

— APO Secretary-General Shigeo Takenaka speaks —

Starting his second term in office, APO Secretary-General Shigeo Takenaka responded to interview questions, looking back at the past and ahead to the future of the organization.

What do you regard as the major achievements of the APO during your first term as Secretary-General?

I would like to mention substantial Secretariat reform as a major achievement, especially reducing the number of departments from six to four in January 2007. That was an attempt to make the Secretariat “leaner and meaner,” while serving member countries better by pooling resources and abilities. It improved coordination and cooperation among and within the four departments, to which the new office layout also contributed. The latest step in Secretariat reform was setting up a new performance appraisal system. It has been operating on a trial basis since July this year after approval from the Governing Body. Individual work targets are now aligned with departmental objectives and then with the overall mission of the APO.

What has given you the greatest personal satisfaction during your tenure?

I also take personal satisfaction in Secretariat reform. The superior performance of the four-department structure has been confirmed, and the new office arrangement reflects the organizational change.

What was the greatest difficulty faced by the organization during your tenure?

The Secretariat went through a period of severe belt-tightening. It was difficult for all of us to see some colleagues leave. I am sorry for that but at the same time am grateful for the trust and support from member countries as well as Secretariat staff.

What are your aspirations for the APO in your second term?

I would like to continue with the reforms set in motion in my first term. One of the most urgent tasks is consolidating and fine-tuning the performance appraisal system of the Secretariat. Efforts to identify new challenges affecting productivity will continue. The knowledge gained will be incorporated in APO projects and enable the organization to achieve its ultimate goal of contributing to the socioeconomic development of Asia and the Pacific.

Which immediate major challenges do you see facing the productivity movement in the Asia-Pacific region?

Due to the different stages of socioeconomic development of member countries, different approaches are required to build up the capacity of NPOs, some of which are struggling to maintain their competitiveness as productivity promoters. Efforts should be made to raise public awareness of the overriding importance of productivity to development. This will pave the way for further progress in the productivity movement.

The Governing Body endorsed a new method for determining the APO budget and the formula for membership contributions. Why were those changes necessary and how will they affect the work of the organization?



Secretary-General Takenaka

Under the new formula, the budget size will first be determined biennially by the Governing Body based on the number of projects proposed by the Secretariat which it approves for implementation. This project-based budget system will have more merits. However, the procedure for determining the estimated budget must be established. The Secretariat must prepare a two-year plan and biennial budget proposal for consideration by the Workshop Meeting of Heads of NPOs and then approval by the Governing Body. There will be an adjustment period of trial and error, but I believe that all these efforts will eventually bear fruit with improved organizational efficiency.

The APO has expanded its role to include nurturing the productivity movement in Africa. How significant is this role and where else will the APO extend its support and collaboration?

After more than four decades, we have amassed a wealth of knowledge of and experience in productivity improvement in the Asia-Pacific region. The Africa Program is meant to strengthen strategic global partnerships by sharing that accumulated experience in productivity. We believe that benefits will also accrue to the APO membership, given today's increased economic interdependence. However, the APO will always listen to the wishes of its member countries and consult them before further expansion of this program.

Do you plan to expand cooperation with other international organizations for mutual benefit and to avoid duplication of efforts?

The synergy derived from networks with other organizations has been mutually beneficial. Therefore, we are expanding cooperative relationships with the ASEAN Foundation, Colombo Plan Secretariat, OECD, ILO, World Bank, and other agencies under the UN. I think that the key to optimizing synergies is a constant exchange of information. This will allow us to extend the scope and depth of future joint efforts.