

## Summary of the Secretary-General's statement

**S**peaking at his first Workshop Meeting of Heads of NPOs (WSM), APO Secretary-General Mari Amano began his statement by expressing gratitude to the Government of Fiji for hosting the meeting and to Prime Minister Commodore Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama for giving the inaugural address. He also mentioned his appreciation for the excellent arrangements made under the supervision of APO Director for Fiji Taito Waqa and Alternate Director and NPO Head Kamlesh Prakash.

While summarizing the objectives of the 2013 WSM, Secretary-General Amano pointed out a “significant change” in the program this year, consisting of facilitated breakout sessions in four groups for in-depth discussions on day one, with the results presented on day 2. The sessions replaced the previous presentations of country papers in response to feedback from member countries. He went on to update the WSM on projects carried out in 2013, including the soon to be launched Center of Excellence on Green Productivity (COE on GP) in the ROC and parallel international conference. Research in progress on Assessment of Green Productivity Implementation and Needs of Member Countries will indicate the areas on which the COE on GP should focus attention.

Continuing with GP-related projects, the Secretary-General explained that the newest edition of the *APO Productivity Databook* had been published three months previously, with added features including an online US dollar-based index for international comparisons. “To meet the needs of IT-savvy users, we are planning to develop smartphone apps to enable the APO’s productivity statistics to become even more accessible to all who refer to them,” he added.



*Secretary-General Mari Amano. Photo courtesy of National Training & Productivity Centre, Fiji National University.*

He thanked the Government of Singapore and others for their support for the 8th Eco-products International Fair (EPIF) held in March and said that preparations for the 2014 EPIF to be held in the ROC were underway. That event will target businesses, government agencies, and consumers, and Secretary-General Amano urged delegates to “seize this unique opportunity to encourage private-sector corporations and public-sector agencies to take part in the ninth EPIF.” The Eco-products Database had been reviewed with expert help and would be expanded to cover countries beyond the Asia-Pacific, he stated.

The Secretary-General went on to describe four projects funded by special cash grants from the Government of Japan in 2013: the recent observational study mission on Photovoltaic and Solar Cell Technology (*see page 3*) in Tokyo and Kitakyushu which attracted widespread media attention; workshop on Labor-Management Relations scheduled for November; and two to be held early next year. He expressed gratitude to the

Government of Japan for providing those grants and encouraged other member countries to do the same “to fund projects that met specific national developmental needs and help promote the APO to the world.”

When giving an overview of the program budget and project lineups for 2014, Secretary-General Amano noted that with the weakening of the yen against the US dollar, the APO exchange rate had been adjusted. That had reduced the Secretariat’s administrative expenses by some 15%, allowing the savings to be channeled into more projects. Based on feedback from the liaison officers’ meeting earlier this year and elsewhere, the Secretariat had proposed increasing the budgets for the Technical Expert Service and Development of NPOs Programs, as well as organizing two missions to nonmember countries in 2014. “If endorsed by this WSM, this type of mission will allow various stakeholders, especially representatives of SMEs in member countries, to learn best practices, new tools, and modern technologies from those advanced economies,” the Secretary-General said.

In the next year, Secretary-General Amano pledged that the APO would build upon previous projects to generate research outputs and build the capacity of NPOs in the areas of productivity measurement, SME performance benchmarking, human-centered productivity, and entrepreneurship. The revised 2014 lineup to be submitted for the endorsement of the WSM featured 75 projects.

In his overview of the project lineups for the 2015/2016 biennium, the Secretary-General informed the WSM that, based on feedback from member countries, public-sector productivity would continue to be a focus area. In addition,



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new topics would be explored, such as productivity in higher education, which started this year; social marketing; change management; gender mainstreaming; youth employment; and more precise methods of measuring public-sector productivity. Elements of key productivity tools and methodologies, such as knowledge management, result-based management, and human capital strategy will be incorporated in those new topic areas. At the same time, reported the Secretary-General, the APO would continue playing its role as a think tank. In response to emerging issues affecting productivity in APO economies, such as demographics among others, research would be conducted to guide policymakers appropriately.

Two areas related to food and agriculture in the 2015/2016 project lineup were cited by Secretary-General Amano. The first was learning how to adapt to climate change and the second was good food safety management practices. “These will continue to feature prominently in our programs as they not only affect every stage of the food chain from farms to food retailers and restaurants but also play an important role in consumer confidence and public perception,” he stated.

The Secretary-General took the opportunity to mention what he saw as three key elements: relevance; transparency; and productivity. To stay relevant to the needs of member countries, he cited the upcoming collaboration

with Cornell University to pilot test a course in agribusiness management as well as a training course on sustainable energy in cooperation with the Government of Thailand, International Energy Agency, and Asian Development Bank. He cautioned that, “To continue such partnerships, however, the APO will have to adopt a more flexible approach in implementing these collaborative projects. I seek in advance the cooperation and understanding of member countries and NPOs when our partner organizations make special requests that are different from our normal project procedures.”

In terms of transparency, Secretary-General Amano acknowledged that improving APO visibility remained a priority and explained a plan for a major IT initiative that would “fundamentally alter” how the NPOs and Secretariat administer projects; greater information sharing would also be made possible through reliance on IT. To improve the productivity level of the Secretariat, new staff were being recruited to fill vacancies, and the Secretary-General hoped that the selections would be finalized soon.

At the conclusion of his statement, Secretary-General Amano told the delegates that he saw the WSM as a “valuable opportunity” to understand the needs and expectations of member countries more thoroughly. He also reiterated his thanks to the Government of Fiji “for its wonderful hospitality.” 🌟