



APO NEWS

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p. 7, Visitors to the Secretariat, Japan



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51st GBM: High expectations for productivity

The APO Governing Body, the supreme organ of the APO, held its 51st session in Colombo, Sri Lanka, 20–22 April 2009. Thirty-nine delegates and advisers from 18 member countries as well as two observers from the Colombo Plan and FAO attended.

The three-day meeting held in the midst of an unprecedented global economic recession provided an opportunity for productivity leaders of APO member countries to exchange information and views on the theme “productivity and the global financial crisis.” Presentations from each member country dealt with the impact of the crisis, identified immediate and long-term solutions, and suggested some new focal points for the productivity movement.

The theme was taken up enthusiastically. Secretary Mahinda Madihahewa, Ministry of Labour Relations and Manpower, Government of Sri Lanka, in his welcome address stated, “The global crisis requires coordinated global and regional responses. The magnitude of the crisis demands pragmatic, innovative, far-reaching solutions.” He also emphasized the importance of productivity enhancement in Sri Lanka and spoke of the establishment and growth of the National Productivity Secretariat (NPS), the NPO of the country, and the success of the National Productivity Awards it organizes. He added that, “APO assistance helped us address diverse dimensions of productivity promotion.”



Inaugural session in progress

The opening address was delivered by Acting APO Chair and Alternative APO Director for IR Iran Dr. Mahmood Ghanizadeh. After sharing concerns on the daunting challenges created by the global recession, Dr. Ghanizadeh declared that the roles of the APO and NPOs were “to push the productivity agenda vigorously.”



Prime Minister Wickramanayaka presenting productivity DVDs to Secretary-General Takenaka (L–R: Madihahewa, Seneviratne, Wickramanayaka, Takenaka, Ghanizadeh)

The VIP guests at the inaugural session included Minister of Labour Relations and Manpower Athauda Seneviratne and Prime Minister Ratnasiri Wickramanayaka, who delivered the inaugural address and keynote address, respectively. Minister Seneviratne stated, “The APO’s role in the context of productivity enhancement is vital.” He also introduced major productivity policies and movements that Sri Lanka has adopted “to move into new realms of productivity growth.” Prime Minister Wickramanayaka stated that the timing and the theme of the meeting were apt and stressed the need “to discuss effective ways and means of jointly recovering from the turmoil.”

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During the plenary session, APO Director for Japan Masato Watanabe was elected APO Chair for 2009–2010, with APO Director for the Republic of Korea Dr. Dong-Kyu Choi and APO Director for Lao PDR Somdy Inmyxai assuming the positions of First and Second Vice Chairs, respectively.

When delivering his report to the meeting on the programs and activities of the organization in 2008 (*see page 2 for a summary of the Secretary-General's annual report to the GBM*), Secretary-General Shigeo Takenaka explained the impact of the global financial crisis on the APO and various cost-cutting measures that the Secretariat had taken including the voluntary salary return by Secretariat staff. The report was well received by the meeting, and it was suggested that further reviews to identify more permanent measures to reduce expenses be undertaken.

The Secretariat also briefed the meeting on the follow-up activities to establish centers of excellence (COE) in member countries. A COE project on business excellence is ready to start with SPRING Singapore as the pilot COE.

In his closing statement, Secretary-General Takenaka remarked that, “I am pleased that this meeting fully supported the new initiatives by the Secretariat.” He noted that, “We could sense that there are high expectations for productivity. Everyone agrees that productivity is the basis for a sustainable

solution. Overall, I am pleased that the demand for productivity improvement measures remains high and that member countries value the activities of the APO, especially in the present challenging times.”

“This session of the Governing Body has been meaningful as we witnessed some more new initiatives by the Secretariat to improve program and administrative operations,” stated APO Chair Watanabe before declaring the meeting closed. “I am sure that the collective wisdom derived from our discussions will shed light on new directions for the productivity movement to assist member countries in dealing with the crisis speedily.”

While in Colombo, delegates visited the Sri Lanka National Museum, the oldest and largest museum in the nation. The delegates also visited the Gangaram Buddha temple, a noted cultural site.



Delegates at the Sri Lanka National Museum

Malaysia will host the 52nd GBM in 2010. 🌀