



55th GBM in Tokyo

The 55th Governing Body Meeting (GBM) of the APO was held in Tokyo, 21–23 May. Approximately 50 delegates comprising APO directors and their advisers from 19 members, along with observers from various national agencies and international organizations such as the ASEAN-Japan Centre, ILO, Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture, Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific, and Ministry of Science, Industry and Technology of Turkey attended.

Parliamentary Senior Vice-Minister Masaji Matsuyama, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Japan, was the guest of honor at the event. In his keynote speech, he commented that it was imperative to create an environment for SMEs to enrich and demonstrate their strength. He added, “This is why I feel empathy for the APO’s activity as it aims to improve the productivity of member SMEs and societies.” He also expressed hope for the APO’s programs to continue helping Japanese companies manufacture better products and for Japan’s technologies and experience to be utilized by APO members for their development.



Parliamentary Senior Vice-Minister Masaji Matsuyama, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Japan, delivering inaugural remarks.

APO Alternate Director for Japan Mitsuhiro Wada delivered the welcome remarks on behalf of APO Director for Japan Kunio Umeda. He said, “Compared to the time of the APO’s establishment, members’ needs and interests vis-à-vis productivity have become diversified, reflecting recent dynamic changes in the economies in Asia and over the world. In this context, it is essential for the APO to add value and gain significance by addressing new challenges and requests from its members in a timely manner.”

APO Chair Azman Hashim expressed similar sentiments. He added, “Increasing the number of members will help greatly in not only improving the funding situation of APO but enabling it to maximize its capabilities and expertise in helping more economies to benefit from its services. The APO should target increasing its membership from the current 20 to 30 or 40 countries within five to 10 years.”

During the plenary session, APO Director for Mongolia Yamaaranz Erkhembayar was elected APO Chair for 2013–2014, with APO Director for Nepal Krishna Gyawali and APO Director for Pakistan Shahid Rashid assuming the position of First and Second Vice Chairs, respectively. Important GBM agenda items included the annual report of the Secretary-General, the APO revised budget for 2014, a report on the review of the APO membership contribution formula, and selection of a new Secretary-General.

In his annual report, Secretary-General Ryuichiro Yamazaki reported the successful Secretariat office relocation to Bunkyo ward in Tokyo. He expressed gratitude to the Government of Japan for assisting in the smooth relocation of the office and for continuing to bear the total cost of the new office rent.

APO members gave in-principle approval of the revised APO budget for 2014. The 2014 budget will be further revised after this year’s WSM discussions and factoring in other financial considerations, including the prevailing dollar-yen exchange rate.

With regard to the issue of the new membership contribution formula, the GBM decided that if members were not able to reach a consensus on the special one-time measure, packaged together with the new, long-term six-year average GNI formula, after the agreed deadline, then the current three-year average GNI formula would be applied.

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The current Secretary-General Ryuichiro Yamazaki will end his term in September this year. With the support of all member countries, the GBM agreed unanimously to appoint Mr. Mari Amano to be the next Secretary-General of the APO.

APO directors made presentations on the theme New Focus Areas and Approaches to Implement APO Programs. APO directors recommended re-focusing on developing cross-industry productivity programs, customizing more programs for NPOs, increasing efforts to improve service-sector productivity, facilitating information sharing among NPOs, and embarking on regional benchmarking initiatives. Directors also reaffirmed the importance of public-sector productivity and the role of governments in modernizing and reducing regulations that impede the growth of business. Many directors also strongly encouraged the APO to reinvent itself by developing alternative revenue streams to boost revenue and expand its activities aggressively.

Presenting the vote of thanks, APO Alternate Director for Bangladesh Dr. Md. Nazrul Islam expressed appreciation to the Government of Japan for

hosting the meeting as well as APO Director for Japan Kunio Umeda and President of the Japan Productivity Center Masayoshi Matsukawa for their leadership and guidance in making this meeting successful.

In his closing statement, Secretary-General Yamazaki also expressed gratitude toward the Government of Japan. He thanked Parliamentary Senior Vice-Minister Masaji Matsuyama, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for gracing the GBM and supporting APO activities that improve the productivity of member country SMEs and societies; outgoing Chair Azman Hashim, the APO Director for Malaysia, for his strong leadership; and APO member governments and their respective NPOs for the support rendered to him as the Secretary-General. Secretary-General Yamazaki pledged to continue fulfilling his responsibilities until mid-September and conduct a smooth handover to new Secretary-General Amano.

GBM delegates also visited the Sumida SME Center, SMEs in the Sumida ward area, and Industrial Tourism Plaza to observe the technology and culture of successful Japanese SMEs. 