

Excerpts of addresses at the EPIF 2006

The following are abridged versions of the addresses given at the opening of the Eco-products International Fair (EPIF) 2006, at Suntec Singapore International Convention & Exhibition Centre, 31 October.

APO Secretary-General Shigeo Takenaka

It is a great pleasure for me to be here in beautiful and bustling Singapore to welcome our distinguished guests to this opening ceremony of the EPIF 2006. Thank you very much for your support. This is a landmark event for the Asian Productivity Organization and we are very proud and privileged to have SPRING Singapore and the Waste Management and Recycling Association of Singapore as the co-organizers. Lending importance to the event is the presence of Singapore Minister for Environment and Water Resources, the Honorable Dr. Yaacob Ibrahim. We are deeply honored and grateful to him for gracing this occasion.

The APO introduced the concept of Green Productivity (GP) in 1994 based on the assumption that a healthy environment and a robust, competitive economy are mutually dependent. In other words, environmentally sound manufacturing practices and management activities can and should make economic sense. When the APO proposed establishing the GP Advisory Committee in Japan in 2003 to advise and support the APO in promoting GP, about 40 leading Japanese corporations signed up. Since then the committee has been actively helping the APO in implementing EPIFs and other GP-related activities.

There are many reasons why the GP concept has been well received in Japan. One is that Japanese companies, like their counterparts elsewhere, must cope with markets, both domestic and overseas, where environmentally conscious customers are increasing at a rapid rate. In today's global economy, being vigilant and responsive to changing demands is critical to maintaining a competitive edge. The existence of sophisticated consumers demanding eco-friendly goods and services has fueled the creation of value-added products and services. Eco-products fairs like this one educate consumers on the availability of a variety of eco-friendly products. This will eventually prove to be significant to the productivity quest in Singapore and other countries in the APO region.

This year's EPIF is the largest yet in terms of space and number of exhibitors. With 12 countries participating in the exhibition, this is also the most international in character. We are expecting more than 40,000 visitors of all ages and from all walks of life in the coming three days. The progressive increase in the magnitude of this fair is encouraging as it reflects a greater awareness of the need to protect the environment.

The APO has been publishing an annual *Eco-products Directory* since 2004. The *Eco-products Directory 2006*, which lists 591 eco-materials, eco-components, and eco-products as well as eco-services, has just been released.



New EPIF logo to be used for all future fairs: the green and blue used reflect the beautiful landscapes and abundant water in the Asia-Pacific region, while the new sprout represents the spirit of ecology that will grow from EPIFs

Professor Ryoichi Yamamoto, Vice Chairperson of the GP Advisory Committee, will later present the first copy to the Honorable Minister Yaacob Ibrahim.

I would like to thank all the exhibitors participating in this fair. My deep gratitude goes to the many organizations and individuals who have made tremendous contributions. I would also like to record my deep appreciation to SPRING Singapore and the Waste Management and Recycling Association of Singapore for their untiring efforts in organizing this event and their commitment to its success. I am grateful to the GP Advisory Committee for its strong support and participation, without which this fair would not have been possible. Finally, I would also like to thank the Japanese government for its financial and other assistance.

Minister for the Environment and Water Resources Dr. Yaacob Ibrahim

It is my pleasure to be here today to join you for the launch of the EPIF 2006. This event fits well with what we in Singapore also desire. For the past 40 years, we have dedicated ourselves to putting in place infrastructure and encouraging public ownership to enhance our environment and quality of life. We have always considered the environmental impact when making public policy decisions. We also consider water to be a strategic resource that should be conserved, valued, and enjoyed. The environment and water industry has been identified as a strategic growth area for Singapore. By 2015, it is estimated that the industry will account for 1.5% of GDP, with a value added of S\$4.5 billion and 35,000 jobs.

An event like the EPIF gives a boost to our efforts because it brings together many local and international players to network and explore business collaborations and generates greater awareness and acceptance of eco-friendly products. Since 1992, the Singapore Green Label, administered by the Singapore Environment Council, has been awarded to environment-friendly

products to help consumers exercise their choices. The number of products that have obtained the Singapore Green Label has reached 250, an increase of 25% over the previous year. While environment-conscious people who think long term need no convincing to make the switch to environmentally friendly products, the average consumer on a budget also stands to benefit. Some eco-products may cost more at the outset. However, as time goes by, cost savings are realized from lower electricity and water consumption. Water-efficient products will also be getting their own labels under a new Water Efficiency Labeling Scheme to help consumers make informed choices when purchasing products such as water fittings and washing machines and encourage manufacturers to produce more water-efficient products.

As the use of eco-products become more prevalent, this will contribute to our objectives of a sustainable environment, such as cleaner air and living spaces where less waste is generated to be disposed of. It also makes economic sense to consumers and industry. It is a win-win situation when we benefit economically over time and also contribute toward environmental sustainability.

Senior Parliamentary Secretary for the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources and Chairman of the Eco-products International Fair 2006 Steering Committee Dr. Amy Khor

The theme of this fair is “A Better Environment for All” and the EPIF aims to provide a platform for international companies and industry players to showcase the latest eco-technologies and eco-products, exchange eco-information, and explore business collaborations and joint ventures. With more than 80 exhibitors sharing their expertise in areas such as eco-enterprises and eco-lifestyles, this is a very special occasion for the eco-products industry in Asia. We have introduced the EPIF 2006 Eco-Awards to recognize eco-friendly products, and 27 companies have submitted 34 products for consideration.

The EPIF seeks to encourage the public to be more environmentally conscious and care for the environment by purchasing and consuming more eco-products. In the fast-moving society that we live in, our demands are making an impact on the environment, and choosing eco-products and services whenever possible will go a long way to help stretch the limited natural resources that this earth has.

One of the highlights of this fair is the Eco-City, showcasing the latest eco-innovations such as a waterless washing machine, soapless shower, and an eco-house equipped with a range of appliances and products carrying the Green Label. Besides the product fair, a three-day international conference will be held concurrently. The theme is “Growing the Eco-nomy”—Learning from the Best Eco-Practices, and renowned speakers from Japan, Germany, and Singapore will be sharing their views on the eco-industry.

As Singapore moves toward being a regional hub for environmental excellence, exhibitions and conferences such as the EPIF are an excellent opportunity for us to learn from industry professionals. It is my hope that future EPIFs will attract even more interest and participation.

Japanese Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry Akira Amari (delivered by Deputy Director-General Kazuhiko Bando)

I sincerely congratulate you all for organizing the EPIF 2006. Today we face many environmental challenges such as global warming, waste and recycling, and toxic chemicals. It is important to regard these issues as opportunities to create new businesses and for renewed growth. At the same time, not only corporations but also nations, communities, and every citizen should be aware of environmental issues, and address them in their everyday lives, according to their role in society.

The EPIF is not only an occasion to introduce the latest environment-friendly products and technologies offered by corporations, but is also a valuable opportunity to exchange information on environmental issues. The Japanese Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry emphasizes the development of industry in a manner that makes economic growth and environmental protection compatible as an important component in the national economic development scheme formed by the Japanese government in July. We are implementing measures to prevent global warming and promote the establishment of a recycling-oriented society.



Visitors thronging an EPIF booth

In cooperation with other Asian countries in the areas of energy and the environment, we are now supporting the establishment of a society that can achieve sustainable development, by promoting Japanese environmental and energy-saving technologies and by creating shared awareness through policy dialogue with nations such as Thailand and Malaysia to build systems based on the needs of each nation.

The 21st century is sometimes described as the Asian Century. The Asian economy, which continues to expand steadily, will play a central role in the global economy. The APO is expected to play a role in increasing productivity in the Asia-Pacific region as a whole, while rectifying disparities within it. The Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry will offer its utmost support for the APO's endeavors.