

Remarks by Ambassador Robert Orr

Partnership Forum: Innovation for Resilient and Smart Communities

Multi-Function Hall 1-3. Annex Building

Tuesday, 19 May 2015; 9:30 – 9:40 am

Good morning President Nakao, Vice President Bindu, Director General Locsin, Executive Director for Japan Koguchi, colleagues, distinguished officials, and technology developers from the public and private sector.

Let me say first that our hearts go out to the people of Nepal and other affected countries, and we extend our deepest condolences for their loss of lives and property. The repeated earthquakes in Nepal and the region, the early arrival of the typhoon season, and the predictions of a harsh El Nino season this year are all reminders of the critical need to reduce our communities' vulnerability to natural and environmental hazards.

It is imperative that, together, we undertake prompt and comprehensive steps to ensure that our disaster management systems reflect the very latest thinking and the very latest technology. Particularly in this part of the world, we know all too well the devastating effects of Mother Nature. In the United States, disasters struck also close to home in recent years when Hurricane Katrina and Sandy hit our shores.

At the same time, we must also focus on mitigating the negative impacts of rapid urbanization. Indeed, Asia and the Pacific is the most rapidly urbanizing region in the world; more than half of the world's largest cities are in Asia. By the year 2050, 3 billion people—about 65% of all Asians—will live in cities. ADB studies have found that rapid urbanization translates into urbanization of poverty—and this goes to the very heart of our ADB mission: “to create a region free of poverty.” Helping our member countries develop “smart cities” with integrated and sophisticated strategies for water supply, wastewater management, and

transport will go a long way towards advancing our goals.

Central to ADB's mission is *financial* support for infrastructure in the energy, transport, urban and rural sectors. During this "Knowledge Partnership Week" we hope to develop what we might call a new form of "*ADB currency*," one that goes beyond dollars and cents. This week experts from the public and private sectors will share ideas and best practices on the latest innovations and trends, and they will discuss the latest hardware and software in smart, resilient and sustainable technologies. The outcome of this week, in terms of new ideas and approaches and new commitments to collaboration, could very well become a new form of "ADB currency of knowledge."

For me personally, as a former executive in the private sector, I am delighted that so many representatives from US firms and organizations are joining us this week

to share their wealth of knowledge and expertise to mobilize innovation solutions.

During my 5 years here at the ADB, I have seen that US firms' active

participation in ADB projects has been based on their know-how in project

management and their sophisticated technology. This is our "strong suit." US firms

have learned that effective economic development translates into good business

development and attractive opportunities.

ADB's Mid-Term Review Action Plan on Strategy 2020 emphasizes the need to

develop an institutional framework and modalities to adopt new and innovative

cost-effective technologies and products. As we participate in this week's panels

and discussions, let us explore how we might build on the partnerships formed and

implement in effective and practical ways the very innovative ideas that I am

sure that will emerge.