

# Vote of Thanks

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by **Werner E. Liepach**<sup>1</sup>

Good afternoon.

**Today, we are at a critical time for South Asia**, when it comes to environmental challenges. Economic development has increased living standards for many, but it comes at a significant environmental cost, which threatens to erode economic gains. A few examples come to mind:

- The flooding in Pakistan in 2010 was the worst in the country's history, affecting more than 20 million people or about a tenth of the population. The flooding of 2011 due to the monsoon also had grave effects, affecting almost two million people.
- Climate change is contributing to increased extreme weather events --from floods to droughts -- either too much water or not enough. It is estimated that lives and livelihood of more than 1.6 billion people in the SAARC region is going to be adversely affected by these climatic changes which threaten food and water security, two of the most pressing challenges faced by the region.
- Or consider the 400 million (or 14% of the region's urban population) South Asians exposed to climate change's rising sea levels because they live along the region's coastal and major river delta areas 10 meters or less above sea level. Impacts of climate change will be most pronounced in the megacities of Delhi, Dhaka, Kolkata, and Mumbai. In Bangladesh alone, sea level is predicted to rise 45 centimetres by 2050 which will affect an estimated 35 million people. Rising sea levels also bring the threat of submergence, as in the case of the Maldives and Sri Lanka.

**Other pressing challenges in the region include** food and water security and air pollution brought about by urbanization. ADB's support for this Conference is a testament to its strong commitment to environmental sustainability and good governance. We recognize the need to protect South Asia's environment, and the need to build the capacity of the judiciary in addressing these challenges, given their critical role in environmental enforcement.

**On behalf of the Asian Development Bank**, First of all, I would like to convey our thanks to the Honourable Supreme Court of Pakistan for hosting this most relevant and informative Conference. We appreciate the strong support of the judiciary for ADB's work in environmental governance in Pakistan and we look forward to further collaboration with the judiciary in promoting good environmental governance.

Secondly, our sincere thanks to the honourable South Asian judges who have participated in this conference and shared experiences from their respective jurisdictions that made the discussions comprehensive and very useful. We believe that sharing good practices with each other is the smart way to move forward in finding solutions for any challenges.

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Lastly, I would also like to thank the distinguished speakers and guests who have joined us for this two days Conference. Your participation has made each session interesting and discussion rich and we thank you for traveling many miles to be at this event. We hope that you found it as constructive as we have and we look forward to future collaborations with you on how to address the environmental concerns we share.

Thank you all for coming!