

Secretary-General's report to the 58th GBM



Secretary-General Mari Amano reporting to the Governing Body on APO activities. Photo courtesy of Directorate General of Training and Productivity Development.

After welcoming all to the 58th session of the APO Governing Body (GBM) in Jakarta and extending gratitude to the Government of Indonesia and the Directorate of Productivity and Entrepreneurship, Directorate General of Training and Productivity, Ministry of Manpower, for hosting it, Secretary-General Mari Amano acknowledged that the APO was founded in “a very different world from today. The single greatest challenge still facing every member economy, regardless of its stage of economic development, is to raise the productivity of its workers,” he continued. He pointed out that individual member economies faced different, although not necessarily new, productivity challenges, giving the example of continuing low value addition to agri-food products, as well as summarizing APO activities to ameliorate that situation.

Approximately 80 multicountry projects had been organized in the past year, allowing the APO to share knowledge among its membership and creating favorable publicity. NPOs played a critical role in multiplying APO efforts locally, he said, and bilateral cooperation among them “had reached unprecedented levels,” with 12 in-country projects conducted in 2015. In addition, 84 experts had been deployed under the DON and TES programs, and the flexibility and speed of TES application procedures had improved.

It was time to review the Center of Excellence (COE) Program and devise new strategies to maximize its potential, suggested Secretary-General Amano. For example, a future COE might focus on building competencies for enterprises in the service sector or enterprises with activities straddling both services and manufacturing. Another idea was for the three existing COE to conduct regular APO-certified training courses to increase the pool of practice-oriented

professionals in key productivity fields, which could serve as a revenue stream.

Turning to international cooperation, the Secretary-General mentioned the three-year MOU with the Center on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP) on research and capacity-building activities, which would become the basis for collaborative projects, including four planned in 2016. The training and research partnership with Cornell University had entered its third year, and he commented that more agribusiness leaders would be trained and more case studies developed under that partnership. The APO and OECD continued to work on a productivity outlook report for publication later this year as well as a pilot study on basic agricultural policies and productivity. Other collaborations with the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs on productivity measurement in Bhutan, UNIDO on Green Productivity (GP), and an MOU with Colombia were summarized.

Related to the strategic direction of GP, the Secretary-General reported that Thailand would host the EPIF in June, and Vietnam had confirmed hosting in 2017. He urged all members to give full support to both.

The Secretary-General noted that five videoconference (VC)-based e-learning courses had been conducted using in-house facilities launched last year. The previous WSM in Singapore had discussed expanding the Digital Learning Program (DLP). He hoped that “the convergence of technology, social media, and content” would introduce a new phase of self-learning e-courses with interactive contents. “We aim to transform the DLP into a world-class learning platform reaching a global audience,” he pledged.

The Secretary-General thanked the Governments of the ROC, Japan, and ROK for generous cash grants enabling additional projects involving both member and nonmember economies, including Africa and Myanmar, as well as the Energy Efficiency Program from August 2015. Discussions with the governments of Myanmar, the Solomon Islands, and Turkey on APO membership continued, he explained, along with his hopes of closer relations with Central Asian countries.

He was pleased to report that staff expenses were about 20% lower than pre-2010 levels, meaning that the organization was more productive, cost-effective, and able to attract and retain talented staff. Staff had and would continue to play major roles in successful sharing of “unique APO expertise.”

Secretary-General Amano reiterated thanks to the Government of Indonesia for its “wonderful hospitality” and the Government of IR Iran for confirming its hosting of the 2017 GBM. He concluded, “We should pursue productivity relentlessly, regardless of economic conditions or turmoil in financial markets. This sense of continual commitment to excellence and focused effort will foster a strong productivity culture and ensure that economic growth remains sustainable in the longer term.” 