

## People behind the scenes: Senior Program Officer Joselito C. Bernardo

**W**hether you celebrate the holiday or not, if you found a beautiful card and a nicely wrapped gift on your desk on Christmas day, that would make you happy. The APO Secretariat's own Santa, who is happiest when he can put a smile on his colleagues' faces, is Senior Program Officer Joselito C. Bernardo.

While all professionals working in a demanding environment are busy by definition, it is no exaggeration to say that APO program officers are unusually busy. They are always on the go, organizing projects and traveling throughout the Asia-Pacific region. Given this frenetic activity, it would be easy to forget important anniversaries of family, friends, and colleagues. When an officer's bags are stuffed with documents, even small souvenirs like key chains can increase the burden. However, Secretariat staff know that Bernardo always brings gifts for his colleagues back from his travels and helps celebrate special days. When he cannot be there in person, he still makes sure that occasions are acknowledged. His friendliness, sense of humor, insight, and vivacity have gained widespread friendship and respect.

One cold early morning in late autumn, one of Bernardo's colleagues was surprised to find the main door of the Secretariat unlocked, although it seemed too early for anyone else to have arrived. The mystery was solved a few minutes later when she found a bleary-eyed Bernardo working on his computer

wearing a big hat and gloves to ward off the chill, with a suitcase next to him. "You arrived so early today," she exclaimed. With a smile, Bernardo corrected her, saying, "Oh, I spent the night here. I have to take a morning flight and it is much easier to get to Narita from here than from home. Besides, if I don't sleep, I don't have to worry about missing my flight." About an hour later, he left for the airport saying, "Now everything's ready; I must go."

It is always impressive when you meet someone who strikes the perfect balance between being sharp and professional and relaxed and friendly. Bernardo's balance is always appropriate for the situation, whether carrying out his duties in the Agriculture Department or off the job. Another colleague said of Bernardo that, "He is a family man and one of the best fathers whom I know." Maybe the source of his warm heart and frequent smiles is the happy family he so much cares about. ☺



*Bernardo*