

# Planning for public-sector productivity activities

**"P**ublic-sector productivity" is an area that the 50th Workshop Meeting of Heads of NPOs in the Philippines last year earmarked for further pursuit by the APO. Since then, the Secretariat has conducted in-house studies on how to translate this directive into tangible programs that will benefit member countries. To devise a systematic, realistic action plan, the Secretariat organized an expert group meeting in Tokyo, 15–17 February. This meeting assembled NPO representatives and public-sector experts from those countries with demonstrated interest in this sector. The three-day brainstorming meeting was attended by eight experts including two NPO Heads, Antonio D. Kalaw, Jr. of the Philippines and Dr. Phanit Laosirir of Thailand.

"We have now come to the stage where we must make a decision on which direction to go," stated Secretary-General Shigeo Takenaka in his opening remarks. He shared his ideas on the possible tools that could be used to promote productivity in the public sector. Secretary-General Takenaka then pointed out that, "We are open to all types of ideas. But in the end, we need to find a way that is both useful to member countries and feasible for NPOs and the APO."

On the first day, participants shared information on current activities and the status of participating countries and institutions to identify the major challenges and opportunities for enhancing public-sector productivity. This information exchange revealed certain commonalities in productivity needs and trends which provided a foundation for discussions on the subsequent days. Experts worked to identify key issues for public-sector productivity enhancement to be addressed by the APO, prioritized project initiatives, and discussed modalities and the packaging of relevant projects and an APO action plan.

At the end of the meeting, the experts produced a framework of proposals for the APO consisting of tools, targets (concerned bodies), and results (ultimate



*Experts discussing proposed public-sector productivity framework*

outcomes). "This will be the first step for the Secretariat in pushing progress in this important area. We will communicate with other NPOs to integrate their views and comments into this framework and then devise a useful, feasible action plan," said Secretariat Research and Planning Director Mukesh Bhattarai when thanking the meeting attendees.

"This meeting was different from the usual APO ones," commented Kalaw while expressing his appreciation to the APO for taking up this challenging issue. Dr. Phanit agreed on the difficulties involved in improving public-sector productivity. He also emphasized its crucial importance by stating that, "Without governmental changes or improvements, there is little chance for growth in the private sector or by any other economic players." 