AfDB Evaluation Week 2020 – Opening Remarks SVP

1. Good morning everyone! It gives me great pleasure to welcome all of you, including the many distinguished guests joining us for the African Development Bank’s 2020 Evaluation Week!

2. This year’s event will be remarkable for several reasons:

3. To begin with, there are only ten years left to deliver on the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals – or SDGs – and as such, this year’s Evaluation Week is aptly themed “From Learning to Transformational Change in Africa: Accelerating Africa’s delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals in the Decade of Action”.

4. The 2020 Global Sustainable Development Report notes that while progress has been made in many areas, it considers it unlikely that all goals and targets will be met by 2030. The Bank Group will need to step up by playing its part with its High 5 priority areas!

5. The COVID-19 pandemic has put at risk many of the economic gains that Africa has achieved over the past few decades, and has compelled countries and development organizations alike, to quickly modify their annual development plans and reallocate resources in response to the crisis and its downside effects. It has also led us at the AfDB to rethink how we work and as a result, for the first time ever, we conducted our Annual Meetings virtually. We are also now seeing our very first virtual Evaluation Week, with a series of interactive online sessions that will feature presentations and panel discussions as well as a capacity development clinic.

6. This year is not only remarkable in terms of the current COVID-19 pandemic, but also because it marks 40 years since the founding of an evaluation function at the AfDB. From its humble beginnings as a small unit, to a fully-fledged independent department that reports directly to the Board of Directors, the evaluation function at the Bank has gone from strength to strength over the course of the last 40 years.

7. Indeed, the Independent Development Evaluation Department or “IDEV”, has played a key role in helping to build a better Bank and fostering a culture of evaluation both within the institution and in its Regional Member Countries. The Bank Group’s Management emphasizes the importance of promoting a culture of results and accountability in transforming the Bank Group into a world-class learning institution.
8. The Bank makes good use of IDEV’s evaluations and to cite a few recent examples, the evaluation of the Bank’s Development and Business Delivery Model (DBDM) was a key input to inform the Bank Group’s historic Seventh General Capital Increase that was concluded last year. Furthermore, following the evaluation of quality assurance throughout the project cycle, this helped us put together an action plan which is now central to the Bank’s efforts to increase the quality and development impact of our operations and includes an “Operations Academy” for training our staff. The evaluation of the Integrated Safeguards System helped us to significantly strengthen the implementation of environmental and social safeguards; while the gender evaluation informed on how we can best proceed with gender mainstreaming, and through the recent evaluations of the private sector development strategy and access to finance, these will help us to better serve the private sector – and the list goes on.

9. The success of IDEV and of the AfDB’s Evaluation Week are a testament to the importance that the Bank attributes to learning from evaluation. Collectively, we are continuously striving to do better, ensuring that evaluation findings make their way into the projects, programs and strategies of the future. My participation – as well as that of so many of the Bank’s staff and managers – is evidence of how serious we are about giving full attention to learning for the ultimate improvement of results. That is why this year’s Evaluation Week is focusing on “From Learning to Transformational Change in Africa”. It is great that we also have so many experts and distinguished guests, from the continent and across the world, joining us on this journey.

10. It will be crucial for us, as well as African governments and development bodies, as we look ahead, to appreciate the link between learning and development effectiveness and to put in place mechanisms so that evaluations trigger “effective learning”. It is only in doing so, that development results can be achieved and sustained through transformational change as we strive to deliver on the SDGs by 2030 and to accelerate Africa’s economic transformation, guided by the Bank’s Strategic Priorities – the High 5s, to “Light Up and Power Africa”; “Feed Africa”; “Integrate Africa”; “Industrialize Africa”; and “Improve the Quality of Life for all Africans”.

11. Over the next two days, we will explore how learning from evaluations can be systematized to enhance the design and implementation of development projects and programs, and thereby pave the way for improved sustainable development outcomes. We will also discuss how organizations learn and how we can strengthen and accelerate the move from learning to action – and improved results.

12. We are delighted to welcome keynote speaker Peter Van Rooij, Deputy Regional Director for West Africa at the ILO, who will provide his unique perspective on “The essence of learning by governments and development organizations in Africa to fast-track delivery of the SDGs in the light of COVID-19”.

13. I very much look forward to his keynote address!
15.14. With this, I would like to welcome you once again to this year’s virtual Evaluation Week and I wish you successful discussions in the coming days. Ultimately, we want to take full advantage of the insights and lessons from so many experts to help us improve results for our own Hi 5 priority areas which will assist us to meet the SDGs for Africa. I thank you.