

## **Promoting Plastics Circularity in the Philippines: Launch of Manila City Action Plan for Plastics Circularity and Future Opportunities**

**Multifunction Hall 2, ADB Headquarters, Mandaluyong City  
Monday, 10 February 2025, 9:00 a.m.–1:30 p.m.**

**Closing Remarks for Yoko Watanabe,  
Director, Environment  
Climate Change, Resilience, and Environment Cluster  
Climate Change and Sustainable Development Department,  
Asian Development Bank**

### *Introduction*

- Good morning, everyone. I am Yoko Watanabe, Director of Environment of ADB's Climate Change and Sustainable Department. To our esteemed guests today, thank you for being here and for your kind, insightful contributions to the discussions on plastics circularity in Manila and beyond.
- We have learned so much this morning, and the launch of this Manila City Action Plan has been truly inspiring. Clearly, the work begins when we leave this room.
- How can we take this plan forward and move it to fruition? Please allow me to share a few thoughts about how we can answer this call to action.

### *ADB and its new Environment Action Plan*

- First off, the coming years will be critical for addressing the triple planetary crisis of biodiversity loss, pollution, and climate change. Only five years are remaining to achieve Agenda 2030 or the Sustainable Development Goals—and yet progress has been slow and challenging.
- The past year has also been the hottest year on record, and as some say, if climate change trends continue, then that was essentially the coldest year of our lives.

- Now this is not a time for doom and gloom. The answer as shown in today's launch is clear—it is Nature. Nature plays a critical role for combatting our triple planetary crisis and delivering sustainable development in our region.
- Our lives and economies depend on nature. Nature-positive development could generate over \$4 trillion in business and create about 232 million jobs per year in Asia by 2030.
- **Here in ADB, we have released a new Environment Action Plan that shows our commitment to respond to the crisis** and help our developing member countries decouple economic growth from environmental degradation.
- This plan, which provides strategic guidance until 2030, is anchored on three pillars as solutions to the crisis: biodiversity and ecosystem management, pollution control and circular economy, and nature-based climate solutions. This means ADB will seek to scale up projects and leverage financing that are aligned to these environmental priorities, be it at the upstream, midstream, and downstream level.

### *Circular Economy as a Key Pillar*

- This brings me to my second point: **we have brought the circular economy to the fore as a key pillar.** While it is imperative that we tackle marine plastic pollution, especially here in the Philippines and Southeast Asia, it also essential that we look beyond plastics.
- The circular economy approach centers on the prevention, reduction, and management of environmental pollution and promoting efficient use of

resources. As we make our cities and communities more livable, we have to do so cognizant of our planetary boundaries.

- At ADB, we are integrating the circular economy in our operations. Along with expanding solid waste management and recycling, we will apply circularity across sectors and regions starting with the preparation and design of new projects that incorporate circular economy components. In the Yangtze River, for example, ADB is supporting the People's Republic of China with developing a circular system for mulching films for agriculture, including collection centers, reverse logistics, and closed-loop recycling that will turn degraded plastics into fresh mulching films.
- The circular economy and resource use efficiency approach is also being mainstreamed through ADB's new Environmental and Social Framework, which will replace the current safeguards policy by 2026.

#### *Actions Aligned with International Agreements*

- Third, **turning plans to reality requires alignment with international agreements.** This includes the Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, the Paris Agreement, and the upcoming Global Plastics Treaty.
- While the recent fifth negotiating session for the Global Plastics Treaty didn't conclude as planned, countries are still optimistic for an ambitious, legally binding instrument that seeks to end plastic pollution.
- ADB is a recognized observer in these negotiations since the second session. As we look forward to its ratification, we are focused on opportunities to assist developing member countries with the treaty's eventual implementation, from support toward enabling conditions and policies to providing knowledge, capacity building, and financing.

- Developing city action plans is only one of several efforts and interventions in a system-wide approach to operationalize a circular economy in the region. As indicated in the Manila City Action Plan, this would not only achieve the objectives of the City of Manila, but it could also be a reference model supporting the objectives of a national action plan, that is then linked to international treaties and frameworks.
- This city action plan can be replicated in other Philippine cities. ADB is poised to provide assistance to support such initiatives. This will complement our ongoing work with the local and national government to rehabilitate the Pasig River.
- Building synergies and partnerships, and strengthening regional collaboration, are vital for resolving marine plastic pollution, given that the negative impacts are both local as well as transboundary.

### *Closing*

- I believe the Manila City Action Plan holds much promise. Together with the potential policy-based loan and the Pasig River program presented earlier, it builds on the momentum to drive the circular economy transition forward.
- It also advances the ambition in our Environment Action Plan to increase nature-positive investments and mainstream the environment into sector programs and activities. We hope this can spark further replication in other cities and countries.
- The path ahead for a better environment and better quality of life will need a whole-of-society approach. Working with colleagues and

counterparts will make our plans possible. Thank you and I look forward to continuing this work with all of you.