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Closing of
Asia Water Week 2013

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I. INTRODUCTION

Good Morning. Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is my great pleasure to bring the Asian Water Week 2013. A few fast facts:

- Over 1000 people registered their wish to participate
- Over 600 have joined the sessions over the past two and half days
- We had 18 side events
- 3 plenary sessions
- 18 parallel sessions on river basins, water resources, rural water services, and urban water services
- The youngest participant is 1 year old
- I will spare the blushes of the oldest!

We consider “Water security for All” as both a strong vision for the water profession and also a major multidimensional challenge. The AWDO launched by VP Lohani on Wednesday has generated great interest in the region and beyond by measuring national water security in five dimensions and highlighting the need to integrate across these dimensions. We look forward to continuing to work on measuring and increasing water security in Asia and the Pacific.

As we all know, a major value of gatherings, such as this, is the opportunity to meet colleagues and to discuss the challenges we face as we work to provide equitable access to water, food, energy and environmental security for billions of people in the Asia. There have been numerous groups, large and small, discussing problems and solutions. And I am sure a number of new agreements to work to push the water frontier.

Before we close Asia Water Week I would like to summarize some of our take-away messages from week. I will only pick a few key observations from our three themes.

In the Urban sessions we looked at Wastewater management, flood management and sustainable urban water services.

For **better wastewater management** increased political will to tackle these issues is essential and there is no universal approach.

For **management of floods** in urban areas increased community education and awareness is critical to enable a shift in paradigm - from traditional to more holistic approaches. Engineering solutions are definitely not enough, the social dimensions of flood preparations have to be adequately addressed and meaningful stakeholder involvement is vital, and ecological considerations in the rivers and flood ways must not be ignored

Urban water services are improving, but it is not time to be complacent. There are still barriers to achieving sustainable urban water services related to the highly fragmented division of responsibilities and tasks among institutions. Regulatory changes are required to avoid a 'sector perspective' and to promote a more 'integrated approach'. Consider the entire water cycle as one system: water sources, water supply,

wastewater and storm-water should be contextualized within an integrated urban water framework.

Turning to the **basin and water resources discussions** – it was broadly agreed that Water insecurity is widespread – and although integrated water resources management is adopted by the majority of the countries in the region, there is still much work to be done to provide a secure water resources base for people, for economies and for the environment. As AWDO 2013 recommends the time to act is now.

But it is not all bad news – there are a lot of promising capacity development initiatives happening in the region – and the increasing focus on competency development, professional certification and leadership development is a good signal that we can expect more effective application of the IWRM principles to spread.

Another exciting development is the increasing interest from the private sector to be more fully engaged in resource management as the result of recognition of the risks to business and reputation of not being seen as good water stewards. ADB will work with new partners to promote these approaches to engage with stakeholders across the region – more new collaborations with shared objectives.

In the **rural water sessions** we looked at future trends in agricultural water management, particularly irrigation services which will be essential to feed the growing population. New approaches were showcased – from systems for the small and marginal farmers through to discussions of the future of the large scale irrigation systems producing essential staple food

grains. New initiatives with our colleagues from the World Bank and FAO will seek to improve both water and food security.

We also heard from case studies on rural water supply and sanitation initiatives across the region – for rural areas the active engagement of the community in the identification and management of these services is essential.

Finally I must draw attention to the lively contribution by the **Young Partners for Water** this week. These 20 young people from across Luzon have joined sessions and taken the chance to learn about water from many perspectives. Yesterday afternoon they demonstrated the energy and innovation that our young people will bring to the water sector. I do suggest you watch this space with interest as they mobilize more support and provide leadership to their friends and neighbors.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I thank all of you for making the time to come to Manila and to share your insights and wisdom. I believe you have found the week thought provoking and that you go home with new ideas and new friends to continue the hard task of improving water security for all.

I wish you all a safe and trouble free journey to your home.

Thank you all for your participation this week.

Thank you.