

**Message of NEDA Usec. Adoracion M. Navarro during the
61st Session of the APO Governing Body
(April 10, 2019, Manila)**

Today, we open the 61st meeting of the Governing Body of the Asian Productivity Organization here in Manila. For those who were not yet around at that time, this is actually the first Governing Body Meeting (GBM) hosted by the Philippines in 21 years. The last time our country hosted the GBM was in 1998.

As the supreme organ of the APO, the Governing Body discusses and decides on policy, finance, programs, membership and other governance issues concerning the organization. We, in the Philippines, therefore believe that by hosting this meeting, we are contributing to the formulation of the APO's vision and roadmap as well as other key decisions to be made during this gathering.

The APO is the premier intergovernmental organization on productivity in the region that seeks to contribute to its socioeconomic development by enhancing productivity in Asia and the Pacific, and the APO has indeed contributed significantly, in collaboration with National Productivity Organizations in the region, to the promotion and improvement of productivity in member economies while performing its roles as think tank, catalyst, regional adviser, institution builder, and clearing house of productivity information.

The improvement of productivity assumes even greater significance when one considers productivity as actually one of the major means by which we can actualize the so-called "Asian century." The Asian century concept projects the 21st century dominance of Asian economy, politics, and culture. This also assumes that certain demographic and economic trends will persist.

The concept came about when a 2011 study by the Asian Development Bank found that by the middle of this century, an additional three billion Asians could enjoy living standards similar to those in Europe today, and Asia could account for over half of the global output. The study, however, warned that the Asian century is not "preordained" and could fail to materialize if certain conditions are not met.

For one, Asia's growth is not guaranteed by any means, and its leaders will have to be able to manage multifarious risks and challenges. These include: the growing inequality within countries; the inability of certain countries to make the necessary investments and policy tweaks to help them avoid the so-called middle income trap; the intense competition for limited natural resources such as land, water, fuel or food; the effects of climate change, including threats to food production; the inefficiencies and corruption which plague different levels of governments; and aging population in certain countries, which can impact continuous economic development in terms of declining labor force, among other possible consequences.

This is why the APO, starting from this august Governing Body, will have to exert more effort if only to ensure that productivity in its member economies continues in its upward trajectory. We have done much in the areas of productivity and quality improvement in the agriculture, industry and service sectors, but that is not enough. How we help chart the path towards uplifting productivity and the quality of lives of Asians will determine to a large extent if the Asian century will eventually be realized.

We, in the Philippines, are indeed very glad to help and further advance the productivity mission of the APO. I am glad that our country, through the stewardship of the Development Academy of the Philippines as our focal organization in the APO, and the

National Economic and Development Authority, the socioeconomic planning agency of the country, is hosting this gathering.

As we embark on this year's Governing Body Meeting, we hope that you will enjoy the famed Filipino hospitality and accomplish what this body set out to do. Welcome, and have an enjoyable and productive stay in the Philippines.