

Chair's Summary of the 6th Asian Development Forum

The 6th Asian Development Forum (ADF) was held on 18th March 2016 in Colombo, Sri Lanka, hosted by the Government of Sri Lanka. The participants were from ADB, Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA), OECD, UNDP, Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Laos, Myanmar, Pakistan, Philippines, Thailand, and Viet Nam.

Under the theme of “2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Voice from Asia”, we discussed how to implement the SDGs, which is an urgent issue for each country, as well as the issues of infrastructure development and industrial human resource development which have an important role to achieve inclusive and sustainable growth as mentioned in Goal 9 of the SDGs.

Welcome and Opening Remarks

Hon Ravi Karunanayake, Finance Minister of Sri Lanka inaugurated the 6th ADF with his welcoming remarks, stating that the UN member states have been urged to take necessary initial steps immediately to internalize the SDGs to their national development frameworks, and the 6th ADF was expected to provide a platform to share the international best experiences and identify areas of support for timely accomplishment of the 2030 Agenda.

Mr. Bambang Susantono, Vice-President of ADB, said in his opening remarks that while weak external environment and volatile capital flows have challenged the Asian economies, we need a sustainable and inclusive growth, and thus, the ADB will continue to help the member countries by scaling up the financing resources and by providing knowledge solutions.

Session 1 Steady Implementation of Sustainable Development Goals

Dr. David Nabarro, Special Advisor to the UN Secretary-General, said in his video message that Asia is in a unique position to offer the experiences and solutions to various major development challenges, and can show a leadership in many areas in implementing the 2030 Agenda.

Dr. Saman Kelegama, Executive Director, Institute of Policy Studies, Sri Lanka, stressed in his key note speech, the necessity to fine-tune existing national strategies with the SDGs in order to reap benefits of the SDGs, and pointed out four crucial areas of the SDGs implementation; effective coordination mechanism, effective awareness program, effective monitoring and evaluation mechanism, and additional funds.

National preparedness for the integration of the SDGs into the national policy is significant to ensure the timely achievement of the SDGs by 2030. In doing so, the relevant policy reforms of a country should be carefully reviewed and implemented. Key messages from the Session 1 are as following:

Sub-session 1. Required national policy changes for SDGs implementation

- The localization and alignment of the SDGs with national development policies at country level need to be initiated, utilizing the existing MDGs framework and good practices. The SDGs could be used as a platform and planning tool to formulate new development strategies and policies, in which social, economic, and environmental sustainability should be considered as the main theme in a balanced manner.
- As the goals and targets of 2030 Agenda are broad and mutually related, and many developing countries have limited capacity of financial and human resources, prioritization of the SDGs is critical. A clustering and holistic approach could be effective for identifying priority areas.
- For mainstreaming the SDGs, a national government should work together with all stakeholders including local governments and community to formulate and implement development strategies. Local governments are to be a focal tier of the implementation of the SDGs. A bottom-up approach from grass roots level might be useful. Governments and developing partners are required to support fostering environment to enable the achievement of the SDGs.
- Improvement of institutional, legal policy and financing frameworks, quantitative and qualitative aspects of data, monitoring and evaluation frameworks are also important factors for the implementation of the SDGs.

Sub-session 2. Enhancing global partnership for SDGs implementation

- As the SDGs covers a wide range of issues, trans-border and multi-stakeholder partnerships in development, including bilateral, and multilateral development partners, the private sector and other development actors, while strengthening country ownership through building partnerships, are indispensable for the implementation of the SDGs.
- CSOs, a major partner for having achieved the MDGs particularly in poverty reduction, education and health, is also expected to play an important role in the implementation of the SDGs. Creation of enabling environment for their activities, mutual cooperation with central and local governments, and recognition of CSOs' contribution are critical for maximizing the impact of their activities for the implementation of the SDGs.
- Partnership with the private sector is essential for the implementation of the

SDGs which requires massive amounts of development funds. PPP can also accelerate public services, rationalize government's role, and offer efficiency gains. Some of key factors for the success of PPP are good governance, legal frameworks, investment plans and road maps, development of institutional capacities at national and local levels.

Session 2 Sustained, Inclusive and Sustainable Growth in Asia

Mr. Toru Ishihara, Senior policy Advisor, Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA) explained in his key note speech the Comprehensive Asia Development Plan 2.0(CADP 2.0) which is expected to contribute to promoting quality infrastructure in the region.

Asia plays an important role in achieving inclusive and sustainable economic growth and the 2030 Agenda globally. Asia will become “a Centre of Excellence” that leads world economy in the future through developing quality infrastructure and human resources as “a pair of wheels” to tap into Asian potential. Some highlights in the Session 2 include:

Sub-session 1. Infrastructure Development in Asia

- Enhancing both quantity and quality of infrastructure investment is indispensable to address massive infrastructure investment gap, a bottleneck of sustainable growth, and to achieve the SDGs.
- It is essential to improve development effectiveness for a mid-long term by aligning infrastructure investment with countries' economic development strategies and regional connectivity strategies, fully considering the stages of development and local contexts of respective countries. Economic corridors serve as a foundation for integrated, cross-border development, fostering connectivity, competitiveness and community in the region. Sustainable development should be a main concept for development master plans.
- From technical and engineering points, key elements of quality infrastructure investment for sustainable and inclusive development include (1) economic efficiency including lifecycle cost as well as environmental and social cost, (2) safety, (3) resilience against natural disasters, (4) sustainability and appropriate social and environmental considerations, and (5) benefits to residents and local communities through employment creation and technology transfer.
- With regard to financing, effective utilization of limited resources is crucially important, and such factors as focusing on priority projects in economic development plans, maximizing aid effectiveness, and mobilizing private sector resources including through PPP are necessary.

Sub-session 2. Industrial Human Resource Development in Asia

- For Asia's sustainable growth, it is indispensable to develop not only infrastructure that becomes the foundation of economic development but also develop industrial human resources that are responsible for the key industries and the upgrade of the industries.
- To make industrial human resources development (IHRD) of each country more effective, donors need to implement assistance of IHRD based on the needs that fit development policies of each country.
- As the needs vary according to the development stage of each country, it would be necessary for donors to develop a wide range of IHR skills such as practical technical skills, design and product development skills, innovation capability and management skills. Basic education and the capacity building of government officials are also important from the perspective of improving the standard of IHR.
- Recipients, therefore, also need to make their development policies reflecting the IHRD needs from the industry to reduce the gaps between vocational skills supply and demand. To that end, a private-public partnership plays a significant role in moving forward those efforts.
- IHRD, involving many ministries and local governments, requires a mind-set change. IHRD through education with cascade strategy has a positive impact in industrial development.

Closing Remarks

Hon. Eran Wickramaratne, Deputy Minister of Public Enterprise Development, Sri Lanka congratulated the success of the 6th ADF, stressing the importance of consistency of development policies and identification of priority issues to achieve the SDGs.

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