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Fostering future global leaders in Asia

"The successful organization has one major attribute that sets it apart from unsuccessful organizations: dynamic and effective leadership," claimed Dr. Paul Hersey, world-renowned behavioral scientist. This blunt assertion of the importance of leadership has persuasive power for corporations, regardless of their size or sector, seeking to enhance organizational capacity and competitiveness. Scores of studies and research projects have been conducted to ascertain the traits of great leaders in diverse areas. The goal is to instill these traits in junior or middle managers and thus foster the next generation of business leaders. The International Masters Program in Practicing Management and the London Business School's Proteus program are examples that focus on training tomorrow's leaders to develop a successful leadership mindset and insights.

Recognizing the need for successors, the APO organized a four-day study meeting on Global Leadership Development in Japan, 17–20 December, to devise appropriate initiatives that will equip tomorrow's business leaders with the tools to transform their corporations into globally competitive ones. Three resource speakers were invited to share their cutting-edge knowledge of leadership, leadership development programs, training tools, etc. The meeting attracted 22 participants from 10 Asian countries, including members of academia, NPO officials, and private-sector human resources officers.



Prof. Nagai emphasizing diversity in global leadership

The keynote address by Professor Hirohisa Nagai, University of Tsukuba, Japan, touched on the rising demand for global leaders in Asia, fueled by successful economic development throughout the region. Prof. Nagai articulated the essential qualities and attributes of Asian global leaders and abilities required to be successful. He defined global leadership competencies (GLCs) as "...observable and measurable characteristics of a person who is involved in global activities by using knowledge, skills, and behaviors that contribute to performing well at work." He also shared his research results on GLCs and concluded that the ability to accept diversity and manage uncertainty was important in Asia.

Group Managing Director Dr. Ahmad Magad, Asia Business Operations of II-IV Incorporated, a multinational manufacturer of infrared materials and optical components, spoke on "Global Leadership Development in American-Asian MNCs." He presented a case study of his company's results-oriented approach to leadership development and stressed the importance of planning for executive succession. Emphasizing the role of mentors in leadership training, Dr. Magad said, "It is a combination of teaching competency and exposing trainees to real-life contents. I spent most of my time mentoring managers for their managerial capacity building including leadership development." He also suggested a useful definition of global leadership for the meeting when he said that, "Global leadership is concerned with building resonance and emotional connection with an organization's stakeholders of cross-cultural backgrounds aimed at creating collective value and win-win for all."

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In an effort to introduce various leadership development tools, the APO invited Professor Michael J. Marquardt, George Washington University, co-founder and president of the World Institute for Action Learning, to conduct a one-day session on action learning, a management tool and process that involves forming small groups working on real problems, taking action, and learning while doing so. Citing the session as beneficial and practical, Managing Director Sirilak Meksang, Personnel Management Association of Thailand, commented, "I learned how to use the language of questioning and reflective listening. Asking the right questions helps people learn, get smarter, and be able to solve complex problems. It enhances system thinking and creativity."

After sharing the current information on leadership challenges facing par-

ticipating countries as a result of globalization, the participants completed a group exercise to identify leadership competencies from a local-global nexus viewpoint and discuss how to develop future GLCs in Asia. They agreed that future leaders should be able to manage cultural diversity and the global-local nexus with universal as well as country-specific competence. They concluded that leadership qualities could be instilled in executives by designing training and development tools in a logical, step-by-step manner. Concerning future leaders in Asia, the meeting decided that a "one-size-fits-all" concept would not work given the region's cultural diversity. Instead, they chose a learning program based on a global-local nexus model to provide tailor-made indicators for a variety of Asian organizations depending on the stage of economic development, type of industry, and cultural background. 