

55th Workshop Meeting of Heads of NPOs
21–23 October 2014, Colombo, Sri Lanka

Opening Remarks
Minister of Productivity Promotion
Hon. Basheer Segudawood

APO Secretary-General Mari Amano,
Minister of International Monetary Co-operation and Deputy Minister of Finance and Planning Dr. Sarath Amunugama,
Secretary of the Ministry of Productivity Promotion Upali Marasinghe,
Distinguished Delegates and Advisers from APO member countries,
Observers,
Ladies and Gentlemen:

Good morning to all of you. On behalf of the Government of Sri Lanka and the people of Sri Lanka, it is my pleasure to welcome you all to the 55th Workshop Meeting of Heads of National Productivity Organizations (WSM).

The current policy of the Government of Sri Lanka, the Mahinda Chinthana or Vision for the Future, clearly states the strategies for improvement of the livelihood of our people, ensuring that all economic and social benefits should reach every strata of our society. Furthermore, in the budget speech of 2011, His Excellency the President envisaged a growth rate of 5–6% from the productivity sector to achieve the goal of taking Sri Lanka into the future as the “Wonder of Asia.”

During the preceding eight years (2002 to 2010), the National Productivity Secretariat functioned under the Ministry of Labour and Labour Relations. Once the government recognized the importance of productivity improvement in the country to broaden the resultant social and economic growth, the decision was taken to form a separate ministry at the end of 2010. The newly formed Ministry of Productivity Promotion undertakes multiple activities to enhance productivity in the country. These activities cover a large part of the spectrum of public sector, private sector, as well as school and community sectors.

At this point, I would like to address more of our achievements in the micro and SME sectors as these two sectors play a major role in creating employment opportunities on an island-wide basis as well as socioeconomic aspects of the rural population in the future. The success of micro and SME sector development is reflected by the blooming number of new industries spread across the country. In a developing country like Sri Lanka, micro and SMEs are the backbone of the industrial sector. Therefore strengthening of micro and SMEs will lead to the expansion of employment and progress in economic phases of the country. To achieve the goal of a 5–6% increase in productivity, we have to focus our attention on the current shortcomings in the system and find appropriate speedy solutions.

We should invest in our human resources development to enhance productivity by improving skills, knowledge, and creativity. This approach will improve the capability of our country to face the challenges of the current and future development goals. Sri Lanka is now moving from a factor-driven economy toward an efficiency-driven economy-cum-innovation-driven

economy. Improvements in productivity and creativeness will result in innovations leading to higher productivity, which will yield higher per capita income for the country.

After 30 years of a bitter and expensive war against terrorism, currently Sri Lanka is booming with economic and social development activities. Roads, ports, airports, industrial projects, housing and irrigation projects as well as highways, including the one that brought you to Colombo from the airport, are good examples of our recent achievements during the short span of the peaceful immediate past.

Those of you who have visited on previous occasions may have seen a completely different and improved Colombo. This signals the wave of sustainable urban development taking place all over the country. I sincerely hope that all of you will have the opportunity to travel within Colombo and see for yourself the economic, social, and environmental progress achieved in the peaceful surroundings existing in the current phase of Sri Lanka.

Concluding my few words, I wish all of you every success in your deliberations and a very pleasant stay in Sri Lanka. I declare the WSM open. Thank you.