



APO news

Heads of NPOs attend APO annual planning meeting

The heads of the national productivity organizations (NPOs) of 19 APO member countries, together with their agriculture delegates and advisers numbering 52, met in the beautiful tropical city of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 14–16 February, to participate in the annual program and strategic planning meeting of the APO at the 46th Workshop Meeting of Heads of NPOs (WSM). In addition to the delegates and advisers, there were six observers from Botswana, Brunei, South Africa, Colombo Plan Secretariat, and Confederation of Asia-Pacific Employers. The mild temperature with occasional tropical showers during the gathering not only helped the delegates to enjoy their stay in Kuala Lumpur but also reminded them that they were there at one of the best times of year in Southeast Asia. The WSM was initially scheduled to be held in Pakistan. However, due to a devastating earthquake that struck the north of the country and parts of neighboring India in October last year, resulting in untold loss of lives and destruction of homes and property, the meeting was relocated to Kuala Lumpur.



Tan Sri Dato' Azman Hashim delivering the welcome address

Tan Sri Dato' Azman Hashim, APO Director for Malaysia and Chairman of the National Productivity Corporation of Malaysia (NPC), mentioned in his welcome address that Malaysia was honored to have the opportunity to host this important meeting because it is a platform for a meeting of minds and a critical path toward competitiveness. The 2006 WSM was especially significant as it marks the 40th anniversary of the NPC as a pioneer of the productivity and quality movement in Malaysia. He pointed out that Malaysia had come a long way since its foundation in 1966 and since joining the APO in 1983. In the 1980s and early 1990s, Malaysia, like many developing economies, was mainly a beneficiary of APO developmental programs, but today Tan Sri Dato' Azman was delighted to note that Malaysia has

now also assumed the role of contributor to APO initiatives and programs, in line with the country's aspiration to make the world a better place for all humanity and in particular for the APO fraternity.

Tan Sri Dato' Azman also commended the initiatives of APO Secretary-General Shigeo Takenaka in the Secretariat's management and administration to make the organization more productive, efficient, and effective in its services to its members. He also suggested that in order to make the APO more dynamic, members need to review its mission constantly. Many activities, Tan Sri Dato' Azman commented, are beneficial to developing members because they are based on the premise of socioeconomic development. Members are in various stages of development, and the requirements of some go beyond socioeconomic development. They are concerned with new economic challenges such as global competition, environmental sustainability, renewable resources, new technology, geopolitical events, health and disease, transmigration of human capital, and many other issues that may not be covered in the current APO agenda and initiatives. These concerns are global in nature and affect every member country irrespective of economic status. Ending his address on a light tone, Tan Sri Dato' Azman expressed the hope that delegates would enjoy the dinner and cultural performance

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"When you ask people what is missing from their lives, it isn't a big-box store. People stop into our store for the social interaction as well as the products."

Michael Kanter

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arranged in their honor that evening. (According to delegates, the evening was memorable not only due to the delicious Malaysian fare and performance, but also due to a musical interlude sung by host Tan Sri Dato' Azman.)

Secretary-General Takenaka presented his annual statement to the delegates (see page 2 for fuller coverage). Among the key issues, he touched upon the need to improve the survey exercise, which the Secretariat had initiated the year before upon the recommendation of the 45th WSM as he felt that it was an important first step in the consultation process between the Secretariat and NPOs in the planning of APO programs and activities. He also mentioned that the "selection and concentration strategy" had been propounded to underline the need to be more focused in activities so that the APO could achieve the maximum impact, and therefore this strategy should be a key principle in program planning in the future. He then suggested that the relevancy of the thrust areas, target groups, and nature of programs should be constantly reviewed in this context.



(L-R) Dr. Ranani, Dato' Nik Zainiah, and Takenaka

Dato' Nik Zainiah Nik Abd. Rahman, Director General, NPC, Malaysia, and Dr. Ghassem Ansari Ranani, Managing Director, National Iranian Productivity Organization, served as the Chairperson and Vice-chairperson of the WSM, respectively. One unique feature of this year's WSM was the deletion of ceremonial aspects to allow the delegates to concentrate on strategic planning sessions in the limited time available. The workshop had

a three-part structure. The first featured presentations of the Heads of NPOs, who spoke on the impact of the productivity movement in their countries and major issues facing it in light of socioeconomic changes in each country. The second part, which comprised five concurrent strategic planning sessions, formed the core of the meeting. The concurrent sessions were broadly categorized into two groups: the industry and service sector, and agriculture sector. They covered the following four topics: 1) thorough review of the 2007 Program; 2) general review of the 2008 Program; 3) review and follow-up of evaluation of project implementation; and 4) revision of the survey exercise.

Among the recommendations made by the Strategic Planning Committees were :

- 1) The APO should learn from the past to develop success stories/models, identify bottlenecks, and change mindsets.
- 2) The duration of projects should be extended.
- 3) The Secretariat will collect human resources development plans and national manpower plans from NPOs to determine the types of competency they require.
- 4) Program planning should be more outcome based rather than output based.
- 5) A framework should be provided for NPOs to track former APO participants to determine the usefulness of training received.
- 6) The APO will undertake selected projects with training elements for impact evaluation.
- 7) NPOs should establish stronger institutional linkages with the private sector.
- 8) The APO will establish a pool of experts, including an advisory body on agriculture, to assist in its think tank role.
- 9) More needs to be done to help member countries set up or strengthen national food safety standards.
- 10) NPOs will set up agriculture consultative committees for input from the agriculture sector on the survey exercise and to the WSM meeting.

NPO delegate from Indonesia Afdaluddin announced that his country will host the 47th WSM in 2007. 🌐