



APO *news*

Liaison Officers Meet at Secretariat

During 1–3 August 2006, APO Liaison Officers in member countries attended a consultative meeting at the APO Secretariat in Tokyo. Sixteen Liaison Officers and seven other representatives from member countries were present. The Liaison Officers are the official links between member countries and the Secretariat “to facilitate the expeditious disposal of matters relating to the APO,” as specified by the APO Governing Body in 1962. Among the agenda items was the finalization of a document that spells out in detail for the first time the role of a Liaison Officer. In addition, the three-day meeting also featured: country presentations by Liaison Officers; plenary sessions to consider specific issues relating to project implementation; presentation on Web-based projects/facilities; and dialogue with individual departments of the Secretariat.



Secretary-General Takenaka (center) presenting the welcome address at the Opening Session

APO Secretary-General Shigeo Takenaka, in his welcome address, told the Liaison Officers that they played a key role in enabling the APO to fulfill its mission. He said that the meeting was to give the Secretariat an opportunity to: 1) thank them for their assistance and advice and return their hospitality; 2) understand the situations facing them as they endeavor to carry out their duties as Liaison Officers and the additional support that the Secretariat could provide; and 3) consult them on several important issues to ensure the effectiveness of APO programs.

Although the Secretary-General did not wish to influence the outcome of the discussions on the issues set before the meeting with his remarks, there was one concern he wanted to single out for special mention: the quality of APO projects. While recognizing that this was a multifaceted issue, his particular concern was with the quality of participants: “I have seen participants who have little or no interest in the project they are attending. Some clearly did not meet the qualifications specified in the project notification. Although our projects are always conducted in English, we have participants who can barely speak or understand the language. We also have participants from the public sector attending projects that are intended for

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“To have a harmonious family life, we must spend time with our family. There is no such thing as quality time if we can spend only a little of it with our families. Employees who are happy at home are more productive. In the end, the company profits.”

Carolyn Baytion-Sunaryo

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the private sector.” The Secretary-General said that the Liaison Officers played an active role in the sourcing and shortlisting of candidates for final selection by the Secretariat, adding that he considered that to be one of their most important, if not the most important, responsibilities as Liaison Officers. He emphasized the seriousness of the issue as it ultimately means a waste of resources by providing training to the wrong persons. He appealed to them to take remedial measures as the Secretariat could do little directly on its own.

In their country presentations, at the request of the Secretariat, the Liaison Officers dealt with: 1) issues relating to the hosting and implementation of APO projects, sourcing of qualified and desirable candidates, timely submission of nominations, and recruitment of local resource speakers; 2) innovative measures undertaken by NPOs to strengthen relationships with other productivity stakeholders, in particular the private and agriculture sectors, and their outcome; and 3) NPOs’ expectations of the Secretariat in the planning and implementation of APO projects. The Secretariat is collating the suggestions of the Liaison Officers for follow-up.



Liaison Officers in the meeting

The meeting, which was also attended by Secretariat staff members, discussed a host of issues relating to APO project planning, implementation, and finance. Among those of great concern were: project planning and design; quality of participants; private-sector participation; NPO engagement program on agriculture; last-minute withdrawals and no-shows; field visits; quality of local resource speakers; follow-up on APO projects; monitoring effectiveness of APO projects; local implementation costs; and airfare matters. There was also a session on Web-based programs and the use of APOnet and APO e-Forum. The Secretariat departments also held separate discussions with the delegates on issues other than those covered in the main meeting. The meeting culminated with the adoption of the document “The Role of APO Liaison Officers.”

The longest-serving Liaison Officer, Frank Pai, Republic of China, presented a vote of thanks on behalf of the delegates. He said that the meeting was important in that it was the only forum where all the Liaison Officers could get together with their colleagues in the APO Secretariat to renew old ties, establish new ones, and consult face to face on issues of mutual interest and concern. At this year’s Workshop Meeting of Heads of NPOs (WSM), only 10 Liaison Officers attended. At the Governing Body Meeting (GBM), there were only seven. Liaison Officers’ attendance at those two key meetings of the APO was even less last year, with eight at the WSM and six at the GBM. This exclusive meeting for Liaison Officers was thus very much appreciated, Pai added, and thanked the Secretary-General for making it possible. He went on to say that the meeting had been fruitful and meaningful and that the next step must be for all parties concerned to carry out what they had committed to do. He concluded with an assurance that the Liaison Officers would do their best to ensure that the APO’s mission and activities are well represented in their countries. 🌀