



## PRESS RELEASE

### CSOs tell ADB: Honor Your Anti-Poverty Promise

7 May 2007, Kyoto, Japan – “We do not want another 40 years of debt, poverty and ecological plunder,” according to civil society groups and affected peoples on the last day of the ADB’s Annual Governors Meeting in Kyoto. They called on the Bank to honor its commitment to poverty alleviation and respect human rights and the environment.

Contentious issues that Civil Society Organizations (CSO) have brought to the attention of top ADB officials and Japanese citizens have included: the ongoing Safeguard policies review; clean energy and climate change; water and power privatization; and illegitimate debt.

“The ADB sits on a knife edge. Fall to one side and the bank will abandon its policy commitments to marginalized peoples and the environment. But fall to the other and they can realize an opportunity – they can be leaders with the highest international standards. We, NGOs and project affected people, believe the jury is still out on which way they will fall,” says Michael Simon, Program Manager of Oxfam Australia.

“A major reason for participating in this AGM that is being hosted by Japan is the opportunity to reach out to Japanese people to make them aware of how their Government through the ADB and the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) have been involved in destructive operations with direct impacts on fragile economies and peoples lives and their livelihoods,” says Ms. Ana Maria R. Nemenzo, President of the Freedom from Debt Coalition. She challenged the Bank to be accountable for its misdeeds in the last 40 years.

“We, as citizens living in the largest donor country of the Bank, have to continue urging the Japanese Government to stop the ADB from investing into projects that cause environmental destruction and human rights violations,” says Yuki Tanabe, Program Coordinator of the Japan Center for Sustainable Environment and Society.

With climate change high on the agenda of this year’s AGM, Tara Buakamsri, climate campaigner of Greenpeace Southeast Asia, commented that “The annual theme seems to be one of appalling hypocrisy. The ADB has plenty of big talk about the increasingly dire risks faced by developing Asia due to worsening climate change. Unfortunately, throughout this meeting the ADB has also repeatedly stated that it remains committed to financing climate-destroying fossil fuel projects. Clean energy initiatives were put forth that we welcome but there is little reason to celebrate the Bank’s 40<sup>th</sup> annual conference.”

The Peoples’ Forum on ADB, a parallel CSO event to the AGM, offered an alternate vision of development for Asia and the Pacific region based on democracy, ecological sustainability, and genuine cooperation among peoples and governments. This is in stark contrast to the controversial Eminent Persons Group report that foresees the ADB dispensing of its poverty alleviation goal, and aggressively pushing for more large infrastructure projects.

“It is unacceptable that the Eminent Persons Group convened by the ADB has such a narrow breadth of expertise, limited solely to the financial and economic aspects of development. We are dismayed to see the absence of eminent persons with expertise in social and environmental issues, and insight into how development processes can be responsive to the real needs of the poor – the very people who ADB is mandated to benefit,” says Joanna Levitt, Director of Programs of the US-based International Accountability Project.

On illegitimate debt, Lidy Nacpil, International Coordinator for Jubilee South – Asia/Pacific Movement on Debt and Development said “ADB lending has resulted in creating illegitimate debt; loans have been used to impose harmful policies, finance destructive projects, support repressive governments, and contracted without democratic.”

Meanwhile, activists in Manila, Philippines led by the Freedom from Debt Coalition held a picket in front of the ADB headquarters there. FDC members wearing black shirts with the print “ADB: 40 years of debt, poverty and destruction,” demand that ADB get out of the Philippines because its projects and policies have only led to greater sufferings of the people.

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