoort

Head OAI, ADB

Your Excellencies Deputy Prime Minister Truong Hoa Binh and Government Inspector General Le Minh Khai,

Ambassador Gareth Ward,

Deputy Secretary General Jeffrey Schlagenhauf,

UNDP Resident Representative, Caitlin Wiesen,

Distinguished members and partners of the Anticorruption Initiative for Asia and the Pacific,

Ladies and gentlemen: Good Afternoon,

The theme for this week's conference – Preventing and Combating Corruption in Infrastructure Projects – is as urgent as it is relevant.

Asian Development bank considers high-quality, low-carbon and climate-resilient infrastructure investment critical for the inclusive and sustainable development of the Asia-Pacific region. Last year, infrastructure projects in energy, transport, agriculture, water supply and urban infrastructure accounted for about 70% of ADB's total commitments.

However – the demand for infrastructure across Asia and the Pacific far exceeds the current supply, particularly in emerging economies and low-income developing countries. In the Asia-Pacific region alone, ADB puts the infrastructure needs at \$1.7 trillion a year between 2016 and 2030.

I have said it in the opening session, and I will say it again in the closing session today. Bridging the infrastructure gap is not just a matter of financing. The Asia-Pacific region faces deficits in infrastructure in terms of quality as well as quantity. And among the many barriers to delivery of quality infrastructure, corruption must be one of the most challenging.

The United Nations estimates that we need to close a financing gap of \$2.5 trillion per year to end poverty and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. Meanwhile, the World Economic Forum estimates that the global cost of assets stolen due to corruption amount to roughly \$2.6 trillion per year— about the same amount needed to finance the SDGs.

Money lost to corruption is development denied to those who need it most. For a development bank like ADB, the moral imperative of addressing corruption is clear.

This is why ADB is proud to stand with OECD, UNDP and the members and partners of the Anti-corruption Initiative for Asia and the Pacific. Your support for the work of the Initiative is absolutely crucial.

We have learned many valuable lessons this week, and I will not seek to repeat these here. But let me leave you with three closing thoughts for the future of the Initiative.

Firstly, engagement and collaboration with the private sector is a critical element of a successful anti-corruption strategy. When good public governance is matched by good corporate governance, the development benefits are magnified – especially in this era where private sector finance far exceeds the public financial resources available for development. I am therefore pleased that members support the establishment of a business integrity network alongside the existing public integrity network and law enforcement network.

Secondly, we must learn to harness big data and new technologies to promote integrity and transparency in public governance more effectively. Along with staggering economic development, the Asia-Pacific region is experiencing and participating in the worldwide digital transformation. E-government, data analytics and artificial intelligence must pave the way towards a more transparent, efficient and cost-effective delivery of the services that we owe to our citizens and beneficiaries.

Thirdly: Each of us must serve as the agents of change in the countries where we operate. Even if we operate in different countries under different laws and systems, we all face similar challenges. OECD and ADB established the Initiative in 1999 to support countries' anticorruption efforts through capacity development and knowledge sharing, and the external evaluation of the Initiative has shown its relevance and value to the members to this date. As we all go our separate ways, let us remind ourselves that we must continue to draw upon each other's wisdom and experiences in a practical and tangible manner.

Finally, let me thank the Government of Vietnam once again for expressing its commitment to good governance by hosting the Conference. You have shown tremendous hospitality to the members and partners of the Initiative and I am sure many of us look forward to an opportunity to return to your beautiful country.

Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you for your valuable contributions. I wish you a safe journey home.