

**ADB OECD ANTI-CORRUPTION INITIATIVE:
FIGHTING CORRUPTION IN THE NEW MILLENIUM
Seoul, 11 December 2000**

**OPENING REMARKS BY MR. SEIICHI KONDO
DEPUTY SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE OECD**

Mr. Minister, distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen,

I am pleased to welcome you to Seoul for the second annual conference of the ADB OECD Anti-Corruption Initiative. I would like to thank the Government of Korea for hosting this important event, specifically targeting corruption in the Asia-Pacific region in the new millenium.

This Conference brings together an impressive gathering: senior politicians, officials, anti-corruption experts and leaders of civil society representing citizens' interest in integrity in government and transparency in the private sector. I am sure that this conference will support the development of concrete principles, strategies and commitment for fighting corruption and safeguarding integrity. I am honored to join this meeting.

In the past few years, OECD countries and countries of Asia and the Pacific have come to fully appreciate the negative economic and political effects of corruption. If our presence here is not proof enough, the presentations that will be made during the next two and a half days will leave no doubt: Corruption has crossed the divide between North and South, leaving as victims in its wake the citizens, institutions and democratic processes in these countries. Our presence here is also proof that effective action requires a broad-based approach involving all countries and, within them, all social partners -- government, civil society, enterprises, trade unions and the media. Only by acting together can we safeguard our common interest in promoting respect for the rule of law and protecting our citizens from corruption.

The ADB OECD Anti-Corruption Initiative

About 14 months ago, leaders from more than 35 nations and international organisations assembled in Manila, at a conference jointly sponsored by the ADB and the OECD, to launch a first-of-its-kind partnership between all social partners in the Asian and Pacific countries and the international community: the "ADB OECD Anti-Corruption Initiative for Asia and the Pacific". There, the nations of Asia and the Pacific agreed to develop comprehensive national strategies for combating corruption, with economic, social and human dimensions, improve conditions for international investment, and to develop public-private partnerships to promote integrity and greater transparency. In turn, the international community pledged to define ways for advancing a regional anti-corruption agenda.

This conference aims to report on progress achieved in the region since Manila, deepen understanding of the problem by focusing on corruption prone areas, and lay the groundwork for further partnerships among all players in the region. In order to achieve this objective, the meeting will pose a series of issues for debate around the following topics:

- ✓ How to tackle corruption in corruption prone areas
- ✓ How to implement international standards of integrity in government and businesses

- ✓ How to achieve good public and corporate governance and how to improve disclosure and accountability in government and business operations
- ✓ What are the actions that need to be taken by multinationals, local enterprises and business associations
- ✓ How to generate support for anti-corruption initiatives through business groups, civil society, the media and aid agencies

Importance of Regional Co-operation

Let me stress the importance of regional co-operation in an anti-corruption effort of this kind. As we all know, fighting corruption is a complex undertaking. Effective action requires a broad-based approach involving all countries. In an increasingly interdependent world, regional co-operation can be a powerful policy tool to take effective measures to curb corruption as shown by the experience of OECD countries, which negotiated the Convention on Bribery in International Business Transactions and adopted the “Recommendation on Improving Ethical Conduct in the Public Service”.

Good, clean governance – both public sector and corporate – can play an important role in promoting stable economic, social and political environments. Reducing corruption can also help eliminate distortion in the allocation of resources, and enhance competition in the market place. Addressing these issues is precisely what the OECD anti-corruption instruments attempt to do. They address corruption from the perspective of both the “supply side”, by taking action against bribe givers and promoting ethical standards in business, and the “demand side,” through work on public service ethics and governance. The ADB’s work, in particular on governance and capacity building, comes in this context too.

I am confident that this second conference of the ADB OECD Initiative, because it aims at drawing on the collective experience of both OECD countries and Asian and Pacific countries, can help nations of the region to reflect together on the different tools that governments, businesses and civil society can use to prevent corruption and promote integrity. Korea can take particular pride in its very comprehensive anti-corruption program and the high-level political support it gives to the fight against corruption. Although this program has been developed in the Korean context, it is a good example of how a successful anti-corruption initiative, when shared in a regional context, can provide useful lessons and experiences for others.

Private Sector and Civil Society: The Critical Players

Let me also stress the key role played by the private sector and civil society. As governments cannot fight corruption alone, the engagement of the private sector and civil society at large is critical in the fight against corruption in the region. Civil society activity in Asia and the Pacific is clearly on the upswing since the recent financial crises. Encouraging? Yes. Adequate? No. More, much more, needs to be done and that is why I am so encouraged to see all of you, representatives of NGOs, journalists, and corporate executive officers, here.

Leadership and partnership

Last but not least, fighting corruption requires leadership and partnership. We can thank Korea and the Office of the Prime Minister for their support in convening this conference and offering us the opportunity to work together, learn together and commit together to fight corruption. The word “together” is important. Because fighting corruption requires many leaders.

In national and local governments, in parliaments and city councils, in the judiciary and security forces, in the tax administration and in corporations, and among citizens in every community.

It also requires partnership. No single effort will do the job. When we look at the most successful societies today - both the established, affluent democracies, and those that have dealt most effectively with the challenges of corruption - we find densely integrated networks of public and private activity, interest and resources. Such partnerships draw on the shared interests of citizens, businesses, elected officials, and honest public officials. They all aim at breaking up the monopolies, the unchecked discretion, and the lack of accountability that lie at the heart of corruption.

We are also thankful for the assistance of our many partner organizations, which have become major players in corruption prevention. The Department for International Development of the UK, the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, the United Nations Development Program, and the US Agency for International Development played an important role in putting together the sessions on the media and civil society and securing the participation of representatives of NGOs and media. The Pacific Basin Economic Council provided invaluable assistance in identifying appropriate private sector participants. Other donors and non-government organizations, including the National Development Institute and Transparency International, the World Bank and the World Bank Institute, also provided assistance and advice.

Many leaders are here for this Conference. I hope that the work of the ADB and the OECD and of this Conference will assist you in your efforts to fight corruption.
