



ASIAN PRODUCTIVITY ORGANIZATION

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57th Workshop Meeting of Heads of NPOs
19–21 October 2016, Putrajaya, Malaysia

**STATEMENT BY THE
APO SECRETARY-GENERAL**

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Introduction

1. It is a great honor for me to attend this distinguished gathering of Heads of National Productivity Organizations (NPOs) and Agriculture delegates for the first time as the APO Secretary-General.
2. I would like to express my gratitude to the Government of Malaysia for its generosity in hosting this year's Workshop Meeting of Heads of NPOs (WSM) in Putrajaya. I would like to express deep appreciation to Tan Sri Azman Hashim, APO Director for Malaysia, and Dato' Razali Hussain, Alternate Director and NPO Head for Malaysia, for hosting this meeting and the warm hospitality extended to the delegates.

Objectives of the WSM

3. As most of you know, I was already deeply involved in APO activities before being appointed to the post of Secretary-General at the Governing Body Meeting (GBM) in Jakarta in April this year. As the Secretary-General, my immediate priority is to ensure that we follow through to achieve the goals of the APO Roadmap to Achieve Vision 2020, which was approved by the last GBM. In doing so, we should focus more effort in developing and implementing cutting-edge and future-oriented initiatives to stay relevant to the next generation needs of member economies.
4. The preliminary budget for the 2017–2018 biennium was approved by the GBM. The 2017–2018 Program Plan was first discussed at the WSM held in Singapore last year. Prior to that, the Secretariat conducted a survey to develop the 2017–2018 projects and discussed the results with Liaison Officers at the Strategic Planning Workshop held in Tokyo in July. The program approach clusters projects that have common goals of enhancing productivity in specialized areas on a sustainable basis to obtain the best outcomes.

Overview of Program Budgets and Project Line-ups for 2017–2018

5. Aligned with the roadmap and the new program approach, the projects developed for the industry and service sectors adopted a sector-focused basis to address the strategic priorities of member economies. The projects are designed to enhance management capacity, energy management, sustainable manufacturing, productivity in the service and public sectors, and the capacity of NPOs.
6. Within the public-sector productivity domain, which includes the leadership framework, the emphasis of projects in 2017–2018 will be on refocusing and deepening the initiatives undertaken since 2009. For example, projects will explore the use of technology to streamline government service delivery to citizens while simultaneously enhancing productivity. Benchmarking against the standards of governments outside the APO membership, including the identification of best practices to be adapted by our members, will also be carried out. These are regarded as steppingstones in the search for broader,

down-to-earth approaches, tools, and techniques for maintaining productivity in the public sector.

7. Similarly, projects for the agriculture and food sectors are clustered under four programs that contribute to achieving the goals and targets of the roadmap. The main objectives are to enhance the productivity, sustainability, and competitiveness of the agriculture and food sectors in member countries by promoting innovative good agricultural practices, value-added agriculture, agribusiness, and food production and manufacturing, as well as the revitalization of agrifood SMEs. The APO will promote the adoption of best practices and skills in the use of tools, techniques, and technologies for the sustainable management of agricultural resources and agribusinesses, improved food quality and safety, revitalized rural enterprises and agriculture, and policy analysis and productivity measurement in the sector.
8. The APO will conduct more pioneering, upstream research on productivity measurement. This includes productivity in the public sector, higher education, knowledge, and cities. An APO Annual Productivity Roundtable and a Biennial Asian Productivity Conference will be held to provide regular forums for productivity experts, scholars, and consultants to discuss emerging issues and challenges, cutting-edge technologies, and innovative techniques to increase productivity in various areas. More study missions to advanced economies will be organized as part of the global search for new knowledge and innovations in productivity. This will help our member governments and productivity consultants stay abreast of developments worldwide.
9. Under the Productivity Measurement and Monitoring Program, the APO will expand the coverage of the APO Productivity Databook and Database projects to provide more relevant data and analyses to member countries with updated information to support their policy formulation. To complement this, the Asian Productivity Outlook and Policy (A-POP) report will be published annually in partnership with the OECD and others starting from the last quarter of this year.
10. The Secretariat revised the 2017–2018 Program Plans taking into account the recent US dollar-to-yen exchange rates to obtain the best lineup of projects within the budget available. The lineup for 2017 features 72 multicountry projects on the priority list and another 16 on the out-of-ranking list, while the lineup for 2018 features 70 multicountry projects on the priority list and 22 on the out-of-ranking list. We will finalize the 2017–2018 project lineup during the planning sessions tomorrow.

Progress of 2016 Projects and Other Matters

11. I would like to provide highlights on the progress of this year's activities. More details will be provided in the annual report of the Secretary-General to the Governing Body in 2017. Earlier this year, we organized several high-profile conferences that brought together internationally renowned experts: the International Conference on Raising Productivity in Higher Education; the annual APO Top Management Forum that covered the topic of business excellence (BE) for the service industry; the Conference on Technologies Driving Future Agricultural Productivity; and the annual Asian Food and Agribusiness Conference that discussed current and emerging topics on advancing agribusiness and the food industry in Asia. Another conference was held in conjunction with the EPIF 2016 in Bangkok. The EPIF itself was a great success, attracting around

45,000 visitors to the booths of 130 exhibitors from Japan, Thailand, and other countries. The EPIF also received media coverage in 11 member and four nonmember countries using the network of an online public relations agency appointed by the Secretariat.

12. In the area of training, we organized a course on Business Excellence for the Public Sector in Fiji, where we leveraged the two APO Centers of Excellence to raise the awareness of BE to enhance public-sector productivity in member economics. The UNDP was invited to share its initiatives in promoting public-sector excellence with the participants. We aim to continue further cooperation with the UNDP, which was impressed with the APO's progress in this area. We also successfully pilot-tested a new course format consisting of online webinar sessions, followed by a face-to-face training course on Organic Agroindustry Development Leadership held in Bangladesh. This was organized in collaboration with the Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP) and International Federation of Organic Agricultural Movements.
13. The Digital Learning Program approved by the GBM will play a major role in helping the APO increase its reach to professionals eager for structured learning opportunities on productivity topics. This year, 13 self-learning e-courses are planned, including four pilot interactive courses. The topics range from productivity tools and techniques and material flow cost accounting to Green Productivity (GP), organic agriculture, agribusiness management, and food safety management. Together with the videoconference-based courses conducted using in-house facilities, the Secretariat will continue to utilize IT to develop and manage various complex digital-learning platforms. I would also like to take this opportunity to announce that the current e-learning platform will migrate to a new digital-learning system and be relaunched as the APO Institute of Productivity, or APOiPRO, to reflect the variety of e-learning formats including videoconferencing, Internet-based platforms for "live" sessions, and self-learning e-courses. The new website address will be www.apo-ipro.org. The Secretariat will announce more details on this later.
14. IT has an increasingly integral role in the way the APO operates. As demonstrated at the Strategic Planning Workshop for Liaison Officers held in July, the Secretariat is modernizing its legacy IT systems and has embarked on initiatives that not only support various new digital learning platforms but will also increase the efficiency and productivity of APO operations. The workshop also made concrete recommendations to address some of the operational issues faced by NPOs and the Secretariat. They included: developing the capacities of NPOs and the APO Secretariat in result-based management; monitoring and evaluation through periodic training; creating a brand for APO products and promoting them in member countries and the international arena; publicizing APO consulting services and fee-based courses to generate revenue to sustain projects; and tapping alumni and mass media practitioners to enhance the visibility of NPOs and the APO and their activities.
15. With cash grants provided generously by the governments of the ROC, Japan, and the ROK, the APO was able to organize additional projects to complement our annual program. They included projects for the industry and service sector 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.

16. With a special cash grant from the Government of Japan, two special programs were undertaken in Tokyo: the Special Program for Capacity Building in the Food Industry in ASEAN Least Developed Countries; and the Special Program for Promoting Public-private-sector Partnerships in Enhancing Food Value Chains in Asian Countries.
17. On behalf of the APO, I would like to thank those governments for their continuous strong support. I also specially thank the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, and Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, which in 2016 together contributed more than 1 million US dollars in cash grants to allow the APO to undertake special projects.

International Cooperation

18. I have exciting news to report on initiatives to promote the APO and expand its activities on the international front. Following an agreement signed between the APO and the Science and Technology Center of Antioquia (CTA), Colombia, APO has almost completed the implementation of a customized training course for the development of Colombian productivity practitioners and independent consultants in the city of Medellín. This course was conducted under a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to promote productivity and innovation. In addition to this course, three Colombian observers attended a GP training course held in Fiji. The Colombians also created a splash at the EPIF 2016 in Bangkok with their exhibition booth and delegation. This is a win-win international partnership for both the APO and CTA. Through this partnership, the CTA aims to play the same role as the APO in Latin America by acting as the center of productivity knowledge and organizing projects and events such as an Eco Fair. For the APO, the CTA can act as a springboard to spread the productivity movement into Latin America.
19. The APO has been working on the A-POP report in collaboration with the OECD Development Centre in Paris, UN-ESCAP, and Economic Research Institute. This joint publication will comprise three main parts: productivity trends; productivity-enhancing policies; and special focus on productivity enhancement in selected APO economies, with Indonesia, the Philippines, and Vietnam featured in the inaugural edition. This approach will enable the APO to harmonize the indicators used by the institutions as well as directly impact the productivity policies of member economies.
20. Under a three-year MOU with CIRDAP to facilitate bilateral cooperation and support collaborative research and capacity-building activities in the Asia-Pacific region, the APO and CIRDAP have agreed to implement four agriculture and food-related projects this year. We are grateful to CIRDAP and its link institutions for this cooperation and hope that this collaboration will be strengthened in coming years. In addition, we are negotiating with the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation Agriculture Center on similar collaborations for agricultural projects in 2017.

Vision of the Secretary-General for the Secretariat

21. APO Directors have emphasized the need to review the APO Roadmap to Achieve Vision 2020 periodically to respond to the changing demands of member countries. I look forward to your country presentations later to obtain concrete ideas on which parts of the roadmap need to be reviewed to meet current and future development needs. The

Secretariat is committed to achieving the goals of the roadmap to enable APO members to become more competitive and productive by 2020 and will work with member countries to introduce innovative new ideas and implement high-quality, relevant projects.

22. For the APO to achieve its vision of being a leading organization on productivity, we must also focus on the future. We live in a digitally connected 21st century world where soaring flows of data and information generate more economic value than the global goods trade. Virtually every type of cross-border transaction has a digital component. This trend towards a digital world economy can only accelerate. The Secretariat will work with you to develop new projects for emerging trends such as the Internet of Things and SMART initiatives for Industry, Agriculture and Services. Initially, specific topics can include big data, 3D printing, augmented reality and artificial intelligence. With these exciting new projects, we hope to encourage more interest, participation and hosting by member countries and ensure that APO stays relevant to you.
23. To achieve the above, the Secretariat will also need to strengthen its roles as a think tank to conduct research on emerging needs of members; as a catalyst for alliances among members and between them and others outside the APO region for mutually beneficial collaboration; as a regional adviser on the economic and development policies and performance of members; as an institution builder to strengthen the capability of NPOs and other institutions; and as a clearinghouse for productivity information.
24. While undertaking those roles, the Secretariat will work to enhance the visibility of the organization to make the APO name synonymous with productivity. As showcasing the results of projects is critical, the Secretariat will cooperate with NPOs on follow-up actions. In particular, we would like to work with you to document postproject success stories, which profile participants who have taken their learning and experience from APO projects to create a momentum for change and productivity improvement in their countries. More success stories, both in print and short but effective videos, are already in the pipeline. We are also working to strengthen the alumni network and document testimonials from senior officials attending APO projects.
25. The Secretariat will undertake an aggressive program to increase APO visibility in line with the roadmap. The APO has already expanded its reach on social media platforms from a Facebook-only presence to Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, SlideShare, and others.
26. To strengthen the APO's roles as a think tank and regional adviser, the Secretariat aims to widen its network of internationally renowned experts and take the lead in creating highly visible platforms such as international conferences and roundtables involving other international organizations and academic institutions with similar objectives. By doing so, the Secretariat aims to cement the reputation of the APO as a reliable international partner in productivity knowledge and initiatives.
27. The urgency to modernize the Secretariat to meet these challenges has never been greater. The Secretariat will leverage cutting-edge ICT to strengthen its knowledge management and knowledge networks, improve its productivity and deliver more visible results. In tandem, we will also develop our human resources and adopt modern management practices. The aim is to have a nimble and mobile Secretariat that is able to quickly and effectively respond to the needs of member countries in this digital age.

Conclusion

28. We all play a part to build a successful and inclusive APO. That is why I am very much looking forward to our discussions over the next three days. In closing, I would once again like to thank the Government of Malaysia for its hospitality and generosity in hosting this WSM.

Thank you.
