

ADB Drafts New Environment Policy

Violeta Q. Perez-Corral, NGO Forum on ADB (March 2001) *

The ADB is seeking inputs/comments and suggestions on the framework of its new environment policy. The ADB has been operating in the region for the past 34 years now only with environment-related operational guidelines in place. Moreover, with poverty reduction as the Bank's most recent 'overarching goal' and a new Long-Term Strategic Framework (2001-2015), ADB's environmental policies and programs need to be realigned accordingly.

With a new environment policy, the ADB hopes to provide formal justification for the:

- integration of environmental concerns at each stage of the poverty reduction country-level processes (e.g., partnership agreements, poverty analyses, preparation of Country Strategy Plan);
- incorporation of environmental protection into all ADB programs and projects;
- strengthening of internal environmental procedures; and
- identification of priorities for investment and technical assistance related to environmental conservation.

The key operational principles that the ADB intends to promote through its Environment Policy are five-fold:

- No significant unmitigated environmental harm;
- Cost of environmental mitigation measures to take into account benefits of mitigation;
- Polluters to pay not only costs of pollution prevention and control but also environmental damage, administrative costs and damages to victims;
- No significant transboundary effects; and
- Monitoring of compliance with specific environmental measures.

Proposed areas of attention in the Environment Policy will include:

- Strengthening policies to integrate environment into national development planning and sectoral development actions
- Enhancing environmental management measures for the sustainable development of resources for the livelihood and protection of the health of the poor
- Enhancing environmental assessment guidelines

* The NGO FORUM ON ADB (FORUM) is a network of diverse non-governmental organizations (NGOs), peoples' organizations (POs), community-based organizations and other public interest groups with advocacy and campaigns relating to the Asian Development Bank (ADB). The Manila-based Secretariat can be reached at: Room 402, 107-A Kalayaan Avenue, Diliman, 1101 Quezon City, Philippines; Telefax: +632 9297987; E-mail: forum@pacific.net.ph. Visit our homepage: www15.brinkster.com/ngoforum.

- Implementing international environmental agreements.

Within the next two months, an initial round of consultations with relevant stakeholders – including NGOs -- will be conducted by the ADB's Environment Division (Office of Environment and Social Development/OESD) to come out with an Environment Policy Working Paper. (The schedule of consultations, however, has not yet been finalized as of this writing.) Another round of consultations will result in the review and drafting of the Environment Policy for Board approval in the last quarter of this year.

The ADB invites all stakeholders to 'go beyond mere consultation towards collaboration' in formulating the Environment Policy. For more information, you may directly contact: MR J. WARREN EVANS, Manager/Environment Division .