



ADB–Asian Think Tank Development Forum 20–21 September 2017 · Colombo, Sri Lanka

Concept Note

A. Background

Think tanks play a vital role in public policy. The wealth of knowledge generated from evidence-based research is an important resource that help governments perform their mandates of development planning and policy development. By utilizing the think tanks' research outputs, governments are able to make informed decisions on social and economic issues of domestic, regional and/or global significance. A constructive platform for the exchange of knowledge and experiences among think tanks needs to be sustained to effectively foster regional cooperation, expand networks, and strengthen their capacities to do research and policy advising.

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) supports networking among government-linked think tanks in Asia and the Pacific through the technical assistance (TA) project, *Provision of Knowledge Products and Services to Developing Member Countries through Systematic Knowledge Sharing*. The ADB–Asian Think Tank Development Forum is the flagship annual event of the ADB–Asian Think Tanks Network (ATTN) that was established in October 2013. The network consists of Asian think tanks—mainly economic development academic research institutions and organizations in Asia and the Pacific that are closely-linked with their government's development planning, economy and/or finance ministries—working on the areas of sustainable economic growth and inclusive development.

Since 2013, the annual forum served as the key platform to promote knowledge sharing and capacity building of the think tank members, who also take turns in co-organizing the event with ADB. Participants from the first three forums benefitted from meaningful discussions on the latest global and regional policy developments and country specific experiences and policy issues on innovation and inclusion, while the fourth event shifted its focus on sustainable urbanization.

B. ADB–Asian Think Tank Development Forum 2017

The theme of the 2017 ADB–Asian Think Tank Development Forum will be “Financing for Sustainable Urbanization in Asia and the Pacific”. It will be organized by ADB in partnership with the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), a think tank member based in Sri Lanka. The IPS is an independent institution that undertakes policy-oriented economic research and provide insights on socio-economic issues to create awareness and shape Sri Lanka's policy agenda. As in the past, the event is expected to draw perspectives from a wide range of development stakeholders, with the main strategic aims of deepening knowledge exchanges among the think tanks in the region and developing relevant policy recommendations on sustainable urbanization.

While the forum maintains last year's overarching theme, the 2017 Colombo forum endeavors to deepen discussions by focusing on the financing dimension of sustainable urbanization. At the outset, a distinguished senior government official from Sri Lanka will deliver the keynote address, followed by presentations on the regional and global economic environment and country-specific developments. ADB will then briefly discuss its report findings on the current condition of

developing Asia's infrastructure, with analysis on the financial and institutional challenges that will shape future infrastructure investment and development.

The succeeding sessions will combine presentations from ADB-invited resource persons, experts, and selected think tank members who will share lessons, experiences, good practices and innovations related to fund mobilization strategies, sustainable financing for basic services, financing options for urban infrastructure, and fiscal reforms, among others. Each session will be organized in such a way where presenters, discussants and participants freely exchange comments, ideas, experiences, and policy implications. Productive networking time will also complement each day's agenda.

C. Participants

About 40 ADB officials and senior level staff of Asian think tanks will participate in the forum.

Sri Lanka-based participants including local think tanks, relevant government officials, international organizations, civil society, business and media, will likewise be invited to attend the two-day event.

D. Time and Venue

The ADB-Asian Think Tank Development Forum will be held on 20-21 September 2017 in Colombo, Sri Lanka.