

Distinguished Guests, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honor and pleasure to welcome all of you to ADB for the 11th Regional Conference of the Anti-corruption Initiative for Asia and the Pacific.

I want to extend a special welcome and thank Nicolas Pinaud, the OECD Deputy Director, and his team for their exceptional collaboration in organizing this conference. The Anti-corruption Initiative for Asia and the Pacific is fast approaching its silver, or 25-year anniversary, and we are grateful for the steadfast partnership with the OECD in promoting integrity in both the public and private sectors in the region.

This year's conference theme, "From Pandemic to Recovery," is both timely and relevant. It captures well the path on which ADB's developing member countries find themselves, as well as our own path as a community of anti-corruption practitioners.

It has been over 3 years since we last met face-to-face as members of the Anti-Corruption Initiative. We have all grown older and wiser from the many challenges that the pandemic has thrown our way - both personally and as champions for integrity in the projects and programs for which we play our respective oversight roles.

At a time of crisis, corruption risks exacerbate the many difficulties that a community faces. The COVID-19 pandemic was no exception. The processes by which funding is allocated, supplies are procured, and bills are paid, are especially vulnerable to fraud and corrupt activity in a time where the pressure to deliver is high.

With the burden of large borrowing programs to finance emergency responses and diminished tax revenues from decreased economic activity during the pandemic, many of ADB's developing members are now facing significant pressures on their budgets and public debt. Moreover, many countries have lost ground in their efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

The subtheme of the conference, "Building Resilient Economies through Transparency, Integrity, and Trust," sums up equally well how we, as anti-corruption champions, must support the public and private sector in our countries get the Sustainable Development Goals back on track.

Over the next few days, we will discuss the multifaceted nature of the fight against corruption. We will talk about the importance of setting and enforcing legal norms, providing safe avenues for reporting misconduct and protecting whistleblowers, investigative approaches in crisis situations, and many other critical, evergreen topics.

However, let us remember that the fight against corruption is about more than legal norms, techniques, and methodologies. It is about a joint commitment to shared values. Values are often implicit, and sometimes it helps to

articulate them so that we can remind ourselves and each other. Along with "Client Centric" and "Transformational", ADB chose "Trustworthy" as one of three core values required to achieve its vision of an Asia–Pacific region that is prosperous, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable. Truly, we believe that transparency, integrity, and honesty are foundations of sustainable relationships.

We consider you - the anticorruption policymakers, investigators, prosecutors, civil society organizations, and private sector participants in our member countries - as essential partners on the journey towards a resilient and sustainable Asia–Pacific region. We at ADB are proud to support your work and provide this platform for sharing experiences and best practices over the coming days.

With this, I would like to hand over to my distinguished colleague from OECD, Mr. Nicolas Pinaud, who will elaborate further on the theme of the conference and the structure of the agenda.

I wish you fruitful discussions and a successful conference.