



A·P·O news

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NPO Heads confer in Sri Lanka

On 10–12 February this year, more than 50 delegates and advisers from 18 Asia-Pacific countries converged on Colombo, Sri Lanka, to attend the APO 44th Workshop Meeting of Heads of NPOs (WSM). This is the program planning and consultative meeting that the APO Secretariat holds annually with the Heads of NPOs and agriculture representatives of member countries. They were joined by eight observers from four international organizations with which the APO has close collaborative relationships. The meeting was inaugurated by the Sri Lankan Minister for Christian Religious Affairs Mr. John Amaratunge. Other dignitaries at the opening session were the APO Director for Sri Lanka and Secretary, Ministry of Employment and Labor, Mr. Mahinda Gammanpila, who gave the welcome address; keynote speaker Mr. Charitha Ratwatte, Secretary, Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Policy Formulation; and APO Secretary-General Takashi Tajima who presented his statement (see page 2 for full report). Mr. M.A.R.D. Jayatilake, Head of the Sri Lanka National Productivity Secretariat, and Dr. S.K. Pachauri, Director-General, National Productivity Council of India, served as the meeting's Chairman and Vice Chairman, respectively.



WSM delegates

Mr. Mahinda Gammanpila, in his welcome address, expressed gratitude to the APO and other member countries for giving Sri Lanka the honor of hosting the WSM, which brought together countries large and small, developed and developing. Despite this diversity, they are united by a common bond, the *mantram* of productivity. Each country would have to find its own approach and strategy in productivity improvement, he said, adding that there was much the member countries could learn from one another, especially in establishing the right fundamentals and policies to achieve higher productivity, the key to development for most countries. In this context, the APO could play a pivotal role in facilitating the process.

"Productivity is influenced by employees' ability and effort," said keynote speaker Charitha Ratwatte. For this reason, companies are investing in training programs, creating a competitive environment where individuals want to contribute,

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"No institution which does not continually test its ideals, techniques, and measure of accomplishment can claim real vitality."

John Milton

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Asian Productivity Organization
Hirakawa-cho Dai-ichi Seimei Bldg. 2F
1-2-10 Hirakawa-cho, Chiyoda-ku
Tokyo 102-0093, Japan
Tel: (81-3) 5226-3920
Fax: (81-3) 5226-3950
e-Mail: apo@apo-tokyo.org
Web site: www.apo-tokyo.org



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and compensating workers according to contributions made rather than based on seniority and loyalty. He noted that to avoid the negative effects of subjective and biased assessments by supervisors, companies are resorting increasingly to using profit-sharing incentive schemes. The training and reward systems are usually applied at three levels: individual performance; business unit performance; and companywide performance.

Productivity is also about efficiency, Mr. Ratwatte added. He cited Frederick Taylor's scientific management method under which even the simplest tasks are observed, measured, and recorded. These three elements are captured in the word "reflect." Quoting the Gautama Buddha, Mr. Ratwatte said that we should reflect on the consequence of our actions—to ensure that they are not harmful to others or ourselves but beneficial and they are the best ways to get the job done—before actually performing them.

Mr. Ratwatte also mentioned various other means for increasing productivity, including: making the right things; adding value; measuring and analyzing total factor productivity; undertaking economic value-added analysis; implementing benchmarking; and translating mission statements into specific objectives.

Minister John Amararatne, in inaugurating the meeting, spoke on recent efforts made by Sri Lanka to move into new realms of productivity growth. "We envision a future of peace and prosperity in which every Sri Lankan will be able to enjoy a higher standard of living and better quality of life achieved through steady improvements in productivity at the individual, organizational, and national levels with gains equitably distributed across all occupations and walks of life."

A structured and methodical approach was adopted with the formulation of a



Minister Amararatne inaugurating the meeting

National Policy on Productivity covering both the private and public sectors to achieve an average of 5% annual productivity growth for the nation as a whole over a period of five years. The Minister commented that this would enable the government to attain an overall growth of about 10% in the years to come. He also said that productivity improvements need to be a national task shared by all stakeholders in the society. This would also ensure that the gains are shared with such vulnerable social segments as the poor, unemployed, women, rural and small farmers, and small businesspersons, the Minister added.

The three-day workshop meeting had a four-part structure. The first was a special presentation on "Opportunities and Threats of a Globalized Economy for Developing Countries: A Business Perspective" by Commercial Bank of Ceylon Chairman M.J.C. Amarasuriya. The second part featured presentations by the Heads of NPOs who spoke on their current concerns and challenges and their organizations' role in improving productivity in the agriculture sector. In part three, the delegates were taken on a study tour of a garment-making facility and a horticultural estate. The fourth part, which comprised six concurrent strategic planning sessions, formed the core of the meeting. The concurrent sessions were broadly categorized into two groups: four under the industry and service sectors and two under agriculture. They reviewed the five APO thrust areas, considered new subject areas for the classification of projects, and proposed specific projects for the APO two-year plan (2005–2006).

The delegates were unanimous in their agreement that the current APO thrust areas are still valid and that they are as relevant to the agriculture sector as they are to industry and service. As for the subject areas, a number of new areas were suggested for inclusion. Among them were: Social fairness/poverty alleviation; Good governance; Productivity measurement and analysis; Building NPOs' research and planning capability; and Entrepreneurship development.

The meeting ended with the adoption of a report of the meeting for submission to the 46th Session of the APO Governing Body scheduled for 8–10 June this year in Jogjakarta, Indonesia. 