

# Summary of Secretary-General's statement

Upon taking the podium to deliver his statement, APO Secretary-General Ryuichiro Yamazaki thanked the Government of Lao PDR for its generosity in hosting the 2011 WSM and Minister of Industry and Commerce Dr. Nam Viyaketh for giving the keynote address. He also acknowledged APO Chair Somdy Inmyxai, APO Director for Lao PDR under the Small and Medium Enterprise Promotion and Development Office (SMEPDO), APO Alternate Director for Lao PDR Soutchay Sisouvong, SMEPDO, and their staff for the meticulous arrangements made. After again expressing gratitude to the Government of Malaysia and Malaysian Productivity Corporation for hosting the 2011 Governing Body Meeting (GBM) at short notice after the 11 March earthquake made it impossible for Japan to host it, the Secretary-General summarized key decisions made at that GBM and updated delegates on follow-up actions.

Secretary-General Yamazaki reported that the 2011 GBM had approved the 2011–2012 budget, and APO Chair Somdy had approved the formation of a task force chaired by APO 1st Vice Chair and APO Director for Malaysia Azman Hashim to review the options for a new membership contribution formula and make recommendations to the 2012 GBM. The Secretary-General also spoke on efforts to find new office space for the Secretariat after the Government of Japan announced it would withdraw the special cash grant to cover office rental, on which the Governing Body would be updated regularly. He thanked member countries who had given special cash grants to deepen the substance and broaden the scope and outreach of APO activities while making up for the budget shortfall for 2012 caused by the rental grant withdrawal. The Secretary-General acknowledged the financial constraints faced by all but said that he would appreciate it if other members could step forward to offer grants.

Secretary-General Yamazaki was pleased that Secretariat efforts to seek funds and collaborate on projects with other international organizations had borne fruit, citing a jointly funded project with the Asian Development Bank Institute and ongoing cooperation with the UN Food and Agriculture Organization and Colombo Plan. He also mentioned the review and subsequent GBM approval of the new thrust and subject areas, saying: “As I have commented before, it is essential to have the



Secretary-General Ryuichiro Yamazaki.

right strategies to chart the direction of the APO but it is even more critical to develop an effective implementation plan.”

Turning to program planning and budgeting for the next three years, the Secretary-General noted the “unprecedented difficulties caused by the strong yen” and warned that the ¥85 to US\$1 exchange set for 2012 would likely need to be revised at next year’s GBM. He went on to detail cost-cutting measures in place in the Secretariat and hoped that with the contingency fund thus built up the APO could maintain its multicountry projects at 52 for 2012. Two future measures were suggested by the Secretariat: not supporting the local implementation costs of e-learning from the general fund from 2013; and combining and sharing the costs of project welcome receptions between the Secretariat and NPOs. However, he cautioned that the Secretariat had made the assumption in compiling the 2013/2014 prioritized project list that “office rental fees would be zero” and requested the support of member countries and NPOs to keep or even increase multicountry project numbers. The Secretariat is proposing 63 such projects for both 2013 and 2014, a jump of 20% over 2012, “a testimony to the Secretariat’s commitment to becoming more cost-effective, as I promised you last year,” Secretary-General Yamazaki pointed out.

When updating the WSM on key projects, the

Secretary-General noted that the Center of Excellence (COE) for Business Excellence (BE) in SPRING was developing a self-help toolkit to help SMEs begin the BE journey and a BE consultants’ manual. He requested proposals for a new COE, since the one within SPRING would end its term in March 2013. The Eco-products International Fair (EPIF), after the seventh of the series in India in early 2011, was on hiatus until 2013 to review its format and structure to ensure that it was even more effective in promoting the Green Productivity (GP) concept. However, Secretary-General Yamazaki pledged to continue GP-related efforts through the development of the Eco-products Database and publication of the 8th edition of the *Eco-products Directory* in 2012. Another key project, the *APO Productivity Databook*, will also be subjected to a review of scope and exploration of additional collaboration with other organizations to ensure that the productivity data collection and analysis project continued to be relevant to member countries.

In June, the Secretariat launched a pilot structured self-learning course on a dedicated web portal. “The reaction to this new self-learning course on the Occupational Health and Safety Management System has been tremendous, with almost 1,900 participants enrolled,” reported the Secretary-General. He said that revamping the APO website had provided new features facilitating online learning to cater to increased demand for such courses. The focus on the public sector continued, and he listed some projects this year and next to improve public services.

With the support of the OECD and Kyushu University Asia Center, the APO completed a two-year research project on Agricultural Policy in Asia in selected member countries. Other research on Productivity Measurement and Monitoring Systems for Agriculture was underway, stated Secretary-General Yamazaki. As directed by recent WSMs and GBMs, climate change and its effects on agricultural productivity were being examined from 2011 as well as farming practices to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Food safety is a high-priority area in agriculture. In 2011, multicountry and national training programs were organized on food safety management systems, in addition to the establishment of model demonstration food enterprises.

Although the number of multicountry projects

on Integrated Community Development had declined, the Secretary-General pointed out that recent projects had focused on rural enterprise development through community-based rural tourism and the One Village, One Product movement. He urged NPOs to organize large-scale events on these topics, as experience in Cambodia, Lao PDR, the Philippines, and Vietnam had shown that they not only attract hundreds of participants but also the attention of policymakers and the media.

In concluding, Secretary-General Yamazaki said, “My first WSM in Bangkok last year was certainly a very important, eye-opening experience for me. I am very much looking forward to your feedback on our programs and our discussions in the next two days.” He took that opportunity to extend, on behalf of the APO, deepest condolences for the more than 300 deaths caused by the recent flooding in Thailand and expressed sympathy to the damage and suffering caused by that tragedy. He then thanked the Government of Indonesia for agreeing to host the next WSM in 2012 and reiterated gratitude to the Government of Lao PDR, especially SMEPDO, “for graciously hosting the 52nd WSM.” The Secretary-General hoped that all present would have an enjoyable stay in Vientiane, “a city that never fails to charm and impress its visitors.” 🍷