

Summary of Secretary-General's statement

The following is a summary of APO Secretary-General Shigeo Takenaka's statement to the 48th Workshop Meeting (WSM) of Heads of NPOs, 16–18 October, at the Melia Hotel in Hanoi, Vietnam. For the full statement, please see the APO Web site.

Secretary-General Takenaka opened his statement by conveying gratitude to the Government of Vietnam for its generous support and cooperation in hosting the meeting, particularly to Dr. Ngo Quy Viet, APO Director for Vietnam, for his gracious, warm hospitality extended to all. Before going into detail on the procedure for approving the APO 2009 and 2010 Programs under the new biennial budgeting system, the Secretary-General explained the imminent issue of finalizing the 2008 Program and then used the 2009 Program as an example of how future plans would be handled. He pointed out that the 2009 Program Plan contained a list of projects requiring a 20% increase in the total membership contributions above the current level, with subsets by priority for deletion or deferral if the GBM approved only a 10% increase or no increase. Because there had been no increase for the past three years and none in 2008, the Secretary-General said, “The Secretariat hopes to receive a significant increase in the total membership contributions.”

Secretary-General Takenaka next described projects on new topics, projects with new methods, and projects with new outreach contents. Noting that a major function of the APO is to identify trends influencing productivity drives in member countries, he cited some “promising to bring exciting breakthroughs,” citing projects organized on mergers and acquisitions, aging society, nanotechnology, biotechnology, and applications of knowledge management in agriculture. “It requires more time and effort to organize projects on new topics,” Secretary-General Takenaka acknowledged, since new resource persons must be contacted and persuaded to become involved, but said that the Secretariat planned to offer projects on intellectual capital, lean Six Sigma, eco-financing, e-waste, applications of nanotechnology in agriculture, and utilization of



Secretary-General Takenaka delivering his statement

biofertilizers and biopesticides in future. He also invited suggestions on new areas to strengthen the APO's research and think tank roles.

In terms of e-learning and the two-tiered project-based approach, the Secretary-General noted that e-learning enabled a wider, more cost-effective outreach and that follow-up face-to-face projects were now held for outstanding participants in e-learning courses, in line with efforts to raise participant quality. Self-learning, Internet-based projects were another successful example. He thanked NPOs for supporting the APO's e-learning drive and promised continuous improvement in course contents and delivery.

The two-tiered project-based approach was adopted from last year for greater multiplier effects and is being expanded. Multicountry projects followed by national dissemination seminars had been so successful that six more utilizing this approach were planned for 2008, the Secretary-General said. He explained that a two-tiered approach had also been adopted for the Development of NPOs (DON) Program via DON Strategy and DON Implementation. He reported that DON Strategy, meant to assess NPO needs, had been launched and an assessment survey covering 15 member countries was underway.

Under “projects with outreach contents,” the

Secretary-General detailed three fact-finding missions to the USA and Europe on knowledge management, innovation, and developing a productivity database and an observational study mission (OSM) on Business Excellence to Australia in June, with one to Switzerland and to Canada later this year. In 2008, more OSMs were planned, including one to Germany on advanced manufacturing technology and another to France on the development of safe, reliable food supply chains. Additional fact-finding missions are being contemplated, although preparations for missions beyond the APO region are often time-consuming and challenging. But, “We are determined to continue with the policy of learning and benefiting more from other regions,” he emphasized.

As the APO has benefited from others, Africans have learned from the African Program started in 2006 with a special cash grant from the Japanese government. With the inputs of productivity experts from member countries, the APO successfully organized the Basic Training Course for Productivity Practitioners in South Africa last July for 30 participants from six African countries. A follow-up advanced course will be held in the first quarter of 2008. The Secretary-General requested continued support from member countries for the African Program and sought suggestions on expanding the collaboration.

The Secretary-General expressed appreciation to NPOs for hosting this year's additional projects made possible through stricter financial control, to the Vietnam Productivity Centre for hosting the WSM and the next Eco-products International Fair (EPIF) in 2008, and to Vietnam's NPO Head Nguyen Anh Tuan and his able staff for the excellent coordination and arrangements for the WSM and ongoing preparations for the EPIF 2008. He reiterated that the APO was a network of member countries and of NPOs in a dynamic system that remained alive only with their active participation and support. “Higher productivity is fundamental to economic progress, prosperity, and the well-being of all in APO member countries,” the Secretary-General reminded WSM delegates in concluding his statement. 