

Summary of Secretary-General's statement

Secretary-General Ryuichiro Yamazaki, the ninth APO Secretary-General since the organization was founded in 1961, made his first public appearance at the Workshop Meeting of Heads of NPOs in Bangkok, Thailand, on 19 October 2010. After thanking member countries for electing him, he called for their continued cooperation “so that we can work together to improve productivity both quantitatively and qualitatively.” He then expressed gratitude to the Government of the Kingdom of Thailand for its generosity in hosting the WSM; and Dr. Witoon Simachokedee, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Industry and APO Director for Thailand, for his inaugural address and Dr. Phanit Laosirirat, Executive Director of the FTPI and NPO Head of Thailand, for their arrangements and warm hospitality.

Secretary-General Yamazaki said that he felt privileged to join the APO as it prepared to celebrate its Golden Jubilee next year and cited the “tremendous contributions” of the previous Secretaries-General. “Our proud history and record of achievements make me resolved to carry out the mandate of leading the APO Secretariat to further the cause of productivity for the benefit of all member countries,” he stated.

He noted the unprecedented financial difficulties facing the organization due to the steep decline of the US dollar against the yen. This had forced the Secretariat to modify the 2011 and 2012 Program Plans to devise the best project lineup within the budget available. The modifications included changes in some project titles, types, or venues, and scaling down or deferment of some where applicable. In doing this, the Secretariat carefully examined the relevancy, continuity, and optimum mix of the project lineup. “The Secretariat tried its best to ensure that the modifications would not compromise the quality and effectiveness of the original projects,” explained the Secretary-General. He cautioned, however, that the exchange rate remained uncertain. The WSM delegates were requested to review the revised project plans, reconfirming those for 2011 and endorsing the list for 2012.

Addressing the work program for the next biennium, the Secretary-General said that, “I am totally convinced that the continued close partnership with NPOs is the key factor in our pro-



Secretary-General Ryuichiro Yamazaki. Photo courtesy of FTPI

ductivity movement endeavors.” Among efforts to strengthen the capacity of NPOs, he pointed out that the Center of Excellence (COE) in Business Excellence in SPRING Singapore was beginning to bear fruit and would continue through the 2011–2012 biennium.

He also touched on the APO’s recent engagement in the public sector and referred to an observational study mission sent to Canada, a recognized leader in public-sector productivity, in August. “Six NPO representatives including three heads of NPOs joined the mission, reflecting the interest of member countries, and I believe that mission has enriched our perspective on this topic,” Yamazaki reported.

Among other new topics to be taken up, the Secretary-General listed the Information Security Management System based on the ISO27000 standard, mental health and productivity, talent management for globalizing SMEs, material flow cost accounting, an Asian SME benchmarking index, the impact of climate change on agricultural productivity, farm practices to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, cutting-edge technologies such as nanotechnology to boost agricultural production, and the important area of food safety management.

He added that project series with recognized value would continue, including the Eco-products Inter-

national Fairs (EPIFs). The 2011 fair will be held in New Delhi, India, in February. He also congratulated the Malaysia Productivity Corporation and Development Academy of the Philippines, two previous EPIF hosts, for organizing their own environmental exhibitions in 2010: “I am greatly encouraged by the commitment and efforts to promote Green Productivity and eco-product initiatives in individual member countries.”

Secretary-General Yamazaki also referred to the productivity databook project to help member countries determine their sources of economic growth and make intra-APO and international comparisons with standardized methodology. He cited the Asian Quarterly Growth Map, which is available on the APO website, as another tangible output of the project.

The Secretary-General shared findings of the impact evaluation study conducted this year, which has employed a new methodology since 2009. The new methodology included assigning an independent expert to undertake the evaluation. “The assigned expert has reported a clear, immediate impact of APO projects in demonstration companies in Thailand, Malaysia, Pakistan, and the Philippines,” he said.

He added that the APO’s outreach to Africa continued to be very well received and much appreciated by the Pan African Productivity As-

sociation. In connection with this, he acknowledged the cash grant from the Republic of China that had made the 2010 African Program possible.

Secretary-General Yamazaki also expressed the Secretariat's gratitude for the generous cash grants from the Government of Japan, enabling special attention to Mekong member countries, among other endeavors, and that from the Government of the Republic of Korea which had facilitated the deputation of experts to various projects. He hoped that other countries could make such grants as well.

"The continuity and quality of our activities also depend on the capability and strength of the Secretariat," Yamazaki pointed out. Examples of efforts

for greater efficiency and cost-effectiveness at the Secretariat included replacement of the e-mail system and ongoing planning to revamp the website. He stated that the Secretariat would carefully examine how an appropriate 50th anniversary event could be arranged in conjunction with the 2011 GBM within the budget available.

In concluding his remarks, Secretary-General Yamazaki referred to his attendance at the WSM as an "eye-opening experience" and looked forward to the interactions with all the delegates. He again thanked the Government of the Kingdom of Thailand and FTPI for hosting the meeting in Bangkok, "a city that always combines traditional Thai warmth with bustling dynamism." 