

28th APO Top Management Forum: Corporate Strategies for Driving Sustainability in the Asia-Pacific

The 28th Top Management Forum on Corporate Strategies for Driving Sustainability in the Asia-Pacific, organized by the APO in collaboration with the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry of Japan, Japan Productivity Center (JPC), and Kansai Productivity Center was held at the Kyoto International Conference Center in Kyoto, 13–15 February. The Top Management Forum is an annual event, bringing together key executives and high-ranking officials in the public and private sectors in the Asia-Pacific



APO Secretary-General Yamazaki (seated 6th L), JPC President Masayoshi Matsukawa (seated 5th L), and Kansai Productivity Center Board Chairman Takashi Tsuji (seated 7th L) with attendees at the opening of the 28th APO Top Management Forum.

to discuss emerging management topics for the region and to share information on state-of-the-art corporate management practices. This year, 37 delegates from 17 APO member countries participated in the forum to study best practices in developing and implementing strategies to promote corporate social responsibility (CSR) within their organizations and societies.

In a rapidly developing global economy, enterprises are forced to review and renew their management strategies constantly to create and/or sustain organizational value and knowledge. Recently, diverse challenges faced by enterprises have also required a reexamination of organizational capacities to remain sustainable in the face of environmental concerns. More enterprises are adopting management tools for sustaining quality and safety and setting strategies to minimize environmental concerns about their overall activities. APO Secretary-General Ryuichiro Yamazaki commented that, “Sustainability can only be achieved with corporate foresight, courage and agility,” and stressed the importance of “strong, visionary leaders to guide their organizations effectively toward the light at the end of any dark tunnel encountered.”

The 28th Top Management Forum looked at various management strategies and approaches for enhancing CSR, examining in-depth the roles of top management in encouraging a culture of environmental awareness and sustainable productivity enhancement. Invited speakers from various sectors, including the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry of Japan, shared views and experiences on promoting CSR. Professor Yoshihiro Fujii, Sophia University Graduate School of Global Environmental Studies, highlighted the concept of “strategic CSR,” noting that its separation from the conventional notion of CSR lies in the integration of both “social and environmental considerations incidental to the company’s business.” He pointed out that, “Strategic CSR enhances corporate value that integrates social value and shareholder value for the creation of a sustainable society.”

Corporate leaders from Japanese industries, such as Pasona Group Inc., Shiseido Co., Ltd., Gunze Limited, Ikeuchi Towel Co., Ltd., and Suntory Holdings Limited, illustrated not only the importance of CSR but also how the energies of corporate leaders are crucial in driving strategies for integrating socially responsible values into business activities.

After a group discussion on how to promote and enhance corporate strategies for driving organizational and social sustainability, participant Adrian Dwitomo from Indonesia added that, “CSR is necessary but has to be adjusted in different companies and different countries. What’s more, it needs full commitment from the top management team.” The attendees also recognized the roles of national and governmental bodies, including NPOs, in setting regulations on accountability and transparency, providing training to encourage sustainable practices within industries, and introducing incentives such as award systems to recognize business excellence based on CSR values. Director of the National Productivity Centre of Cambodia Bunna Yea summed up the topic succinctly: “I wholeheartedly support CSR, because if you take care of society, society will take care of you.”



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