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Wednesday September 28, 2011

9 am: Welcome remarks

- Individual greetings, especially Daniel as new SC member.
- Welcome to the Riviera Maya!
- Thank you CNBV Mexico and SBS Peru for co-hosting this event. We realize that you felt challenged to match the breathtaking surroundings we had at the GPF on the wonderful island of Bali last year, but I must say you really kept your promise. Thanks for bringing us here and showing us this beautiful spot of the Riviera Maya.
- After working towards this event for more than 6 months it is now indeed an emotional moment to see how many of you - our members, potential members and partners have come to Mexico to the 3rd Annual AFI Global Policy Forum. And it was heartwarming to realize that participants got more and more excited to come and join us here. On my way to Mexico I visited five of our members in Africa - in Kenya, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Ghana, and the BCEAO in Dakar/Senegal. I could sense that everyone was getting ready for the event of the year.
- A lot has happened over the **past year**. Many of us have been troubled with the consequences of financial crisis; others have been struggling with some cases of microfinance crisis.
- Under the leadership of its Steering Committee, AFI has seen tremendous progress - with financial inclusion becoming increasingly a policy priority in more and more countries and the launching of promising reform initiatives that will further decrease the number of people without access to finance. I am therefore looking forward to the AFI network progress report later this morning which will be delivered by three of our members.
- Let me also tell you that we now have **81 member institutions** - an increase of 20 institutions (i.e. of 33%) from last year - despite our change of focus on engaging rather than expanding the network. I am pleased to announce that the latest institution which has joined the Alliance most recently (2 weeks ago) is the People's Bank of China as the second institution from China (after CBRC just 1 month before).
- Our **theme** this year is: **"Taking Stock, setting goals, moving forward"**. Why this theme? You will remember - when we started out in Kenya just 2 years ago in September 2009 we made a first effort to "Bring smart policies to life" which has also become AFI's major ambition and brand. Last year in Indonesia we were "Taking Financial Inclusion to the next level" by really invigorating and activating the network. When we left Bali we were setting the stage for the work of the network along the lines of four major themes that have guided us throughout the year: (i) leadership, (ii)

mobile financial services, (iii) partnerships, and (iv) consumer protection and financial empowerment.

- Now, when we met for the **first planning** session with our co-organizing members CNBV Mexico and SBS Peru **early this year** we had a stimulating brainstorming on the focus for this year's GPF. Our brainstorming in March was structured around two points: First, we wanted to look deeper into the question of why policymakers and regulators are doing this? Why are they apparently so concerned about financial inclusion? What is their motivation? Second, we looked at the current state in financial inclusion worldwide with still 2.5 billion people with no access to financial services at all. We found that although a lot has been achieved in a number of countries and even the G 20 has put the issue of financial inclusion high on the global agenda, perhaps there is an opportunity for this network to now take the challenge and leverage on our strengths and synergies - and become even more ambitious - based on a solid self-assessment of where we are right now.
- The question simply is: If we are not doing it who will? This is the reasoning behind our focus this year on **"Taking Stock, setting goals, moving forward"**. And this theme is reflected throughout the program.
- We will make our first serious effort on stock-taking and formulating the way forward already **this afternoon** when partners and members assess progress jointly - thereafter we will listen to AFI member countries on what their ambitions are in response to this challenge.
- **Tomorrow** the AFI working groups will show what their concrete role is in helping us fulfill our financial inclusion objectives - by sharing their results achieved so far and their work plans going forward.
- On **Friday** we will have the extraordinary opportunity to reflect on our efforts in the light of the deliberations of two financial inclusion leaders: HRH Princess Maxima of the Netherlands who is the UN Secretary General's Special Advocate for Inclusive Finance for the Poor, and the President of Mexico, his Excellency Felipe Calderon Hinojosa before we will make our commitment which will culminate in the "Maya Declaration".
- You are certainly aware that the **G 20's Global Partnership for Financial Inclusion** has decided to hold their first Annual Meeting on 1 October back-to-back with the AFI GPF. Therefore, some of us will have the opportunity on Saturday to carry our messages and insights forward to the G 20.
- One word on our **funder** - the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation: You have continuously asked us mainly two questions throughout the year: First, why is AFI distinct? Second, what impact is it making? Finding answers to these questions has been driving us, and we hope that this Forum will provide answers as well. Thank you for your intellectually insightful and generous financial support without all this would not be possible.

The AFI global policy forum is an ideas marketplace. **Its currency is knowledge.** Let me advise you just this once to spend your currency and trade it widely! For only by sharing our ideas, experience and knowledge will new ideas and innovations be sparked that could have major impacts on our ability to extend financial service to those who need them most.

Finally let me all welcome you again at the Riviera Maya, and let me thank all of you in the room for the excellent cooperation with us and your confidence in the AFI Management Unit. I would like to assure you that it is a fascinating mission for us we are on. I am looking forward to the next days. Thank you!