

## Innovation and technology: the HOF Symposium

In the globalized economy, enterprises must innovate to create customer value and ensure their continuing viability. This involves enhancing capabilities for technology development and innovation. Managing technology and innovation has been a topic of many APO projects, including the 2007 and 2008 Top Management Forums.

The nonprofit Honda Foundation (HOF) was established in 1977 with a grant from Honda Motor Company founder Soichiro Honda and brother Benjiro. The HOF mission is “Science and technology must serve to ensure people’s happiness,” and the annual Honda Prize is awarded to those with significant achievements in ecotechnology. The HOF and National Science and Technology Development Agency of Thailand coorganized an international symposium on ecotechnology entitled Innovation and Entrepreneurship in Asia in Bangkok, 28–29 March, to identify business challenges in innovation and high-technology utilization, particularly ecotechnology. Based on its long-term activities in Green Productivity (GP), the HOF invited the APO to send representatives to the symposium. Research and Planning Department Director Mukesh Bhattarai and Program Officer Yasuko Asano, along with Executive Director Dr. Phanit Laosirirat, Thailand Productivity Institution (FTPI), attended to share APO and FTPI experience in promoting ecotechnology use in the Asia-Pacific and describe the gap that exists between high-tech innovations and SMEs and entrepreneurs.

Bhattarai reported that despite abundant R&D in ecotechnology innovation, problems persisted in transferring the benefits of technological breakthroughs to economically crucial SMEs. He identified three keys for technology transfer to SMEs: funds, human capital, and incentive systems. Asano also emphasized



*APO representatives at the HOF Symposium (L–R) Bhattarai, Asano, Phanit*

the importance of SMEs and entrepreneurs in spreading ecotechnology for sustainable growth in the region and pointed out that, “The APO can mobilize the business community, academics, and policymakers from its member countries through the NPO network to serve as catalysts to initiate the ecotechnology movement in Asia in line with GP.” She introduced the *APO Productivity Data-book* as a key tool for identifying socioeconomic needs and measuring levels of development and innovation.

Dr. Phanit presented results from the joint FTPI, National Economics and Social Development, and World Bank Productivity and Investment Climate Study of 1,500 firms in Thailand showing that 70% of SME respondents did not know how to access technology or locate contact persons, a finding that generated lively discussion at the symposium. Both the audience and HOF expressed appreciation for the presentations by the APO Secretariat and Dr. Phanit. 