

Secretary-General's statement to the WSM

After welcoming the attendees and thanking the Government of Indonesia for hosting the 47th Workshop Meeting of Heads of NPOs (WSM), APO Secretary-General Takenaka's statement focused on three main topics: Secretariat reform; measures to improve project operations; and building relationships outside the APO region.

The Secretariat had been reorganized into four departments, Administration and Finance, Research and Planning, Industry, and Agriculture from the beginning of January, the Secretary-General explained. Most functions of the previous Environment Department were taken over by the Industry Department, and those of the former Information and Public Relations Department were completely absorbed into the Administration and Finance Department. "I am sure that the synergy derived from the pooling of resources and capabilities within the Secretariat will lead to greater cost-effectiveness of our operations," Takenaka stated. He also disclosed that the Internet and World Wide Web will become the principal tools to disseminate information on APO activities and therefore the Secretariat will invest in a redesign of its Web site to make it more attractive and useful.

The Secretary-General also said that the think-tank role of the Research and Planning Department would be expanded. Due to increasing globalization and competitiveness in markets, he noted that the department was responsible for identifying the latest productivity-related concepts and trends, not only within but also beyond the APO membership. If necessary, he added that the Secretariat could organize fact-finding missions to advanced countries to collect information that would lead to enhanced productivity and competitiveness in member countries.

The DON Program is now divided into two parts, DON Strategy and DON Implementation, administered by the Research and Planning Department and Industry Department, respectively. DON Implementation refers to all individual-country services, such as TES, BCBN, and DMP. In addition, the Industry Department now handles most environment-related projects, including the Eco-products International Fair in Vietnam in early 2008, the Secretary-General said. Recalling that at the 2006 WSM in Kuala Lumpur he had emphasized "the need for enterprises to be aware of consumers' preference for safe and environment-friendly food products if they were to remain



Takenaka speaking at the WSM

competitive," Takenaka said that the Agriculture Department had organized numerous projects with this objective in 2006, including one on disease prevention in the poultry sector, and that "this objective will be pursued even more vigorously this year."

Turning to measures to improve APO project performance, the Secretary-General reported that 65% of projects planned for 2007 were Categories B and C, compared with 45% in 2005 and 46% in 2006. He noted that this continuing shift away from Category A projects would allow more participants from each country, thus facilitating follow-up activities. Takenaka said that experience in 2006 had shown that using a two-tiered approach in which a multicountry project is followed by initiatives in participating countries for greater multiplier effects was feasible and more such projects were planned for 2007

and 2008. He pointed out that IT-based modalities were cost-effective and could reach a large audience and that their combination with more traditional project methods was a new approach initiated by the Secretariat. A special IT support and e-learning budget was made available for continuity in IT-based initiatives.

"The APO must constantly look beyond its boundaries to network and connect with other international organizations in fulfilling its missions and goal," Takenaka declared. He went on to say that the alliance with the ASEAN Foundation deserved special mention. In August 2006, the APO sponsored the Roundtable Conference for the Promotion of the Productivity Movement in Africa, attended by more than 80 and followed up with a series of visits to the Secretariat by African delegates for discussions. The Secretary-General expressed his gratitude to the Government of Japan for its financial support for the African Program and to the resource persons from member countries.

Finally, Takenaka mentioned that the 2006 GBM had proposed the introduction of a biennial budget to replace the annual one, along with a change in the timing of both the GBM and WSM. If approved by the GBM this year, Vietnam has graciously offered to host a second 2007 WSM in October. After thanking all NPOs for promoting the APO, sourcing participants and experts, and hosting projects the Secretary-General concluded, "That we have achieved so much over all the years of the APO's existence is a tribute to the vision and commitment of our member countries. We can all be justifiably proud, while moving forward to achieve more." 🌐