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STATEMENT BY THE ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK

By Dr Eduardo Banzon

As we move toward the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals, the countries of Asia and the Pacific are on the threshold of a new era of achievement for health coverage and outcomes. Region-wide commitments to Universal Health Coverage (UHC) offer opportunities for ADB to partner with countries in the region to address health systems challenges and issues that directly affect human health outcomes, such as access to potable water and sanitation, particularly those that affect the poor. ADB is increasing its support for the health sector, and strengthening its collaboration with partners like the WHO.

For Asian and Pacific countries, achieving UHC will require tackling challenges such as persistent high rates of extreme poverty, pockets of poverty in MICs, urbanization, informal sectors without health insurance, unfinished business of the MDGs, increasing vulnerable populations due to natural disasters, rapidly aging population, the growing impact of noncommunicable diseases, large mobile populations groups, and persistent risks of epidemics and pandemic.

Tackling these challenges demands innovations which ADB seek to bring to its work in the health sector. In particular, ADB is working to apply sector knowledge from urban development, finance, infrastructure and social protection projects; provide strong project management and financial structuring expertise; strengthen sector efficiencies through ICT applications; emphasize on poverty reduction and sustainability in project designs; support regional cooperation on health sector solutions; and mobilize large amounts of financing from private and public sector. Innovations are powerful when applied to business models delivering health services, to regulations and health financing reforms, and to the nature of partnerships between sector, agencies and countries.

We would like to mention in this respect our collaboration with WHO and the Asia ehealth Information Network on developing an M&E tool for measuring and achieving UHC, and the upcoming conference “Measuring and Achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC) with ICT in Asia Pacific – Making a Business Case for Strategic ICT Investments for Quality Health Care for all,” 2–3 December, in Manila. ADB and WHO are engaged in an exemplary collaboration to advance innovations in ICT applications to improve efficiency and quality of the health sector. We hope this collaboration provides inspiration to others to share knowledge and experience, and find and apply solutions.

We are looking forward to supporting the region jointly on the challenging and rewarding path to Universal Health Coverage.