

Smart and digital is the way forward

For productivity to be a game-changer in the new economy, the 57th WSM identified digitization and innovation as key enabling tools for APO member countries



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Dato' Seri Ong Ka Chuan
Second Minister of International
Trade and Industry, Malaysia

The Fourth Industrial Revolution, even in its current early stages, is already beginning to alter the way we work, live, and interact with each other. In order to embrace the Fourth Industrial Revolution, productivity organizations have a crucial role in ensuring that all factors are optimally used to achieve productivity gains,” highlighted Malaysia’s Second Minister of International Trade and Industry Dato’ Seri Ong Ka Chuan while addressing the Heads of National Productivity Organizations (NPOs) in Putrajaya during the 57th Workshop Meeting (WSM) of the APO.

The three-day workshop that kicked off 19 October began by paying heartfelt tribute to His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand, who passed away on 13 October 2016. The WSM also observed a two-minute silence as a mark of respect for the King and to express solidarity with the people of APO member Thailand. The WSM was attended by representatives of 18 APO member countries, along with agriculture delegates and advisers. Observers from the African-Asian Rural Development Association, Centre for Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific, OECD, Pan-African Productivity Association, and UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific also participated

in the WSM to understand the needs of APO member countries and discuss areas of mutual collaboration.

Think out of the box, become a game-changer

Addressing the inaugural session of the WSM, the Second Minister pointed out that productivity was a crucial game-changer in the 21st century economy and called upon WSM delegates to review overall initiatives and create a better framework for improving productivity. “As the leading mover of productivity in your respective countries, you have the unenviable task of raising productivity levels to enable your economies to be more competitive. This gathering provides an opportune occasion for all of you to take stock of where we are in terms of our achievements,” he said.

Minister Ong also emphasized that the APO should adopt a three-pronged approach to drive the productivity movement in member countries. “First, you need to think out of the box, be creative and innovative, and be constantly on the lookout for new ways of doing things. Second, you need to benchmark against the best productivity measures introduced by successful organizations. Third, there should be a mechanism for sharing of the best practices.”

Appreciating the APO's contribution to expanding opportunities for cooperation and greater socioeconomic development of member countries, APO Director for Malaysia Tan Sri Azman Hashim pointed to the country's recent achievements in implementing the Business Excellence Framework (BEF). "The Malaysia Productivity Corporation has successfully leveraged the APO Center of Excellence on Business Excellence in Singapore to promote the BEF among all organizations and to push for higher productivity in the country. Close to 4,000 companies have successfully adopted the BEF since 2013," he informed the WSM.

Meeting tasks

The WSM proceedings began with NPO Delegate for Lao PDR Somdy Inmyxai proposing NPO Delegate for Malaysia Mohd. Razali Hussain as Chair. The motion was seconded by NPO Delegate for Indonesia Estiarty Haryani. Next, NPO Delegate for Sri Lanka J.M. Thilaka Jayasundara proposed NPO Delegate for the Republic of Korea Wooyoung Chun as Vice Chair, which was seconded by NPO Delegate for IR Iran Dr. Roya Tabatabaei Yazdi. The delegates unanimously elected Hussain and Chun as Chair and Vice Chair of the 57th WSM, respectively.

Making his first official address after assuming the post in September 2016, APO Secretary-General Santhi Kanoktanaporn announced that the organization would be taking up a myriad of technology-enabled initiatives to push forward the goals of the Roadmap to Achieve Vision 2020 and help member economies become more competitive and productive in the new digital economy era. Underlining the present-day relevance of "ICT for Smart" for all member economies as a key means to achieve the Vision 2020 goals, the Secretary-General said that in a hyperconnected digital world, seamless flows of data and information could generate more economic value than the global goods trade. "Virtually every type of cross-border transaction has a digital component. This trend toward a digital world economy will only accelerate," he stated.

The Secretary-General thanked member economies for their outstanding financial support, including the cash grants provided by the Republic of China, Japan, and the Republic of Korea, which had enabled the APO to organize additional

projects to complement its annual program. These included projects for the industry and service sectors on female workforce participation, labor-management relations, and energy efficiency and conservation, as well as projects for the agriculture and food sectors on agricultural innovations, food safety management, and cold-chain systems. In particular, the Japanese government had recently confirmed more than USD 1 million in cash grants for special projects.

While providing a snapshot of the APO's activities during 2016 and an overview of projects lined up for 2017–18, he invited NPOs to review the Roadmap to Achieve Vision 2020 based on the changing demands of their countries. This would help the APO Secretariat introduce more innovative ideas and high-quality, relevant projects to enable member economies to become more competitive and productive by 2020.

After consideration of all documents and reference papers submitted to the WSM 2016, the delegates unanimously adopted and endorsed the evaluation of 2015 projects and presentation on impact evaluation of 2014–15 projects, including suggestions made by member countries for submission to the 59th Session of the Governing Body to be held in IR Iran in April 2017. The Secretariat also presented the proceedings of the Strategic Planning Workshop for APO Liaison Officers (LOs) held in Tokyo, 19–21 July, which was attended by 12 LOs, six representatives of LOs, and three observers from member countries. It also presented the report on the APO Center of Excellence Program and the National Follow-up Program and gave an overview of the METI special cash grant that the APO had been informed of recently.

Recognizing the need to drive outcome-based project management, the Secretariat presented the program-based approach that it was pursuing under the APO Roadmap 2020. The presentation also highlighted that under the roadmap, the results-based management approach and results-oriented monitoring had been adopted. During the strategic planning sessions, delegates deliberated on country-specific needs and firmed up the program schedules for projects. NPO representatives presented country papers on their initiatives and outlining challenges and specific requirements. 🌐

Visit the APO website at <https://goo.gl/oKB2cc> to access speeches at the WSM 2016.



United we stand: Representatives from 18 member countries, advisers, observers, and participants at the 57th WSM in Putrajaya, 19–21 October 2016.