



# APO NEWS

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## EPIF 2009: undaunted by the economic downturn

**T**he majestic sound of a gong heralded the opening of the Fifth Eco-products International Fair (EPIF), held 19–22 March at the SMX Convention Center in Manila. The four-day event was organized by the APO in collaboration with the Development Academy of the Philippines (DAP) and Philippine Business for the Environment. One hundred twenty-eight companies and organizations, the largest number of exhibitors in the history of the EPIF, displayed the latest in environment-friendly products and services. The theme of this year's EPIF was Sustainable Consumption, Sustainable Production, Sustainable Future. The EPIFs showcase the most advanced environmental technologies, provide opportunities for business collaboration, and increase public awareness of eco-products and -services.



Executive Secretary Ermita striking the gong to open the EPIF 2009

Since the first EPIF in Malaysia in 2004, each successive one in Thailand in 2005, Singapore in 2006, and Vietnam in 2008 has set new milestones in scope and scale. The EPIF 2009 not only brought together the greatest number of exhibitors in EPIF history, especially from SMEs in the host country, but also received strong support from the host government including visits by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and cabinet members of the Philippine government. The EPIF 2009 included exhibitors from the financial sector for the first time. Its 83,000 visitors were a remarkable achievement given the current economic downturn.



President Arroyo at Kitayama's briefing on eco-finance

The economic situation was a constant concern of special guests who gave presentations at the EPIF opening ceremony. Representing the coorganizers and supporting organizations, they offered encouragement for environmental initiatives in the current economic climate. Secretary Jose L. Atienza, Jr., Department of Environment and Natural Resources of the Philippines and EPIF 2009 National Executive Committee Vice Chairperson, delivered the opening remarks, followed by Green Productivity Advisory Committee (GPAC) Chairperson and Mitsubishi Electric Corporation Chairman Dr. Tamotsu Nomakuchi, who emphasized the continuing importance of environmental issues despite economic challenges, stating, “Whatever the state of our economy may be, we cannot turn a blind eye to the need to protect our environment.” Dr. Nomakuchi also expressed optimism that the EPIF would help raise public awareness of the need to address mounting environmental problems.

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EPIF Preparatory Committee Chairperson and Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation Chairman Teisuke Kitayama complemented Dr. Nomakuchi's address by highlighting the positive changes that environmentally enlightened consumers could bring about by "encouraging the private sector to offer more eco-friendly and energy-efficient products." Former First Lady of the Philippines and EPIF 2009 Executive Advisory Committee Chairperson Amelita M. Ramos thanked the exhibitors and spoke on eco-friendly activities in the Philippines. In his keynote address, Executive Secretary Eduardo R. Ermita expressed full support for the EPIF as an event dedicated to showing the path to a sustainable future.

Prof. Ryoichi Yamamoto, Vice Chairperson of the GPAC, then presented Executive Secretary Ermita with a copy of the newly published *Eco-products Directory 2009*. The 2009 version lists more than 800 eco-products and -services available in the Asia-Pacific region. Around 1,000 copies were distributed over the course of the four-day fair. (The e-edition of the directory is available on the APO Web site.)

A three-day international conference, organized in parallel with the EPIF 2009 with the same theme, provided an open forum for the discussion of various green issues including eco-innovation, global finance in the context of sustainable development, the Clean Development Mechanism, green procurement, and marketing strategies for eco-products. More than 30 experts and practitioners shared their knowledge with an audience comprising representatives of private enterprises, NGOs, and public organizations involved in the promotion of sustainable production and consumption in APO member countries. Former President of the Philippines Fidel V. Ramos delivered the keynote speech at the conference and challenged both local and international delegates to take action to care for the environment and seek unity in purpose, vision, and action to achieve that goal. He suggested that the three key words "caring, sharing, and daring" were instrumental in dealing with environmental issues.



Former President Ramos (R) giving a thumbs-up for the 2009 directory with Dr. Nomakuchi (L)

The EPIF 2009 was also an important venue for discussions of how to create synergy from the success of the fairs. Chaired by APO Secretary-General Shigeo Takenaka, delegates from the previous hosts Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, and Vietnam shared their experiences in organizing this mega event and major achievements with representatives from the Philippines, India, and Indonesia, the host of the EPIF 2010. On the second day of the fair, these delegates joined conference experts and participants at the handing-over ceremony, during which the EPIF flag was passed from the Philippines to Indonesia.

The APO had a booth at the EPIF 2009 to promote its programs, especially Green Productivity (GP). Visitors to the booth received brochures, leaflets, and other GP-related publications, including the *Eco-products Directory 2009*. Many local SME entrepreneurs expressed enormous interest in the directory as a means of identifying future business partners. They also expressed a desire to register their products in future editions. Visitors were invited to post notes on their commitment to greening their lives on an eco-tree decorated with APO balloons, which proved as popular as at previous fairs. Many messages pledged to practice the 3Rs (reuse, recycle, reduce) and to plant more trees.



EPIF Handing-over Ceremony (L-R): Vice President Rachmat Gobel, Industry, Technology and Maritime Affairs, Indonesian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Takenaka, Kitayama

Various parallel events educated and entertained visitors. The main stage of the exhibition space hosted cultural performances, speakers, and raffle drawings for prizes such as four motorcycles, an LCD TV, and a green air-conditioner. Another event was a two-day meeting of the International Green Purchasing Network.

Director Jan Tan, Waste Management and Recycling Association of Singapore, a coorganizer of the EPIF 2006, confirmed the quality of this year's fair, noting, "I think that the quality of this year's exhibition is quite good in all aspects, such as the exhibitors' booths, dimensions of the exhibits, governmental support from the host country, and the quality of the conference and other side events." The APO received other encouraging news when the organizers of the EPIF 2009 confirmed that they would hold a domestic eco-products fair next year to continue eco-efforts in the Philippines. The APO hopes that even more companies and organizations from APO member countries will participate in the EPIF 2010 in Jakarta next March. 🌱



APO booth at the EPIF 2009