

APO Secretariat restructures

The APO Secretariat started the New Year with a restructured organization that promises to be leaner and meaner to serve member countries better as they strive to achieve greater socioeconomic development and marketplace competitiveness through enhancing productivity. This is part of an overall reform plan conceived by Secretary-General Shigeo Takenaka and endorsed by the APO Governing Body, which also encompasses personnel policies and project financial management.

Organizationally, the Secretariat started with three divisions at the time of its establishment in 1961: Administration and Budget, Program, and Information. The Agricultural Division was added in 1966 and Research and Planning Division in 1974. The Information Division eventually became the Information and Public Relations Division in 1986. In 1995, the Office of the Environment was established. All were subsequently renamed departments. This six-departmental structure was maintained until the end of 2006.

This structure had been functioning reasonably well until recently when various factors, including financial, necessitated the introduction of cost-cutting measures. For an organization with a staff of fewer than 50, six departments were considered too many, top heavy, and not cost-effective. In addition, having many departments also meant that each department was small in terms of staff size. That was not the most efficient way to utilize manpower resources as small departments do not allow for flexibility in staff deployment. With many departments, the overall coordination of the Secretariat's roles and responsibilities was made more complex. A leaner organization was thus called for. One possible option was to return to the original three-division system. However, in light of the expansion of programs and activities

over the years, it was more realistic to streamline the Secretariat into four departments: Industry Department, Agriculture Department, Research and Planning Department, and Administration and Finance Department. The services offered by the previous Environment and Information and Public Relations Departments were integrated with other departments. In other words, the organization will continue to devote substantial resources to Green Productivity-related projects and to its publication and IT programs. The reduction in the number of departments is also expected to contribute to better communications within the Secretariat and more efficient use of resources.

Not only does the Secretariat have a new organizational restructure, it also has a new look. The whole office layout had to be modified to accommodate staff redeployment as a result of the restructuring. However, the scale of the changes was major as the Secretariat also had to function in a smaller office space from January. This was necessitated by a 25% increase in office rental from this year. To avoid paying higher rent, the Secretary-General decided to reduce the space by about the same percentage. Renovation was undertaken in November and December last year. One positive outcome of the renovation was the discarding of old documents, files, and excess furniture no longer useful or necessary. Although Secretariat staff members have smaller work areas, the use of low partitions and filing cabinets makes for a more spacious and brighter office. Everyone is more visible. Meeting corners are available to facilitate communication and coordination among staff members for the better planning and organizing of APO activities. See page 2 for an overview of the new Secretariat structure and staff members in each department.