



GBM gives directions to expand the productivity movement

The APO Governing Body (GBM) held its 54th session in Singapore, 17–19 April 2012. Forty-seven delegates and advisers from 19 member countries as well as nine observers from the Colombo Plan, Pan African Productivity Association, Singapore Productivity Association, and Turkey attended. The guest of honor at the inaugural session was Minister of State for National Development and Trade and Industry Lee Yi Shyan, who introduced efforts by the Government of Singapore to promote a productivity culture, transforming it from a developing to a vibrant developed nation. He appreciated the assistance of the APO and Japan Productivity Center in developing Singapore's first national productivity campaign in 1981. Minister Lee emphasized that in 2012 the need for the productivity drive remained as relevant as ever, if not more so in the context of global competitiveness.

After welcoming all attendees, APO Director for Singapore Png Cheong Boon pointed out that SPRING Singapore had chosen the design for the GBM backdrop and collateral material to reflect the close, long-standing relationship between Singapore and the APO. The skyline of Singapore was juxtaposed against a garden filled with the Stamariaara APO, which was bred by Singapore to commemorate the organization's 40th anniversary. Juxtaposing the hardy APO orchid with the skyline of cosmopolitan Singapore symbolized the continuing progress and resilience of Singapore, the APO, and other member economies.

APO Director for Lao PDR Somdy Inmyxai presented the opening address as the APO Chair. He requested members to work together to overcome widening income disparities and ensure inclusive economic development. He called for greater regional integration for the sustainable growth and prosperity of the Asia-Pacific, and said that the APO's importance could not be over-emphasized. During the plenary session, APO Director for Malaysia Azman Hashim was elected APO Chair for 2012–2013, with APO Director for Mongolia Yamaaranz Erkhembayar and Acting APO Director for Nepal Narendra Raj Baral assuming the position of First and Second Vice Chairs, respectively.

In his annual report, Secretary-General Ryuichiro Yamazaki gave the background to Secretariat proposals submitted to the meeting. He explained how the Secretariat had improved its operational effectiveness and his plans to review and streamline processes with the help of IT. While he sought to reduce project implementation costs in collaboration with NPOs, the Secretary-General emphasized that training would remain a core APO activity. (See page 2 for a summary of the report.)

The main GBM agenda items were relocation of the APO Secretariat, membership contribution formula, and preliminary budget for 2013–2014. After a lively discussion of options, it was unanimously agreed that the Secretariat would remain within the Tokyo metropolitan area.

After examining the recommendations of the task force on the membership contribution formula, it was decided that discussions should continue, with Malaysia remaining the chair and Pakistan joining as a new member. The Secretariat was advised to facilitate the work of the task force efficiently so that it could be completed no later than the 55th Session of the GBM in 2013. The APO Preliminary Budget for 2013–2014 was related to the relocation of the Secretariat and new membership contribution formula. After careful consideration, the GBM unanimously approved a 0% budget increase with total membership contributions remaining the



Minister of State Lee Yi Shyan delivering his address. Photo courtesy of SPRING Singapore.

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same as for the 2011–2012 biennium. The Secretariat will prepare a revised budget for 2013–2014 and circulate it for the Directors’ approval.

APO Directors made presentations on the theme Strategies for Growing the APO. An expanded membership would enable the APO to share the wealth of knowledge and experience accumulated over the past 51 years with more Asia-Pacific countries in line with its vision “to be the leading international organization on productivity enhancement, enabling APO economies to be more productive and competitive by 2020.”

Presenting the vote of thanks, APO Director for Fiji Taito Waqa appreciated the Government of Singapore for hosting the meeting, APO Director for Singapore Png Cheong Boon for his leadership, and the entire team of SPRING for organizing the meeting so meticulously. In his closing statement, Secretary-General Yamazaki remarked, “An important issue that was resolved was the location of the Secretariat office thanks to the decisiveness of APO Directors.” He thanked the Directors for the useful ideas in their policy statements and said that, “The direction from the Chair to focus on not more than six key areas to develop action plans was a timely reminder that, with our limited resources, the APO must always focus on what generates the greatest benefits for members.” In acknowledging the observers, the Secretary-General expressed special gratitude to the representative of the Government of Turkey for indicating his country’s interest in joining the APO after Chair Azam Hashim’s invitation. “With emphasis on the APO increasing its international partnerships and expanding the membership, I hope to see even more observers at the next GBM,” Secretary-General Yamazaki concluded.



“This session of the Governing Body will go down in the history of the APO as one of the most important sessions because we made some historical decisions,” stated APO First Vice-Chair Erkhembayar. The First Vice-Chair continued, “A lot of suggestions promised to energize the productivity movement in member countries, strengthen the roles of the APO in the region, and propel it to greater heights in the global arena” before declaring the meeting closed.

GBM delegates also attended the 2012 Business Excellence (BE) Sharing Conference, an initiative launched by SPRING Singapore, where 2011 BE Award Winners and other outstanding organizations shared their best practices in productivity and BE. A city tour was also offered to introduce the colorfully diverse culture of Singapore. 