

Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my honour to open the 11th Regional Conference of the Anti-Corruption Initiative for Asia and the Pacific, jointly organized by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

We are privileged to have with us today, in the beautiful headquarters of ADB, distinguished participants from government anti-corruption policymakers, investigators, prosecutors, law enforcers, representatives from the private sector, and civil societies of the member economies of Anti-Corruption Initiative for Asia-Pacific (ACI).

Let me take this opportunity to thank our partner, the ADB, for hosting this year's conference.

Since 1999, the ACI, co-established by the Asian Development Bank and the OECD, has supported governments' efforts to act against corruption. It is a forum to sharpen the policies and practical instruments in fighting corruption and to promote resilient economies.

The theme of this conference, "From Pandemic to Recovery: Building Resilient Economies through Transparency, Integrity, and Trust," is very relevant to today's challenges in the region.

- **Asia and the Pacific is a major engine of the global economy.** It is projected to account for approximately [70% of global GDP growth](#) in 2023, and, as highlighted in the [OECD Economic Outlook interim report](#) released in March, Asia and the Pacific economies have managed the pandemic crisis relatively well, and, short-term prospects have improved.
- **However, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on economies and societies worldwide** and despite positive signs of a rebound, medium-term uncertainty and rising inflation pose a threat to global recovery.
- **Asia and the Pacific is not an exception in this regard.** Economies continue to grapple with its far-reaching economic and social consequences, with corruption being a stumbling block for recovery.
- **In the vast majority of countries, the perception is that that there has not been significant progress against corruption in the region in the last 4 years** (according to TI's latest Corruption Perception Index). This is concerning as corruption undermines the level playing field for companies and poses a risk to citizens and businesses' trust in government, which is a cornerstone for a sustained recovery.

- It is imperative that **we come together to tackle this issue head-on**, with transparency, integrity, and trust at the forefront of our efforts.
- **Today's Conference is a perfect opportunity to open the way for discussing how the Initiative can continue to support this collective effort.**

We believe that the Initiative has a unique capacity to mobilize a broad range of stakeholders through its three workstreams: the Public Integrity Network (PIN), the Law Enforcement Network which exists since 2015, as well as Business Integrity (BI) that was launched in 2019. It provides a platform to hold a constructive dialogue on corruption risks, challenges, and practical solutions to respond to members' critical needs.

During this Conference, we will take stock of the lessons learned from the COVID-19 crisis to provide actionable insights that can contribute to a sustainable and inclusive recovery in the region.

Our discussions will be structured around the following agenda for the conference:

1. The conference will start with a dialogue between leaders from the Asia and the Pacific region to discuss challenges in promoting a clean and trustworthy environment for resilient economic recovery post-pandemic.
2. The conference will then go into thematic sessions to discuss anti-corruption measures in the public and private sectors, ranging from whistleblower protection, integrity risk assessments, collective action initiatives and compliance incentives for the private sector. These discussions will draw on the latest international standards such as the OECD 2021 Anti-Bribery Recommendation.
3. There will also be a parallel meeting of the Law Enforcement Network whose participation is restricted to law enforcement practitioners to delve into investigation practices, asset seizure and asset recovery. You will have a chance to discuss about new practical guidelines on law enforcement response to corruption in crisis situations. These guidelines were developed thanks to the support of the United States government.
4. Finally, the Steering Group session on the 11th of May will provide an opportunity to discuss and agree on the next steps for the Anti-corruption Initiative for Asia and the Pacific.

Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen, **in conclusion, let me thank all of you for joining us today.** I am confident that this conference will provide us with a valuable opportunity to share knowledge and experiences, challenges, and find good practices that contribute to the fight against corruption and the promotion of transparency, integrity, and trust. I wish you all a productive and fruitful conference.