

**53rd Session of the APO Governing Body**  
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**Keynote Address**

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**12th President of the Republic of the Philippines**

**Introduction**

We hold today's 53rd Governing Board Meeting of the Asian Productivity Organization and the 2011 APO Regional Awards with still vivid pictures in our minds of the unimaginable tragedy that has struck Japan, our original host country for the APO's 50th Anniversary. It is a disaster of unprecedented magnitude that is not yet over, and which reminds us once more of the overwhelming power of nature, against which human contrivances seem vulnerable and insignificant. But, while we witnessed huge swathes of devastation, we also saw in the aftermath of the 11 March triple whammy of earthquake–tsunami–nuclear spill the indomitable spirit and collective will of the brave Japanese people.

**Sympathy and Admiration**

Allow me, therefore, to convey our deepest sympathies to the people of Japan, through the APO and our Japanese friends present here today. We are confident that the Japanese nation and its capable and highly-disciplined people will rise from this massive tragedy stronger than ever before. As universal citizens of the 21st century, we of the APO collectively join the rest of the world in offering whatever support we can mobilize to help alleviate the plight of our Japanese neighbors, even as we praise them for their admirable qualities as a people.

As the world watched with shock and commiserated with the victims of the disaster, we were also struck by the distinctive poise, courage, and industry exemplified by the Japanese people throughout one crisis after another. We are awed at their grace, composure, and efficiency without which thousands more could have suffered. As the Japanese nation rises out of the ruins, we remember not so much the wrath of Mother Nature but rather the resilience and indomitable spirit manifested by the Japanese people. As we express our sentiments for Japan's speedy recovery, we also welcome and congratulate the APO's new Secretary-General, our dear friend, Ambassador Ryuichiro Yamazaki, and wish him well in his new assignment.

This gathering today for the APO Regional Awards to outstanding achievers is inextricably linked to the larger context of the recent great Japan earthquake. The tragic events have reminded people around the world to become more caring, sharing, and daring for each other. We should aspire to become a cooperative human community in the Asia-Pacific: our faith paramount and hope prevailing that nothing can bring humankind down even in the face of the severest adversity if people care, share, and dare for others.

**Our Beautiful Spaceship Earth**

It will be recalled that UN Secretary General U Thant once referred to our tiny planet (among the millions of other heavenly bodies in God's universe) as the "beautiful Spaceship Earth as it continues to spin and circle in frigid space with its warm and fragile cargo of animate life." We are delighted and honored to be asked to this golden jubilee of the APO which has done

so much to raise productivity, improve the quality of life, and expand the potentials of Earth's bounties in the Asia-Pacific mega-region during this last half-century.

Improved productivity translates into economic growth and sustained development. Japan has demonstrated that the first line of defense in any massive natural disaster or financial tsunami is a strong economy and a patriotic citizenry. The Asia-Pacific region has been experiencing unprecedented economic expansion and is a major contributor to global prosperity. The combined GDP of the 20 APO members was some US\$9trillion in 2007, which accounts for about 16% of the world's GDP. For years, the APO has strengthened the capability of national productivity organizations (NPOs) and other institutions.

### **Natural Calamities and Global Warming**

As the world becomes more vulnerable to disasters, volatile food and energy supply, rising commodity prices, spiraling poverty, and global warming, there should now be greater emphasis on building capacities, strengthening institutions, and promoting productivity and competitiveness. As the changes in the world unfold, the strategic directions of the APO have been realigned in order to be more responsive to the new global challenges confronting us. These are: 1) promote Green Productivity; 2) strengthen NPOs and other stakeholders; and 3) drive innovation-led productivity growth.

That global warming causes severe weather disturbances, bringing about typhoons, droughts, floods, and freshwater depletion, and contributing to deaths, sicknesses, and malnutrition, is an established fact. Following the spate of major earthquakes in recent years, a hypothesis that links global warming and increased geologic activity is becoming a serious popular concern. As ice melts (as the hypothesis goes), stresses on the crust of the earth change, bringing about powerful movements within earthquake faults and unusual reactions inside volcanoes. This hypothesis is yet unsupported by factual data; but, even if no correlation has yet been found between climate change and earthquakes, there are already enough real and deadly reasons to campaign against global warming and work for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

### **Concerted Action: Networking and Partnership**

There is a need for the governments of the world, business corporations, and experts from academe, peoples' organizations, and international bodies to get their acts together through networking and partnerships. We have to realize that it is in such partnerships and networks where real results are and can be achieved for public benefit. We need government leaders to provide the political will. We need leadership in the corporate world, with their financial and technological capital, to make the right investments; we need academe and research institutions to develop and uplift the quality of manpower; we need nongovernment organizations and peoples' organizations as watchdogs and coworkers. We need regional organizations like APEC, ASEAN, and the APO, in pushing for concerted action to attain sustainable socioeconomic development for our region.

### **Productivity and Sustainability**

It is in the context of the continuing Japan tragedy that the APO's activities assume greater significance. It is gratifying to note that there is a consensus now emerging to recognize the importance of "sustainability" in the new thrusts and directions of our organization. Also being intensified is the promotion of Green Productivity as one of several strategies of the APO. I also agree with the recognition that time-tested productivity improvement approaches in the private sector can be equally applied in government with likely successful outcomes.

Through our adoption of public-sector productivity, we develop an important building block toward long-term sustainability.

On 4 December 1996, during my presidency, I keynoted the 1st World Conference of Green Productivity that resulted in the landmark Manila Declaration on Green Productivity. Our Manila Declaration propelled Green Productivity in a more organized manner in Asia and increased people's awareness for our fragile environment. That first GP World Conference and its two other succeeding GP international conferences likewise held in Manila, under the auspices of the Development Academy of the Philippines (the national productivity organization of the Philippines) placed the harmonization of the environment and development as its main concern. Those three consecutive GP world conferences held in Manila took cognizance of the UN Brundtland Commission's concept of "sustainable development" that passionately underscores mankind's responsibility in "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

### **Enduring Peace, Sustainable Development, and Human Security**

While this principle is clearly accepted worldwide, much debate still ensues where the issues of ecological integrity, inclusive economic growth, and population expansion converge. The twin goals of enduring peace and sustainable development probably describe best our region's long-term aspirations. On the other hand, a new component of development, which is human security, has emerged in the international community as advocated jointly by Sadako Ogata, former UN High Commissioner for Refugees, and Dr. Amartya Sen, Nobel Prize awardee for development economics.

"Human security" is concerned with safeguarding and expanding people's vital freedoms. It partakes both of protecting people from critical and pervasive threats, and of empowering people to take charge of their own lives. Protection refers to the norms, policies, and institutions essential to shield people from various threats and requires governments' top-down vigilance, especially in insuring the rule of law and democratic governance.

"People empowerment" underscores the role of individuals as stakeholders and participants, and necessitates their bottom-up contribution through self-help and self-reliance. "Development," if it is to mean anything, must increase the participation of everyday citizens in an economy so that it could become structurally and technologically stronger in the next decade.

In the larger East Asian region, potential flashpoints remain, notably North Korea and the South China Sea. Because virtually every Asia-Pacific state is intent on pursuing growth and maintaining regional stability, it is now easier to be optimistic about a more cooperative global future. The interdependence being generated by the market system and induced by various initiatives to unify our region bolsters both the "soft power" and diplomatic underpinnings of regional stability and security.

### **The Relevance of "Eco-Productivity"**

While Asian countries may indeed be on the threshold of transforming their economies, we realize there are other ongoing transformations as well, in our landscapes, in our eating and recreational preferences, in the speed with which we consume goods and services, in our definition of people's needs, and in the fundamental component of people-to-people relations. As some experts have aptly observed, our metropolitan areas have borne the heaviest burden

of these transformations. While we have seen their economies improve, we also witness the degradation of the urban environment. The fast-paced industrial hustle and bustle in our urban centers have placed an enormous strain on their capacity to sustain a quality environment, particularly in such matters as providing safe water, dependable energy sources, comfortable housing, as well as functional road networks. Aggressive urbanization has eaten up much of our agricultural lands and is threatening our sources of food supply.

Green Productivity was relevant 50 years ago when the APO began and is even more relevant now. GP should truly be the battle cry of our times. With the increasing number of success stories about big business corporations making environmental investments, there is now a demand for better teamwork among the governments to support this advocacy with policies and mechanisms to “spread the good news about Green Productivity.”

### **The APO’s Role in Achieving Sustainable Development**

Eco-efficiency is the name of the game now in international commerce, and it does not mean only technological changes in products or in production processes. It also means changing the preferences and practices of the consumers, and more and more changing consumerists’ lifestyles that impinge negatively on our limited environmental capital because of climate change. It is because of the growing global attention to the problem of climate change that governments around the world have banded together to ratify the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change or the Kyoto Protocol of 1997. Greater global commitment is still needed following the failure of the 2009 Copenhagen Summit, if we wish to substantially reduce greenhouse gas emissions and mitigate global warming.

It is here, in sustaining global support for climate change mitigation, that the APO plays a most valuable role. All of you are effective advocates for the kind of productivity that need not be at the expense of the environment. The APO deserves our commendations for its new mission statement that emphasizes sustainable socioeconomic development in our region, as well as for its continued support for Green Productivity. I am confident that, following these strategic thrusts, you will cause greater positive impacts in the global campaign for sustainable socioeconomic development and for successful outcomes in the years ahead.

### **Unity, Solidarity, and Teamwork: The Key to Success**

The question now is can we do it? Yes, we can if we adopt best practices under a common basic formula of unity, solidarity, and teamwork. First, we need “unity” which translates into unity of purpose. We should have a consensus that this is the way to go and that all our actions must lead to its achievement. Second, we should have “solidarity in values,” or a common understanding of interests, attitudes, and personal behavior among our respective peoples and governments that will eventually translate into the integration of responsibilities and values. Third, we should have “teamwork in community- and nation-building.” We must be able to translate our unity and solidarity into action and that means the ability of people, of a government, of a nation, or even a regional aggregation of countries or economies to work together as one team.

### **Conclusion**

To conclude, let us not forget that we should be caring for the preservation of Mother Nature and the welfare of mankind by sharing with each other what God has bestowed on us. We maximize these by daring to achieve unity of purpose, solidarity in values, and teamwork in the execution of policies, plans, and programs toward our better future.

Let me thank the APO for the Regional Productivity Award given me, which I humbly accept for our country, for our shared advocacies on Green Productivity, as well as for inviting me to keynote your 53rd Governing Body Meeting and the 2011 APO Regional Awards. It is a distinct honor for me and the Philippines to be recognized by the APO, the foremost international organization in the Asia-Pacific on Green Productivity, for our commitments to our common goal of sustainable socioeconomic development through green or eco-productivity.

Let us link more closely with one another as we continue to pursue the more balanced and more sustainable human development and human security of our region so that “we will have a better today than yesterday and a better tomorrow than today.” Thank you, *mabuhay*, and best wishes.