



APO NEWS

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50th GBM: green light for membership contribution increase

The 50th session of the APO Governing Body (GBM) took place in Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran, 21–23 April. In attendance were 45 delegates and advisers from 19 member countries, two observers from the United Nations Development Programme, and one from the Iranian Confederation of Employers' Association. The meeting elected the new APO Chair and Vice Chairs for 2008/2009 (*see page 7*) and received reports from Secretary-General Shigeo Takenaka, which included the financial report and reports on the programs and activities of the organization for 2007 (*see page 2 for a summary of the Secretary-General's annual report to the GBM*). The meeting also decided the amount of the total membership contributions for 2009 and 2010 and approved the program plans for that biennium. Although "discussions of budgetary matters are never easy," pointed out the Secretary-General, they proceeded in the spirit of mutual cooperation, as explained below.



50th GBM in progress

The 50th GBM opened with a welcoming address by APO Director for I.R. Iran Mohsen Haji Mirzaie, who expressed delight that Iran was able to host this important event for the first time in the country's 40-year history of membership in the APO. Mirzaie proudly announced that Iran's fourth fiscal development planning program had produced a national economic growth rate of 8%. Productivity improvements alone had generated growth of 2.5%, and this was expected to continue into the fifth development program.

In his opening message, APO Chair Besar Setyoko of Indonesia conveyed appreciation to Secretary-General Takenaka and Secretariat staff members for their efforts and speedy response to put into practice the Governing Body's decisions on the new membership contribution formula and the Secretariat reform plan.

Vice President of the Islamic Republic of Iran for Management Development and Human Capital Dr. Ebrahim Azizi delivered the inaugural address. He said that the APO had played an important role in strengthening productivity among its member countries in the nearly 50 years of its existence. He went on to explain that productivity had immense importance in Islamic culture and in the teachings of the Quran. Dr. Azizi shared his analyses of the relevance of productivity and concluded by stating that productivity would continue to be a major pillar in I.R. Iran's development plan.

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Following the decision of the Governing Body to adopt a new membership contribution formula at its 49th session in Mongolia in June 2007, the meeting used a new procedure to determine the amount of total APO membership contributions. Previously, national contributions were based on a fixed ratio of the gross national income of member countries. From this year onward, Directors are required to decide the total membership contributions for a biennium based on program plans prepared by the Secretariat in consultation with the Workshop Meeting of Heads of NPOs.

The discussions on the total membership contributions proceeded smoothly, and Directors arrived at a firm, unanimous decision on the amount for 2009 and 2010. The agreed amount represents a 3.2% increase above the current level, taking into account such factors as increasingly expensive airfares due to high oil prices and the recent depreciation of the US dollar. The increase thus ends a freeze on APO total membership contributions imposed since 2005. APO Secretary-General Takenaka appreciated the increase and stated that it epitomized the strong commitment of member countries to the productivity movement as well as a vote of confidence in the work of the organization.

Another highlight of the 50th GBM was policy initiatives proposed by Directors focusing on ideas to upgrade the productivity movement in the Asia-Pacific region before the 50th anniversary of the APO in 2011. Several ideas were expressed by more than one Director, such as strengthening the APO's

think tank role, establishing centers of excellence in specialized areas among NPOs, development of national customer satisfaction indices, and improvement in public service delivery. The meeting requested the Secretariat to examine the proposals and devise an integrated plan to commemorate the first 50 years of the APO's existence.

Secretary-General Takenaka, in his closing statement, expressed appreciation for all the ideas suggested. He reported that the initial step in strengthening the think tank role had been taken with the launch of the new version of the *APO Productivity Databook* series. The new volume contains labor productivity data on all member countries spanning the 30 years from 1975 to 2005 and is the only publication that provides this type of data. The GBM greeted the Secretariat's initiative with applause.

While in Tehran, the delegates had the opportunity on the second day of the GBM to visit the Royan Institute, the country's leading institution in cell-based biotechnology research.

During the closing session, APO Director for Sri Lanka Mahinda Madihahewa presented a vote of thanks to the Government of I.R. Iran and National Iranian Productivity Center for their generosity and warm hospitality extended throughout the meeting. He then issued an invitation to all delegates to attend the 2009 GBM in Sri Lanka. 