

## APO 42nd NPO Heads' Meeting Secretary-General's Statement

**A**t the outset of his statement to the NPO heads, APO Secretary-General Takashi Tajima said that he had three main topics relating to APO activities for their consideration. These were competitiveness, protection of the global environment, and social fairness. Mr. Tajima elaborated that the productivity movement in the 21st century should be directed toward the strengthening of competitiveness by fostering the creative and innovative minds and skills of the people, ensuring a symbiotic relationship between environmental protection and economic development to achieve a sustainable quality of life, and the promotion of social fairness to narrow the gap between the haves and the have-nots.

In light of the increasing role of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in national economic development, Mr. Tajima said that their revitalization would remain a primary area of concern for the APO. There will be more programs on and for SMEs. On the South-South Cooperation Program, the Secretary-General reported that participation in this program, previously for South Asian countries only, was now open to all member countries to spread its benefits, and that the scope of activities would be expanded beyond supporting industries to cover other relevant fields.

Secretary-General Tajima pointed out that knowledge has emerged as a key resource for future business growth, and business organizations should transform themselves into knowledge centers to carve out new market niches through innovative products and services.

Moving on to the Green Productivity (GP) Program, Secretary-General Tajima reported that substantial progress had been made due to the increasingly active support of the NPOs. He mentioned efforts to enhance GP activities further through collaboration with other international agencies, like the US Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) and the Regional Institute of Environmental Technology in Singapore.

On the Integrated Community Development (ICD) Program, the Secretary-General would like



*Mr. Takashi Tajima*

to see more emphasis being placed on productivity and management matters, and greater involvement by the NPOs in community development activities. He further stressed that the NPOs should realign themselves as knowledge centers to meet the requirements of the new knowledge-based economy. Secretary-General Tajima also highlighted some of the new initiatives undertaken under the Development of NPOs Program, like the APO Best Practice Network and the annual Forum on Development of NPOs.

Globalization, Mr. Tajima said, had a significant impact on the lives of the people, particularly those in rural areas. To enhance the vitality of the agriculture sector, the APO will address a number of emerging issues like genetically modified organisms and hazard analysis critical control points. Activities relating to environmental sustainability will also be emphasized. He reiterated the critical importance for NPOs to maintain close liaisons with agriculture-related ministries and agencies in their respective countries.

Secretary-General Tajima announced the publication of the first edition of *APO Asia-Pacific Productivity Data and Analysis* in December 2001 and expressed the hope that it would serve as a comprehensive and authoritative source of

information on productivity and socio-economic progress for policymakers, researchers, and others concerned with productivity promotion. He welcomed constructive comments and suggestions for its further improvement.

The Secretary-General then went on to report on the results of the external evaluation of APO projects, the renovation of the operational system in the APO Secretariat to enable it to serve the needs and requirements of member countries better, including the installation of a local area network and the eventual introduction of an extranet for direct electronic linkages with the NPOs, and the replacement of the traditional five-year plan with the more practical two-year plan. He expressed the gratitude of the APO for the support and cooperation received from all member countries and from other international and regional organizations, national and local governments, and NGOs in upgrading the quality and contents of APO programs.

Secretary-General Tajima concluded his statement by emphasizing the need to uphold the conviction that the productivity movement is key to overcoming growing apprehension about the future and to putting sustainable economic development back on track. 🌐