

PRESS RELEASE – ADC FORUM – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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AMBASSADOR SAYS MASSIVE GEOPOLITICAL SHIFTS IN SE ASIA PUTS AUSTRALIA'S NORTH AT THE SHARP END OF OUR FUTURE

Former Australian Ambassador to China, Professor Geoff Raby, says that deep structural changes in the global economy will increasingly play to the strengths of Northern Australia.

“The centre of global economic gravity is shifting rapidly towards East Asia. So Northern Australia is now geographically adjacent to the world's fastest growing economies. Australia's northern latitudes have a once-in-a-generation chance to the capture the potential of regional growth and structural change.”

“Recognising the potential opportunities and developing well crafted public and private policy approaches will be important to realize the potential of Northern Australia.

Professor Raby is leading one of five expert working groups at the forthcoming Northern Development Summit due to be held in Townsville this month, 26-28 June.

Hosted by ADC Forum, Queensland Government, James Cook University, Townsville Enterprise and the City of Townsville The Northern Development Summit is encouraging all sectors of the public, government and business communities to attend and have their say on the future of Australia's North.

Australia represents one of few truly advanced nations in the tropical zone and has obvious advantages in terms of its proximity to Asia's burgeoning powerhouses of middle class consumerism – half a billion in China alone, says Professor Raby.

“We now need to become a zone of tropical urbanization to optimize Australia's comparative advantage and serve rapidly escalating regional needs.”

One of the first things we see with a rising middle class is increased protein consumption, says Professor Raby, a need we can begin to meet through beef and other supporting industries like cereal production. As the trend continues, we also need to specialize in tropical soils, forestry, water and energy, supported by existing expertise and a growing labour force.

As long as we recognize that the North needs to differentiate itself not only from its tropical neighbours but also from the southern states of Australia, says Professor Raby, Northern Australia also has a standout potential to package itself as a tourist destination alongside the best of Africa and South America by attracting more sophisticated visitors from countries like China, Japan, Korea and Singapore.

“The Southern States enjoy the kind of tourism that encourages visits to traditional Australian icons – the ubiquitous photo in front of the Opera House, for example – but the North will likely become a more sophisticated zone of tropical urbanization amidst jungle, air and aquatic adventures that showcase some of the world's most unique landscapes and biodiversity.”

“If we can get the cities and infrastructure right, there is the natural attraction of settlement in a sophisticated and urbanized tropical ecology – one that transcends old barriers to cultural inclusion in the North and puts Northern Australia among the most sophisticated centres of development in the world.”

The Northern Development Summit is open for public registration and will explore the landscape of possibilities for the development of Australia above the Tropic of Capricorn, balancing its needs across population, major settlements, energy and minerals, tourism, biodiversity and sustainability.

To attend the Summit, the public is invited to visit www.adcforum.org



ADC Forum (Founded as the Australian Davos Connection) is a not-for-profit leadership organisation founded in 1996 by the Australian members and participants of the World Economic Forum.

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ADC Forum is an independent not-for-profit organisation delivering high-level strategic leadership forums including the annual Australian Leadership Retreat on Hayman Island and the annual Future Summit.

Professor Geoff Raby is a Vice Chancellor's Professorial Fellow at Monash University and former Australian Ambassador to the People's Republic of China. He is Chairman and CEO of Geoff Raby & Associates.

Dr Geoff Raby is Chairman and CEO of Geoff Raby & Associates, a Beijing-based business advisory firm. In addition to his roles at Geoff Raby & Associates, Dr Raby is Chairman of ASX-listed SmartTrans Ltd, as well as an Independent Director on the boards of Fortescue Mining Group, OceanaGold and Yancoal Australia. He is also Co-Chair of Corrs Chambers Westgarth's China Business Practice, Senior Advisor to Kream Gavin Anderson, and Vice Chairman of Macquarie Group China. Additionally, Dr Raby is a Vice Chancellor's Professorial Fellow at Monash University and a member of the Advance Global Advisory Board. In recognition of his contributions to advancing the relations between Australia and China, Dr Raby is honoured with the title of Friendship Ambassador to Shandong Province and has been made an honorary citizen of Chengdu City. Dr Raby was the Australian Ambassador to China from February 2007 to August 2011 and Deputy Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) from November 2002 to November 2006. He has held a number of senior positions in DFAT, including First Assistant Secretary, International Organisations and Legal Division (2001-2002), Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the World Trade Organisation, Geneva (1998-2001) and First Assistant Secretary, Trade Negotiations Division (1995-1998). He was Australia's APEC Ambassador from November 2002 to December 2004. Between 1993 and 1995, Dr Raby was head of the Trade Policy Issues Division of the OECD, Paris. In 1991, Dr Raby established in DFAT the Northeast Asia Analytical Unit which subsequently became the East Asia Analytical Unit. He was head of the Unit from 1991 to 1993. Between 1986 and 1991 he served in Beijing twice as head of the Embassy's Economic Section. He has also held positions as trade policy adviser to the Minister for Trade (1993) and in the Office of National Assessments (1984 to 1986). Dr Raby was born in Melbourne, Australia, in September 1953. Before joining the Commonwealth Public Service, he was senior tutor in economics at La Trobe University. He has BEc (Hons), MEc and PhD degrees from La Trobe. In 2007 Dr Raby was a recipient of the La Trobe University Distinguished Alumni Award and in 2010 he was made a guest Professor of Nankai University, Tianjin PRC. Dr Raby is a Member of the Order of Bernard O'Higgins, Chile, for services to international trade, especially for promoting agricultural trade liberalisation.

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