

Type I ecolabeling: getting off the ground

The APO, through its Green Productivity Program, has been actively involved in promoting effective strategies for increasing green purchasing and creating greater market demand for green products and services. As a follow-up to the annual *Eco-products Directory/Database*, the APO organized projects in 2010 and 2011 designed not only to review the breadth and scope of the directory/database and identify measures for improvement but also to study recent green strategies of member countries and identify their current needs. In extensive discussions between participants, experts, and APO program officers, national type I (ISO 14024) ecolabeling schemes were recognized as one effective green purchasing strategy for the entire region. However, individual APO member countries require significant levels of technical assistance in the development and enhancement of type I ecolabeling schemes as national initiatives that would allow them to address environmental concerns and secure broad-based commitment on the part of corporations and individuals to greening the economy.

For the first time in its 50-year-plus history, the APO cooperated with the Department of Technology, Industry and Economy of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to cohost an interregional workshop to provide technical training and assistance for the development of national type I ecolabeling schemes based on the ISO 14024 standard. The Capacity-building Workshop on Type I Ecolabeling, held 5 to 7 March in Bangkok, Thailand, in collaboration with other external bodies such as the Global Ecolabelling Network and Thailand Environmental Institute, brought together representatives of



Experts John Polak (L) and Dr. Chaiyod Bunyagidj (R) assist participants in a group exercise.

selected member countries of both the APO and UNEP who are currently involved in the development or operation of national type I ecolabeling programs in their countries. International experts with diverse backgrounds gave presentations on experiences, best practices, and insights on trends from Canada, Germany, Hong Kong, the Republic of Korea, Mexico, Sweden, and Thailand to guide the participants through detailed aspects of establishing and operating a national type I ecolabeling program, including the development of certification criteria, conducting life cycle assessments, quality management, and marketing strategies. “Valuable learning sessions and exchanges during the workshop should be maintained to exchange/build programs,” noted one delegate in attendance. The APO intends to continue seeking other opportunities to provide its member countries with assistance and support in ecolabeling and certification efforts. 🌱