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New Year message from the APO Secretary-General Shigeo Takenaka

The New Year is a time to reflect on the past year as we look forward to the coming one. As such, it is my earnest hope that all readers of the *APO News* will see your productivity efforts bear fruit in 2009. I would also like to thank you for all your support for the APO in 2008. Your support was crucial to the success of our continuing efforts to improve the organization.

The year 2008 was an important one for the APO in several ways. The APO Governing Body introduced a new budgeting system and procedures for deciding total membership contributions by member countries in 2008. Last year also bore witness to new Secretariat initiatives to make APO programs more useful. One of the highlights was the introduction of in-country training programs for productivity and quality practitioners which were implemented on a pilot basis in India, IR Iran, and Pakistan. These pilot programs were the tangible results of the Need Assessment Survey coordinated by the Secretariat. I am certain that we will organize more improved, down-to-earth projects under this initiative in 2009. In addition, the 2008 Eco-products International Fair (EPIF) in Hanoi, Vietnam, was a resounding success, attracting 100,000 visitors over four days. That success will hopefully be repeated at the 2009 EPIF in Manila, the Philippines.



Another highlight was the successful implementation of the e-learning courses. e-Learning is by far the most cost-effective way to deliver knowledge to a wide audience in the APO region. Since such courses were first offered in 2005, the number of e-learning participants has increased. In 2008, we were able to reach more than 1,500 participants with about 60% of them from the private sector. This number will increase even more in 2009 with our current e-learning formats going from strength to strength, including the self-e-learning program that we embarked upon in the latter half of 2008.

Paralleling our efforts to implement new initiatives, the Secretariat explored ways to improve project quality. One important introduction was a test for training course participants in the final session. We have, in fact, been surprised by the participants' enthusiastic response to this. Another change was assigning officers in charge for the entire duration of projects, thus ensuring a high level of quality through meaningful coordination and commitment.

I sincerely hope that we will be able to make meaningful contributions to individuals, companies, organizations, and member countries through these continuous improvement efforts. In all this, we will be relying on your support and cooperation and looking forward to 2009 knowing that you are with us in our productivity endeavors. 