

Welcome Remarks by
Erna Witoelar, UN Special Ambassador for MDGs in Asia Pacific
at the Official Launching Ceremony of the Asia Pacific Water Forum
27 September 2006, ADB Headquarters, Manila

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon. I would like to first congratulate Former Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori, for taking over from Late Mr. Ryutaro Hashimoto, as the new president of the Japan Water Forum. I would also like to express how pleased I am to be working with old friends, the chair, Ambassador Tommy Koh and Vice Chair, Mr. Ravi Narayanan. It is an honor for me to be appointed as the Vice Chair of the Asia Pacific Water Forum.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we all have an important challenge ahead of us—to help the Asian countries reach the Millennium Development Goals, especially the Targets 9, 10, and 11 on environmental sustainability, access to water and sanitation, and improving lives of the urban poor. Water is life, while sanitation is dignity—both support sustainable development. As the UN Special Ambassador for the MDGs, and based on my experience in Indonesia and in international activities, I consider that achieving the water MDGs is crucial for the sustainable economic development in the Asian region.

Last year, I chaired the Independent Panel for the comprehensive review of ADB's Water Policy. We recommended ADB to “do more and do better”. I am particularly pleased that the Forum is inaugurated on the occasion of ADB's conference on doubling water financing. I applaud ADB's President Kuroda for making a significant and noble commitment to double its investments in the region.

I am also pleased to know that one of the key result areas of the Forum focuses on increasing public outreach, through regional advocacy to government leaders, and decision makers. Sure, the Forum will support through its activities that will complement such investments and produce tangible results in terms of better lives for the people in the region, including the poor.

The Forum is result-driven and aims to contribute to sustainable water management and the achievement of the Millennium development goals in Asia. In this regard, the Forum will deliver a matrix of key result areas, and priority themes targets. I am pleased that several key players in the region have expressed their commitments to support as lead institutions to deliver these results and targets. All of them have gathered here today.

Ladies and Gentlemen, our action has already begun. Tomorrow, the members of the Governing Council will meet for the first time to discuss the work program, and prepare for the first Asia Pacific Water Summit in 2007. The Forum hopes to provide countries and organisations in the Asia-Pacific region with a common platform and voice in articulating the region's strategies and promoting its achievements in solving water problems, including meeting the necessary investment requirements. The Summit will showcase leadership in decision-making, excellence in practice and innovation, and results that have had a substantial impact at the grassroots level. I look forward to working together with each one of you to delivering a successful first Summit.

In closing, I thank you again for entrusting in me the responsibility as one of the Vice Chairs of the Forum. With your help, I hope to do my best to craft a distinct positive contribution by the Forum in the Asia and Pacific region for improved water services and sustainable water management, supporting the sincere efforts made by the respective countries in the region.

Thank you very much.