

Au revoir, but not goodbye

Senior long-serving APO Secretariat staff member Yoshikuni Ohnishi, former Research and Planning (R&P) Director, retired on 31 December 2003, after 36 years of dedicated service. Since joining the Secretariat in 1967, his career with the organization was almost entirely devoted to the R&P Department, rising from officer (1974), to senior officer (1986), to chief coordinating officer (1996), and to director (1999). The latter two positions were effectively that of departmental head. Although he has retired, Ohnishi will continue to serve the Secretariat as a consultant on a part-time basis.



Mr. Ohnishi (at lectern) chairing one of the sessions at the APO 2nd GP World Conference, Manila, 2002

Stern in demeanor, Ohnishi is usually seen as unapproachable by those who first make his acquaintance. However, when one knows him well, he is a friendly and caring person. His booming laugh belies a serious nature. He is usually the first to report for work each day, when he is not visiting member countries to oversee APO projects, and he enjoys tackling new challenges.

Ohnishi holds the firm conviction that the APO and NPOs are one and the same family with the identical mission of increasing productivity. For this reason, as head of the R&P Department, he paid considerable attention to strengthening the less advanced NPOs with groundbreaking projects like productivity roundtable conferences, productivity specialists' workshops, forums for NPO heads and senior officials, and workshops on developing NPOs' core competences. "All these activities were implemented with the cooperation of the advanced NPOs; they were always ready to share their resources and experiences. This networking is very unique among international organizations and must be further nurtured and sustained," Ohnishi said.

Ohnishi believes that the productivity concept is difficult for the general populace to appreciate and understand. He advocates the use of indirect approaches, like putting an emphasis on innovation and competitiveness. These are easier to understand and are closely related to productivity. On the future of APO activities, he had this to say: "We may need to review our eclectic approach to productivity improvement and sharpen our focus, especially in these times of limited resources."

In 2000, Ohnishi received the Government of Japan Foreign Minister's Commendation for outstanding contributions in promoting friendly ties between Japan and foreign countries.

Ohnishi's successor as R&P Director is Takuki Murayama, who joined the Secretariat in August 2002 as Senior Program Officer (Environment) and Counselor for Industry Projects, following a distinguished career with the Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry of Japan. He graduated from the University of Tokyo with a Bachelor of Science in engineering. 