



# p-Leader—Republic of Korea

## The human-centered productivity campaign

Dr. Dong Kyu Choi

APO Director for the Republic of Korea and Chairman & CEO  
Korea Productivity Center

**T**he unmanned interplanetary space probe Voyager 2 is continuing its journey in outer space but has failed to find Earth-like, habitable planets in our solar system over the last 32 years. It is becoming clear that Earth is the only option for future generations to call home. Our planet, however, has suffered from diminishing natural resources that are important input factors for the output of value and products. This has become a pressing issue to be addressed not only for the present but also for the future. Against this backdrop, in the mid-18th century, the concept of productivity started to evolve to maximize the value of such input factors as materials and labor.

**“Productivity is a precious concept that holds out the promise of a better life for all mankind.”**

For the sake of a better today and a better tomorrow for all mankind, the concept of productivity was born so that the ultimate dreams of mankind could be realized: job creation and greater employment for sustainable growth based on collective wisdom resulting in a better quality of life. Unfortunately, however, many people seem to misunderstand or hold a biased view of the productivity concept. They believe that productivity is a mere efficiency indicator on production sites, or is the logic employed by managers who wish to drive their labor force to ever greater exertions. In addition, some say that productivity is a cliché as new terms and concepts are coined en masse in the fields of management and economics.

Productivity is a precious concept that holds out the promise of a better life for all mankind. It is necessary to promote the development of diversified, multifaceted concepts in the framework of productivity and to encourage active interaction between these new ideas. Yet, we need to remain aware of the danger of propagating prejudices and misunderstandings about the concept of productivity. This will jeopardize the creation of



a productivity-friendly culture. We should make efforts to remove such misunderstandings and prejudices surrounding productivity and impart the real meaning of productivity so that the level of productivity can be enhanced on a large scale.

Now is the time to live the dream of human-centered productivity, which is the origin of the productivity concept. Human-centered productivity is based on respect for humanity. Conceptually, this gives rise to trust between labor and management, which in turn becomes the basis of the entire process of producing outcomes, encompassing input and output, and bringing consumption and utilization into harmony. It aims for sustainable growth by establishing a virtuous cycle in which increased outcome is fairly distributed.

It follows that machinery, automation, robotic systems, and IT must be used to lessen the drudgery associated with human labor, and productivity enhancement be carried out to motivate human beings toward continuous technological innovations. Human beings should be the center of all innovation activities, for innovation can only be sustainable on the basis of respect for human beings.

With the APO at the center, let member countries declare in unison their commitment to overcoming misunderstandings and prejudices about productivity and finding consensus in the enhancement of human-centered productivity, so that not only entire industries but also entire nations can ap-

preciate and enjoy a productivity-friendly culture. Moreover, with the APO at the helm of Asia's sustainable growth, let each member country seek to transform its fundamental drivers for productivity and for economic growth.

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The bottom line in switching processes toward productivity-led economic growth is to focus on respect for human beings, the fundamental concept pursued by the world of productivity. To that end, the Korea Productivity Center established the New Productivity Campaign Headquarters in 2009 to practice the vision of human-centered productivity enhancement. “New Productivity Enhancement” is based on the concept of enhancing the human-centered productivity concept. It is a new productivity paradigm that not only considers the social integration concept with a productivity mindset at the center but also seeks sustainable management (growth) for the future. New Productivity Enhancement sets forth its visions of human-centered innovation, innovation-enabled productivity enhancement, a virtuous cycle of performance distribution, and enhancement of Green Productivity.

The human-centered productivity concept shares the same roots with humanitarianism originating in the Orient, especially East Asia. Moving a step further, what if the Green Productivity concept developed by the APO could be expanded into the East Asian philosophy that seeks harmony between mankind and nature and be included in the paradigm of the human-centered productivity concept?



*Dr. Choi delivering a lecture on human-centered productivity to Korean university students, March 2009*

This concept is very close to the cultures and traditions of APO member countries. It is an important Asian value that we should preserve and nurture to maturity. Therefore, I would like to propose that APO member countries develop the concept of productivity into a human-centered productivity campaign. The human-centered productivity campaign is a goal to be pursued by all member countries with the APO at the center. To reach the goal, all members must unfold a productivity campaign not just in industrial sectors but nationwide and strive to share experiences and knowledge for mutual productivity enhancement by establishing a network system among member countries. Such endeavors will enable APO member countries to live together while at the same time achieving mutual development and prosperity. The APO will play the leading role in helping Asian countries flourish and realize the dreams of mankind, which include global poverty reduction, better quality of life, and environmental protection. This is also what productivity is fundamentally aiming for. 