



WSM sets future agenda

Nineteen NPO delegates, 18 Agriculture delegates, and 20 advisers representing APO member economies gathered for the 52nd Workshop Meeting of Heads of NPOs (WSM), 18–20 October 2011, in Vientiane, the “Jewel of the Mekong” and capital city of Lao PDR. The objectives were to reconfirm the APO’s 2012 project lineup and approve that for the 2013/2014 biennium, which represent specific activities to advance the productivity movement in the region. The meeting was also attended by three observers, one from the UN Food and Agriculture Organization and two from the National Productivity Improvement Program of the Federal Demographic Council, United Arab Emirates.



Inaugural Session in progress. Photo courtesy of SMEPDO.

Representing the Government of Lao PDR, Minister of Industry and Commerce Dr. Nam Viyaketh delivered opening address and welcomed all delegates. He lauded the role of the APO in promoting productivity in the region since its inception and noted that his country’s association with the APO was significant as it opened its economy to catch up with global economic growth. Deputy Director General Soutchay Sisouvang of the Small and Medium Enterprise Promotion and Development Office (SMEPDO) and APO Alternate Director for Lao PDR gave inaugural remarks.

The meeting elected NPO Delegate from Lao PDR Soutchay and NPO Delegate from Indonesia Yunani Roaidah as Chair and Vice Chair, respectively. On assuming his position, the Chair stated the WSM agenda and asked the Vice Chair to support him. In the first plenary session, Secretary-General Ryuichiro Yamazaki presented APO achievements in the past year (*see pages 2 and 3*) and indicated future directions. He also expressed sincere gratitude to the Government of Lao PDR for its generosity in hosting the meeting.

The first plenary session also discussed and adopted the evaluation report of APO projects in 2010. Secretariat staff then gave a series of presentations to update delegates on the review of the APO membership contribution formula; new strategic directions approved by the previous Governing Body Meeting (GBM) on which the 2013–2014 program plan was based; 2013–2014 project lineup including prioritization criteria; e-learning; and last-minute withdrawal issue.

In the second plenary session, delegates gave insightful presentations covering the role of NPOs in productivity promotion, how to strengthen SME competitiveness, and how to foster innovation and sustainable growth in the region. All of that information will be useful in shaping future APO activities.

On the second day, two concurrent sessions for the industry and service sectors and agriculture sector discussed specific projects for 2012 and the 2013–2014 biennium, including venues and timing for 2012 and in-principle agreement for the 2013–2014 lineup. The actual number of projects in 2013 and 2014 will depend upon budgetary approval by the GBM. The industry and service session was chaired first by NPO delegate from India N.C.Vasudevan and then by the NPO delegate from Cambodia Yea Bunna. The agriculture session was chaired by Agriculture delegate from Lao PDR Khamtanh Thadavong. The industry and service sector session expressed the need to: enhance recognition of APO training courses by associating with other international organizations; develop basic, intermediate, and advanced courses for selected subjects; expand e-learning; and explore cost recovery methods. The agriculture session recommended strengthening postproject evaluation and developing more projects on the impact of climate change on agriculture and international marketing and trade systems. The chairs of both sessions presented reports to the plenary session on day three.

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A short excursion was organized by the hosts on the morning of day three to introduce Lao culture, history, and handicrafts. This was enjoyed by all, as most delegates were visiting the country for the first time. Subsequently, the afternoon closing session heard and adopted the report of the 52nd WSM to the 54th GBM to be held early next year. The observer from the United Arab Emirates Dr. Saeed Abdulla thanked the delegates and hoped to develop a collaborative, productive relationship with the APO and its member countries. Announcing that the Republic of Indonesia would host the next WSM, Vice Chair Roaidah delivered a vote of thanks and invited all to her home country.

APO Secretary-General Yamazaki thanked the Government of Lao PDR, SME-PDO, and all delegates and attendees for conducting a successful meeting and said that the Secretariat would review the revisions in project lineups and submit them to the GBM next April for its approval of the appropriate budget. Quoting the national tourism slogan “Lao PDR is simply beautiful,” WSM Chair Soutchay invited everyone to visit the country again, thanked them and the APO for their contribution to the success of the meeting, and declared the 2011 WSM closed. 