



APO NEWS

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p. 6, Joint meeting, Japan



p. 7, APO Honorary Fellow, Singapore



p. 8, Workshop, Cambodia

APO liaison officers meet in Tokyo

The APO assists its member countries' pursuit of socioeconomic development through productivity by fostering a spirit of mutual cooperation. As the national counterparts to the APO, the national productivity organizations (NPOs) play a critical role in preparing and implementing APO projects. Within the NPOs, APO liaison officers are the focal point for day-to-day communication and coordination between the APO Secretariat and NPOs. In recognition of their importance, the APO organizes a Liaison Officers' Meeting once every two or three years. This year's meeting took place at the Secretariat in Tokyo, 27–29 August 2008, during a slight lull in Tokyo's notoriously humid summer heat. The meeting brought together 22 liaison officers and senior project coordinators from 18 member countries to discuss their partnership with the Secretariat and how to maximize the benefits of APO projects and services to member countries.



Liaison officers introduce themselves on the opening day

This year's meeting was of major importance because half of participating countries had appointed new liaison officers since the previous meeting in 2006. APO Secretary-General Shigeo Takenaka emphasized the significance of this meeting for new liaison officers in his opening remarks by stating that, "This meeting will give you firsthand observations of the set-up, working environment, and operation of the APO Secretariat.... I trust that this will deepen and enrich our working relationship."

Following the Secretary-General's remarks, liaison officers and Secretariat staff introduced themselves. Singapore Liaison Officer Wong Wai Meng, the third longest serving after those from Bangladesh and the Philippines, commented, "I think that it is a welcoming and good thing for us to have many new faces at this meeting. I believe that our new friends will bring a lot of ideas and suggestions for the further development of the APO."

The first item on the agenda concerned the nominations of project participants. The Secretariat emphasized the importance of qualified participants to ensure the success of projects. "The candidates' qualifications in terms of present position, responsibilities, scope of work, experience, and English-language proficiency should meet the minimum requirements given in the project notifications to achieve the intended objectives," stated the meeting chair, Secretariat Administration and Finance Department Director Dr. A.K.P. Mochtan, adding that, "Qualified participants meaningfully participate in the program and also ensure multiplier effects." The need to ensure qualified national experts for research projects was also stressed to assure solid outcomes of the research. Liaison officers agreed that the quality of participants was of overriding importance. They outlined the nomination procedures and time requirements for those processes and offered suggestions on how to improve the current systems to identify the best candidates and thus guarantee the high quality of APO projects.

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The presentations and discussions that followed focused on the Secretariat's new program initiatives including e-learning and the Development of NPOs (DON) Program. Industry Department Program Officer K.D. Bhardwaj briefly described the e-learning courses focusing on types, topics, methodology, and future offerings in 2009 and 2010. Liaison officers gained a better understanding of the significance of e-learning and wide coverage that those courses allow. Subsequent discussions involved various aspects of e-learning in terms of project coordination and implementation, duration and timing, suitability of facilities, local coordinators, topic and resource speaker selection, program delivery, certification, and follow-up activities.

A joint presentation by the Research and Planning Department and Industry Department of the Secretariat on DON Strategy and DON Implementation followed. The presentation mainly focused upon apprising liaison officers, especially those newly appointed, of the research activities of the APO, the evolution of DON Strategy, and planning for DON Implementation, which included feedback from the recently concluded pilot in-country training programs held in IR Iran and India. A major discussion point was how to align individual-country programs with DON initiatives, especially in areas identi-

fied in the need assessment survey, for further development and improvement. Other project-related issues discussed in the meeting included logistics, site visits, APO alumni bodies and public relations activities, and questions and suggestions.

On the afternoon of the second day, participants visited the International Productivity Center (IPC), the training center of the Japan Productivity Center for Socio-Economic Development in Hayama, around 35 km from Tokyo. The liaison officers were impressed by the IPC, which is equipped with the latest facilities. The beauty of its views and quality of accommodations were also appreciated.

When the three-day meeting ended, all involved had achieved a deeper understanding not only of the relationships between the Secretariat and liaison officers, but also among the liaison officers themselves. APO Program Manager Ishfaq A. Sheikh, NPO Pakistan, said in his closing remarks on behalf of the participants, "We will continue to make programs more substantial and so contribute toward the fulfillment of APO objectives both efficiently and effectively." 