

Fiji holds second Roundtable Conference on Productivity

After Fiji's first Roundtable Conference on Productivity in August 1995, its productivity movement has continued to evolve. In 2003, the NPO was repositioned as the Training and Productivity Authority of Fiji (TPAF) and another national productivity awareness campaign was launched by the Prime Minister. Recognizing that the achievement of a better quality of life is dependent on the continuing improvement of productivity and quality in the workplace and in communities, and mindful of changes in the global economy, the TPAF convened a second Roundtable Conference on Productivity in Suva, 6–8 April 2005, to give the productivity movement in the country new strategic directions.

Attended by 10 representatives each from unions, employers, and the government and by delegates representing nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), media, academics, and more than 100 observers, the conference was opened by Minister for Labour, Industrial Relations and Productivity Kenneth Zinck. In his inaugural address, Minister Zinck reminded the delegates that “Productivity is everybody’s business, not just that of the TPAF or that of any specific social partner.” He went on to define productivity as “doing more with what we already have” and cited the audiovisual sector, agriculture, and information technology as areas that “represent opportunities for using our resources in smarter ways.”

Minister Zinck also urged conference delegates not to ignore those engaged in the informal sector, in which a significant percentage of Fiji’s population makes its living. Methods to increase their productivity and well-being would also greatly benefit the entire economy, he added.

The main purposes of the second roundtable conference were to review the old charter signed in 1995 and draft a new Productivity Charter for Fiji. After discussion, the delegates agreed on the contents of a new charter, which was approved at the end of the three-day session. The new charter is to be officially signed by Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase along with the other social partners at a special event in June.

The new slogan agreed upon for Fiji’s productivity movement is “A better quality of life through innovation and creativity,” while the new guiding prin-



Roundtable conference participants with Minister Zinck (seventh from left)

ciple of “enhancement of mutual trust, respect, and transparency among all stakeholders,” was adopted. Other guiding principles of Fiji’s productivity movement include enhancement of economic opportunities and the promotion of employment security, fair distribution of gains, sustainability, relevant education and training, flexibility and adaptability, and ownership of the movement by all. With these as the basis for future actions, the roundtable conference recommended specific programs of action for the TPAF, government, and all social partners.

Among the recommendations for the TPAF were strengthening the promotion of productivity and quality and promotion of its role as the NPO of Fiji; adoption of Green Productivity initiatives, including benchmarking and the fostering of model plants that others could emulate; undertaking research to contribute to policy formulation; and promoting a national culture of innovation and creativity in its training activities. It was agreed that the TPAF required adequate funding to fulfill its role as the country’s NPO. The government, on the other hand, must take the lead in nurturing a productivity culture by giving tangible support to the NPO through the provision of adequate resources, by supporting awareness initiatives at all levels, and especially by providing national leadership in the development of productivity and quality processes within the public sector. The government was also encouraged to identify productivity targets in the public-sector strategic plan, facilitate the introduction of technology in all sectors of the economy, and promote the importance of quality and of adhering to international standards in the provision of goods and services. It was agreed that the prime minister will continue to lead the national awareness campaign.

Under the new Productivity Charter, all social partners pledge to create and support an environment conducive to productivity practices; develop annual

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action plans to promote productivity within their organizations and society at large; foster a favorable employment relations climate; and break down barriers that hinder productivity growth. Under the education and training initiatives, the parties agreed to “pursue the training of productivity specialists vigorously,” including those enrolled in technical and vocational education. In addition, the partners agreed to explore the need to link wage systems with performance and productivity in ways that will ensure a fair distribution of the gains from higher productivity. As Minister Zinck noted in his address, “At the end of the day, it is what happens in each enterprise, in each government department, in each trade union or NGO, in each training institution, in each village, and in each school that will determine the productivity growth of the nation as a whole.”

The Productivity Charter heralds a new direction for Fiji’s productivity endeavors. The APO deputed four resource speakers to the roundtable conference: Koh Kasuga, Special Advisor, Japan Productivity Center for Socio-Economic Development; S. Thiagarajan, Singapore National Trades Union Congress, Nik Zainah, Director General, National Productivity Corporation of Malaysia; and R.C. Monga, productivity and management consultant from India. Kamlesh Prakash, Industry Department, represented the APO Secretary-General at the conference. 