

APO Secretary-General's statement to the Heads of NPOs

APO Secretary-General Takashi Tajima began his statement to the Workshop Meeting of Heads of NPOs with the reaffirmation that the ultimate objective of productivity improvement was to realize a better quality of life for all people. Competitiveness, environmental protection, and social fairness constitute the three pillars of the present productivity movement in the region. He noted that these were taken into account in the designing of APO activities.

Secretary-General Tajima went on to state that the major components of corporate assets had been shifting from tangible to intangible ones, such as knowledge, experience, ideas, and know-how, as a key source of competitive advantage. This has prompted governments and organizations to accord top priority to the generation and application of knowledge. He cited the Republic of China as an example where the government had sought to establish a nationwide knowledge management (KM) infrastructure.

Mr. Tajima pointed out that KM is a thrust area of the APO. Under this program, the promotional efforts have advanced from concept introduction to concept application. The APO is also actively assisting the NPOs to propagate the KM concept in their respective countries. The success of the Vietnam Productivity Center in this regard was highlighted.

The APO Strengthening of SMEs program, Mr. Tajima said, has also made a fundamental change in its focus, i.e., from nurturing and strengthening SMEs in general to catering to the specific needs of the weaker ones.

On the APO Green Productivity (GP) program, Mr. Tajima referred to the APO's participation in the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) and the inclusion of the APO proposed partnership initiative on GP-Integrated Community Development (ICD) was in the official WSSD documentation. Following the WSSD, the APO 2nd GP World Conference was held in Manila in December 2002 to review the



Mr. Tajima delivering his annual statement

progress of the GP program and to determine its future directions in light of the WSSD outcome. The conference's "Statement on Green Productivity" will form the basis for future GP activities. Mr. Tajima announced that the APO would conduct a survey on green procurement practices among its member countries.

The Secretary-General informed the meeting that the APO ICD program is contributing to sustainable development and poverty alleviation through its dual approach of promoting GP demonstration projects at the community level and developing a core cadre to play a leading role in sustainable community development. This approach will be further strengthened with the inclusion of a new kaizen element in projects for rural life improvement.

Turning his attention to the APO agriculture program, Mr. Tajima said that the agriculture and food sector continues to be significant part of most member countries' economies. "Recent experience has shown that a nation's sustainable development cannot be ensured without the sound development of this sector." He further added that the APO, in seeking for areas of commonality between agriculture and its thrust areas of strengthening SMEs and GP, had selected the fol-

lowing for special focus: 1) strengthening the competitiveness of the agriculture and agribusiness sectors; and 2) promoting sustainable development of agriculture. Mr. Tajima called on the NPOs to be more vigorously involved in the agricultural sector and to strengthen their liaisons with agriculture-related ministries and agencies.

Mr. Tajima reported that the Development of NPOs (DON) program had expanded significantly both in the number of member countries participating in it and the variety of services it offered. Experts were assigned to help: 1) Sri Lanka formulate its national productivity policy for the public sector; 2) the NPO of Bangladesh to design a strategic action plan for productivity improvement; and 3) the Vietnam Productivity Center to upgrade its IT and KM capabilities. Multi-country DON projects continued to contribute to the institutional development and capacity building of NPOs.

Efforts at disseminating information about the APO and reference materials for productivity promotion and enhancement continued to be given special focus, said the Secretary-General. The electronic media are increasingly used for this purpose, particularly the APO Web site on the Internet and the APOnet that now serves as

the hub of information exchange and networking among member countries. The next information dissemination plan was to introduce e-books on the APO Web site. He announced the publication of the *APO Asia-Pacific Productivity Data and Analysis 2002* and said that all-out efforts would be made to improve further its usefulness to policymakers in government and business in planning regional, sub-regional, and country-wise strategies.

On the APO's financial situation, Mr. Tajima reported that the Secretariat had taken concrete steps to cope with the present financial constraints and to make the best possible use of available funds. He cited the use of discount air tickets by Secretariat staff members, participants, experts, and resource persons as an example. This attempt at cost saving could be effective only with NPOs' cooperation. He also requested the NPOs to meet the local implementing costs in full when hosting APO projects. He told the meeting that this was a decision the APO Governing Body made in 1998 based on the APO basic spirit of mutual cooperation among its member countries.

The APO has established extensive cooperative relationships with governmental agencies of non-member countries and with other regional and international organizations. Mr. Tajima said that the synergy derived from the pooling of resources and capabilities from within and beyond Asia and the Pacific has been mutually beneficial to all concerned and it must be sustained. He thanked the many organizations that had been collaborating with the APO and expressed the desire for more collaborative relationships with them in the future.

The Secretary-General wrapped up his statement by asserting that future productivity promotion challenges would not be less intense than those in the past four decades. To deal with them effectively will require innovative and creative minds to develop new and different perspectives and strategies, both region-wise and country-wise. Their first priority in the meeting, he told the delegates, was to determine the future direction of their respective productivity movements. 