

— Asia and Europe build eco-innovation bridges —

In April 2007 an APO fact-finding mission visited the Swedish Industry Association (SINF) in Stockholm and discussed ways of working together to create synergy in areas of common interest. The SINF, a national organization of small and medium-sized Swedish industries, expressed great interest in the APO's Green Productivity (GP) Program, an innovative productivity concept that allows companies to achieve greater competitiveness while simultaneously addressing environmental concerns. Sweden, one of the most environmentally conscious nations in Europe, can benefit from the APO's expertise in GP, while APO member countries can learn from the state-of-the-art technologies, activities, and initiatives of eco-innovation practiced in Europe.

The APO therefore organized a study meeting on Eco-innovation held in Stockholm, Sweden, 3–7 September, in collaboration with the SINF. It was incorporated into the SINF's second annual conference on the Sustainability of the Planet (SOP), which was held 4–6 September. Thirteen participants representing 13 countries attended the meeting along with Professor Ryoichi Yamamoto of the Institute of Industrial Science, University of Tokyo, as an APO resource speaker.

The study meeting began with Prof. Yamamoto's presentation on the Environment and Eco-innovation. He introduced the concept of eco-innovation as the optimal way to minimize environmental risks based on technological advances. Prof. Yamamoto also provided participants with Japanese examples of eco-design initiatives as a way to overcome the obstacles of dematerialization, i.e., using fewer resources, while describing some eco-materials. He pointed out that, "Policies should promote material efficiency and high resource productivity in the fight against pollution and environmental degradation, as well as resource depletion." His presentation was followed by two Swedish speakers, Dr. Sven-Olof Ryding and Peter Nohrstedt from the Swedish Environmental Management Council, who spoke on Swedish experiences with product-related supply chain information and on eco-innovation and green purchasing, respectively.

After the independent APO workshop on the first day, participants then took part in the SINF forum and workshops of the SOP conference for the following two days along with 110 experts from 40 different countries. Prof.



Sweden's environment-conscious ABB hosts meeting participants

Yamamoto and one participant each from Japan and the Philippines, Naoki Arai and Dr. Antonio Pineda, respectively, took part in the forum discussions by speaking as panel experts and were actively involved in the discussions on how to create incentives for funding organizations.

A site visit was made to the world-leading Swedish engineering company ABB in Vasteras, near Stockholm. ABB is one of the world's leading power and automation companies, operating in about 100 countries. Participants were briefed on ABB's environment- and energy-conscious technologies by in-house ABB engineers and a contracted consultant. "The ABB group company aims to contribute to economic growth, environmental stewardship, and societal development through industrial innovation and technology," explained Managing Director Wernoe, electronic consultant for ABB.

The combination of innovation with a sustainability aspect will ultimately benefit all, as noted by Executive Consultant Krisada Ruangchotevit of Siam Cement, Thailand, who gave a presentation on his business perspective during the wrap-up session of the meeting. The other meeting participants agreed with his assertion that, "It is indispensable to have commitment and acceptance from top and middle management to promote ecologically sustainable procurement within the framework of corporate policy." 