

Welcome Remarks

Bambang Susantono, Vice President (Knowledge Management and Sustainable Development)

External Support for Decentralization Reforms and Local Governance Systems in the Asia-Pacific: Better Performance, Higher Impact?

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09:05 - 09:15

Dr. Somlal Subedi,¹ Chief Secretary of the Government of Nepal, Jochen Mattern,² representatives of the governments of Indonesia, Nepal, and the Philippines; development partners and resource persons, colleagues and friends, I would like to very warmly welcome you to ADB.

Over the last three decades, numerous countries in the Asia-Pacific region have engaged in decentralization and local government reforms. The rationale and motivation for such reform initiatives has been as diverse as the reform context of each country, ranging from “big bang” decentralization as part of regime transformation in my own country Indonesia, to efforts to rebuild the state and create new social capital after 25 years of internal unrest and war in Cambodia. Many initiatives aim at strengthening sub-national governments in order to improve their service delivery for citizens and to promote local economic development.

The international community has supported decentralization and local government reform initiatives by investing in policy loans, by means of capacity development and advisory services and by facilitating national and cross-national learnings. ADB for instance, has invested \$290 million in policy-based loans in the past 3 years and such loans are usually complemented by advisory technical assistance.

In the context of the recent discussion on localizing Sustainable Development Goals, development partners have committed to engage all key policy government makers at local, state and federal levels and to refine, implement, and monitor goals and detailed targets locally. There is strong emphasis on issues such as strengthening infrastructure investment at local level and on domestic resource mobilization.

Development partners have increasingly sought a common approach for their support to decentralization reforms. In line with the global debate on aid effectiveness they have made visible efforts to harmonize their support amongst themselves and to align external support with the partner country’s strategies and systems. Our partner, the Development Partners Working Group on Decentralisation and Local Governance (DeLoG), has played an important role in this regard.

¹ Highest-level civil servant of Nepal. Newly appointed.

² Head of the Secretariat of the Decentralization & Local Governance development partner network

The Governance Thematic Group of ADB has only recently requested for membership in the DeLoG partnership and this 3-day learning event is the first joint activity under the partnership.

The event will focus on reform processes and their results in developing member countries of the ADB. It will look at the national reform processes, including issues such as functional decentralization, fiscal decentralization, and social accountability. It will also highlight support strategies and instruments provided by development partners in the context of SDGs.

The event aims at a structured exchange of information and experiences among a wide range of participants, including government officials, development partners and ADB staff from Resident Missions and headquarter. It will provide a forum for joint learning of participants from successes and failures in supporting decentralized governance.

I wish you stimulating three days and hope that the event will help you deal more effectively with the challenges in your respective countries and projects. Thank you for your attention.