

For All It Is Worth!

The APO was Not Built in a Day



Mr. Yuji Yamada

Mr. Yuji Yamada –“Gene” as he is known to many –has been with the APO since its inception in 1961. Indeed, his involvement with the APO extended even further back to when the idea of a regional productivity organization was being mooted and eventually implemented.

Mr. Yamada graduated from the Faculty of International Affairs and Development Economics, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, Tokyo, Japan, in 1957. He was one of the handful of staff in the APO Secretariat when the APO was formally established in May 1961. His involvement with the APO, however, dated back much earlier, that is, from the time of preparation for its establishment. At the time, Mr. Yamada was a Planning Officer, and later Senior Program Officer, in the Japan Productivity Center (JPC), now the Japan Productivity Center for Socio-Economic Development (JPC-SED), the National Productivity Organization (NPO) of Japan. The JPC was intimately involved in all the preparatory meetings and conferences leading to the birth of the APO.

Mr. Yamada’s first assignment in the APO Secretariat was as its Administration Officer. In this capacity, he helped to develop a number of operational documents to govern the day-to-day functioning of the Secretariat. One of them is the APO Staff Rules and Regulations, which is still being used today despite the fact that it was prepared 40 years ago. Between 1972-1980, Mr. Yamada served as a Program Officer in the Industry Division. He rose to become Head of the division in 1980, and concurrently the Special Assistant to the Secretary-General. In 1995, he relinquished his position at the Industry Division, but continues to serve as the Special Assistant to the Secretary-General. In 1999, he was designated Special Adviser to the Secretary-General.

The dedication and commitment of Mr. Yamada to the cause and activities of the APO is without parallel. His long service too will be difficult to match. He is also very much appreciated for his diligence and wisdom. It is he who built up the APO international relations program. His many valuable contributions were given recognition when the Government of Japan conferred on him the Award for Special Contribution to International Economic Cooperation in 1993. This was followed by his appointment as a Commandeur de l’Ordre des Palmes Academiques by the Government of France in 1995.

This interview tries to capture the insights of Mr. Yamada from his personal involvement in the establishment and development of the APO over the past 40 years as they are important to maintain a proper perspective of the role and mission the APO was set up to achieve.

Mr. YUJI YAMADA

the APO Secretary - General

Could you tell us how you came to be involved with the APO?

I would say it all started toward the end of 1958. I was with the JPC then. At that time, Mr. Kohei Goshi, the then Executive Director of the JPC, undertook a mission in early 1959 to eight Asian countries to explore the possibility of organizing a meeting that would prepare the ground for the creation of a region-wide productivity association. He was accompanied by Mr. Susumu Morota, Director of International Cooperation, JPC. Unfortunately, however, while in Bangkok, the first stop of the mission, Mr. Morota fell seriously ill, and had to be hospitalized. As he obviously could not continue with the mission, Mr. Goshi directed me to take his place. I immediately left to join him in Ceylon (as Sri Lanka was known then), and accompanied him for the rest of the mission. This was the start of my journey with the APO.

It may not be out of place to mention here the reasons why the JPC was then actively taking the initiative for setting up such a regional organization. Established in 1955, the JPC had been spearheading productivity drive in Japan by way of promoting the concept and practices of productivity to top management and labor union leaders and conducting training on small industry development and management training in such fields as industrial engineering, quality improvement and cost reduction, and management consultancy development and services, among others. On international activities, it had dispatched a large number of study missions on various disciplines to the United States as well as European countries to make on-spot observational studies and also to establish working relations with the counterparts in those countries—all with the single objective of learning from the developed countries. In the mean time, thanks to the efforts and assistance provided by the U.S. Government and also by the International Labour Office in Geneva, the so-called National Productivity Centers were one by one starting to come up since the mid-1950s in a number of Asian countries. It was against this background that the idea came to the mind of Mr. Goshi to explore the possibilities for setting up a machinery to promote a regional productivity campaign through mutual cooperation among Asian countries—hence, the move for setting up the APO.



Mr. Yamada receiving Govt. of Japan award.

The Journey Begins – A First Trip into a Long Lasting Journey with the APO

What was the result of the mission? How did the countries visited react to Mr. Goshi's proposal?

The mission as a whole went very well. The countries visited were supportive of the idea of a regional productivity organization to act as a clearinghouse of information pertaining to the endeavors for productivity improvements in the respective countries, although the concrete form it would take was not clearly envisaged at that time. This was to be one of the main areas for subsequent consideration and decision. The positive outcome of the mission meant that we could proceed with the next step of convening a meeting to further elaborate on the idea in a multilateral setting.

Planting Organization, Seeding a Movement

From this mission, one fundamental difference to Mr. Goshi's proposal came to light, that is, the envisaged association would have to be governmental. Mr. Goshi's original idea was that it should be launched as a private sector initiative with the business corporations as the main players. Such thinking by Mr. Goshi was understandable given his long involvement with the private sector in Japan, where the formation of associations and networking was one of its distinguishing features. Mr. Goshi himself was Executive Secretary of the Keizai Doyukai (Japan Association of Corporate Executives). This background and experience must have influenced his vision on how the APO should be constituted. One telling example of this could be seen in the designation of the three main pillars of the JPC which Mr. Goshi helped to found in 1955. These three pillars are management, labor and academia. The government sector was deliberately left out on the assumption that it would be there to lend its support but not to play a dominant role. In other Asian countries, however, the situation was quite different at that time. In most of them, the government played a central role in economic planning and development, of which productivity is an integral part. If we were to proceed with the regional grouping, there was no other way but to involve the governments.

How was this difference reconciled? What happened next?

Moving One Step Closer

Mr. Goshi was a pragmatic and realistic man; he did not insist the APO should be a private entity. In fact, he was quick in consulting the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan to obtain its support and involvement in taking the initiative. It was our good fortune that the Ministry was very supportive of the idea, and its quick action helped Mr. Goshi to push forward with the plan.

I had the opportunity to accompany Mr. Goshi to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to confer on this matter. The person who received us and with whom we discussed the matter was Mr. Morisaburo Seki*, the Director-General of the Economic Cooperation Bureau. He understood the situation and likened it to a need for the government to adopt a baby conceived by the private sector so as to ensure his/her happy birth. As he very interestingly but aptly summarized, unless the government helped out, it was likely that there would be a miscarriage and the APO might not be born at all. Mr. Seki promised Mr. Goshi he would do all he could to help.

Two weeks later, after rounds of consultation with a number of governmental ministries and agencies, Mr. Seki announced the readiness of the Japanese Government to endorse and support the plan to launch the APO as an inter-governmental organization. Thanks to the quick action by Mr. Seki and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, preparation for the establishment of the APO could move forward.

*Mr. Morisaburo Seki later became the second APO Secretary-General, serving from 11 July 1970 to 31 July 1975.



Mr. Kohei Goshi

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Could you please tell us more about Mr. Goshi?

Mr. Goshi: A Man with a Sense of Mission

This prompted him to study economics, to work as a journalist covering the financial/business world beat, and then on to productivity-related activities.

Apart from Mr. Goshi, who else were instrumental in making the APO a reality? How were they involved with the APO?

There were many personalities who contributed to the formation of the APO whom I should be referring to. One person I must mention is Dr. Ichiro Nakayama, a well-known Schumpeterian economist who was then the Chairman of the Japan Labor Institute, as well as Vice Chairman of the JPC. He was the person who guided the JPC on productivity matters. Dr. Nakayama was also a very staunch proponent of a regional productivity drive embracing all the Asian nations. Mr. Goshi held Dr. Nakayama in high esteem, and he was always seeking his advice and guidance on how to bring all the Asian nations together in a regional productivity movement. I had the privilege to meet frequently with Dr. Nakayama, and I have benefitted greatly from his personal tutoring on the general economic situation in Asia, the rudiments of the concept of productivity and the actions needed for its application.



Dr. Ichiro Nakayama

As one of the core members of the JPC delegation to the preparatory meetings on the APO, Dr. Nakayama was deeply involved in the setting up of the APO. Among his many notable contributions was the formula for membership contribution. This matter was one of the tasks taken up by the Asian Productivity Committee constituted by the first Asian Roundtable Productivity Conference held in Tokyo in March 1959. Dr.

Nakayama, together with Dr. Palamadai Samu Lokanathan of India, were appointed the vice chairmen of this committee, while Dr. Jose C. Locsin of the Philippines served as its chairman. Together, they prepared a draft outlining the structure, constitution, program, finances and other matters relating to the functioning of the APO. Dr. Nakayama was particularly instrumental in determining the formula for membership contribution tied to the GDP. The essence of his idea was that assessment of the contributions should be based on

Learning the Ropes— Other Role Models

the ability of each nation to pay according to its GDP, and not in the form of percentage sharing of the demand for productivity increase at the regional level, as practiced by the United Nations in their assessment

Learning the Ropes- Other Role Models

of membership contributions. His contention was that you cannot increase productivity too much, because the demand for productivity improvement is infinite. Each nation's ability to pay the annual contributions should be given due consideration taking into account the reality that the Asian nations were poor. After having ascertained the total sum that could be collected as a widow's mite from the member countries, the program for enhancing productivity in the region could then be determined by consensus in accordance with the priority to be set for action.

Another personality I have to mention is Mr. Ichiro Oshikawa who was earlier the Secretary-General of the JPC and was the first APO Secretary-General. Before he joined the JPC, he was heading the Osaka Prefectural Research Institute for Commerce and Industry which was engaged in extensive studies and researches in small industry, and he himself was a renowned research expert on industrial development. Mr. Oshikawa was a man of action. No sooner had he assumed the post of the APO Secretary-General than he placed an emphasis on the need for addressing the issues of small industry development in the APO program. In so doing, he stressed the importance of the APO program of action to be pragmatic and down-to-earth. He was contending all the time that the APO projects should be geared in such a way as to directly serve the needs and requirements of the national productivity organizations and their customers, such as companies, manufacturers and entrepreneurs, particularly, of small and medium enterprises. As soon as he assumed office of the APO Secretary-General, in May 1961, he immediately initiated a series of projects aimed at meeting his stated contention, such as the Productivity Center Workshop (India, September 1961) which became the annual Workshop Meeting of the Heads of NPOs; the Workshop on Aid to Small Business (Pakistan, October 1961); and the formation of Experts Groups to undertake surveys on such subjects as Marketing and Distribution; Management Training and Development; Production Techniques and Efficiency, and many others, which were done in all the then member countries. Indeed, the practical approaches that we currently adopt in mapping out the programs is a legacy passed on to us by Mr. Oshikawa.

One more person who comes close to my heart is Dr. S. K. Rau who joined the APO Secretariat toward the end of 1961 as Head of the Administration Division. He later became Deputy Secretary-General in 1965. He was from the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) and was deputed by the Government of India. As soon as he joined the Secretariat, he wasted no time in studying the historical background against which the APO was formed, and the concept and

Moving One Step Closer



Mr. Yamada with Dr. S. K. Rau (right)

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practices of productivity enhancement not only in Asia but also in the United States and in Europe. He did this by extensive reading of the available literature, spending a good deal of time discussing with Mr. Ichiro Oshikawa, and also interviewing Mr. Goshi and Dr. Nakayama, among others, to pick their brains on what and how to proceed with the promotion of productivity in Asia. The way he worked was horrendously intense and meticulous. Since many of the Japanese personalities he met were not so proficient in English language, I had to act as his translator. Despite my flaws and blunders, Dr. Rau could somehow get the gist of the discussions.

Dr. Rau and I worked late into evening at the office almost every day. Around eight o'clock, he would ask me to join him for drinks and dinner in his apartment which was located close to the Secretariat. After a good round of Scotch & soda, his wife, Uma, would serve spicy South Indian vegetable curries, which I relished very much. However, whenever I take spicy food, I would perspire profusely. As a result, it became a rule in their home that whenever Uma serves curry to me, she has to provide me with a big bath towel to wipe off my perspiration!

At the time when you joined the APO there were very few Japanese in international organizations. Did your family members object to your joining the APO? What advice did they have for you?

As it so happened, my father was a well-traveled man, at least according to the standard of his time. This was due to his food canning business which took him to many countries, including those that later became APO members. For instance, I could still recall seeing pictures of my father taken in Batavia, the old name for present day Jakarta. Not only this, thanks to my father's business activities, I myself was able to spend some of my childhood years in Taiwan. So, because of this background, my parents had no particular concerns about my joining a regional organization like the APO.

Service First— A Parental Advice on Humility

On reflection, I guess there are a number of important lessons I have learnt from my parents, especially from my father. I might not have been too attentive then, but as I look back, I now know I owe my father a lot for having enlightened me on some of the fundamentals for working and being acceptable in an international milieu. One that I remember most clearly is about being sensitive to others. As with his usual style, he did not tell me directly about this. Instead, this was done by repeating the same messages like "Do not ask others to do the things you yourself do not want to do," and "Forget about what you have done for the others, but remember what others have done for you." Having to listen to them for many years, his messages got through to me all right. Now I appreciate them very much as they have really helped me to be sensitive to others, a necessity for working in a diverse cultural environment like in the APO Secretariat.

He did the same thing again, this time on a different occasion—my first official trip abroad in February 1959 to accompany Mr. Goshi in place of Mr. Morota who was taken ill. Amidst the hectic preparation, I decided to drop by my parents' place in Chiba on the outskirts of Tokyo to inform them of my coming trip. I had to make a great deal of effort to do this as there were millions of things I had to take care of within a very short time before my departure. Anyhow, I was able to visit my parents on the eve of my departure. My father's reaction, on hearing of my coming trip, was totally unexpected. He simply sat there, with no

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particular emotion, and all but asked one question, “Why did you come to see us when you are so pressed for time for your preparations, Gene?” He repeated the question over and over again. I was frustrated. I honestly thought it was a good gesture on my part to go see my parents before I embarked on my first official mission abroad. Those were the days when an overseas trip, even on business, was very difficult for a Japanese to make due to many restrictions imposed by the government. My father’s reaction—or the lack of it—and the peculiar question he repeatedly asked made me think I had wasted whatever little precious time I had.

My mother came to the rescue. This was not by way of stopping my father from asking the same question. She simply told my father to take me out to dinner at a tempura shop nearby. Over many cups of “sake” that

accompanied our tempura, my father again presented his infamous line of, “Gene, what is it you really want by visiting us?” I simply told him that I was leaving for Bangkok the next day. Before I could get drowned with frustration, however, my father in a marked departure from his style explained to me why he persisted with his question. He said that he deliberately did it by asking another question “What difference does it make to you, between domestic travel and overseas mission?” Then, he expressed his hope that I would remain humble about my coming trip. What he did not want to see, he stressed, was for me to develop a sense of self-importance or self-conceitedness for having been chosen to accompany Mr. Goshi. He added that the mission would no doubt be important, but it would be more important for me to be a servant of the mission, nothing more. This was one unforgettable lesson for me. Apart from the preaching like the above, he used to tell me quite often “Not to be arrogant; Not to throw your weight around; Not to be mendacious; To be honest and humble.” At one point in time, his advice sounded like drumming the lessons into my head, but, on reflection they are certainly the tenets to be kept in the back of my mind all the time. I very much hope now that throughout my service in the APO, I have successfully lived up to my father’s expectations, at least, to be a humble servant of the organization.

What were some of the tasks that needed immediate attention in the Secretariat in the first couple of years?

When the APO Secretariat started functioning, I was the Program Officer in the Administration Division. So, my recollections will have to be confined to administrative issues. In 1961, the basic rules and regulations on staff administration, financial procedures, and project operations were already in place as approved by the Governing Body in its first session. However, the rules and procedures for the day-to-day work operations, like annual leave, sick leave, making payment, attendance, use of office cars, and many others, had yet to be laid down. Dr. Rau and I had to work late to prepare them. In this task, we were guided by a series of

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consultation with some UN agencies in Tokyo. Although some of their procedures were relevant to the APO Secretariat, we had to come up with quite a few of our own.

Setting the Operational Boundaries— Strict-but-fair Rules

In this matter, Dr. Rau was of the opinion that such rules should be worked out with strictness and severity. His idea was that strict and severe operating rules could be relaxed or changed anytime later, as and when we gained working experiences in applying such binding rules. He contended it would be very difficult to do so the other way around, namely, changing loosely defined rules to stricter ones. When I remarked that such harsh rules made the Administration Office unpopular, he coolly replied, “What’s wrong with that?” According to him, in most organizations, the Administration Office is bound to be hated by the people directly involved with operations work. He added that while it is true that those in the Administration must also understand the issues and problems faced by the operations people, it is more important they are seen to be “fair to all” by others. Thanks to Dr. Rau’s initial efforts, the APO Secretariat continues to this day to have very strict-but-fair administrative rules and procedures.

How did the APO get the finances to fund its activities in the early days?

Finances are no doubt one of the most important requirements for any organization. It is especially so when it is new, and lots of expectations are attached to funding. In the case of the APO, discussions on financial matters were taken up in a series of preparatory meetings, and the final draft statement on the APO’s finances was decided only after careful deliberations by prominent experts like Dr. Nakayama and Dr. Lokanathan. This made the APO’s budget and financial requirements realistic. There was some money, enough for the start-up and for the limited meaningful programs.

In those days, to expand APO programs further, the Secretariat would first work out ideas for new programs, and then look for the appropriate agency to sponsor them. A good instance was an idea put forward by Dr. Rau, all of a sudden, in the middle of 1962 on the proposal for Development of Small Industry program. To support it, he suggested soliciting funds from some foundations in the US. He set a very ambitious target too, namely in the amount of US\$1 million! At that time, even I thought he was crazy, because the total amount of membership contributions from eight member governments was only US\$108,000. Trying to get US\$1 million from somewhere else was to me like asking for the moon.

Financing the Work- A Million Dollar Target

Not willing to give up, Dr. Rau contended that the basic requirements of any institution, be it domestic or international, are “man, machine and money”. Man or qualified personnel, he argued, could be sourced from anywhere, provided the needed finances are secured. The same with machine or system to produce a quality product, which could be appropriately installed with the wisdom of personnel involved, provided money is available. Hence, the US\$1 million he was seeking for. He said that even if only a quarter were forthcoming, it would be a great help to the APO in mounting more projects for member countries. He further believed that such outside funding for the APO would contribute to enhancing its status as an international body vis-a-vis its member countries and others.

Interview with Special Adviser to

Dr. Rau's contention seemed logical, but how to go about materializing the proposal was a real problem. Two of us assiduously studied the available literature, directories, reports, and other documents on possible funding agencies. Finally we settled for the Ford Foundation. After a long-drawn-out process of communication with the Foundation, Dr. Rau flew to New York twice to visit the Foundation, and managed to somehow persuade them to consider the matter. The Ford Foundation asked for a detailed proposal with intended programs and budgets. At this point, Dr. Rau then directed me, "Gene, it's your turn to take over. Please map out the programs and budgets for US\$1 million".

It was just like "a bolt from the blue". It was not so difficult to work out the budget plan for APO activities out of membership contributions as the total sum involved was only US\$108,000, almost half of which was for administrative expenses. But, to construct the budget details for the programs and projects twenty times as much was truly a horrendous job. After a series of consultations with the JPC and with experts like Mr. Akira Takanaka of Central Japan Industries Association, two major programs were designed for implementation in Japan. They were the 8-week Small Industry Development Administrators Course (SIDAC), and the 24-week Small Business Management Trainers and Consultants Course (SBMTC). According to the original plan, these two programs were to be organized annually for eight years.

Upon receipt of the APO's proposed programs, the Ford Foundation deputed Mr. Roger Gregoire, the former Secretary-General of European Productivity Agency (EPA) of the OEEC (presently, OECD) to some of the APO member countries (India, the Philippines and Japan) for on-site study of the situation of small industries. After considering the report by Mr. Gregoire, the Foundation deputed another consultant in the person of Dr. Hurbert Passin, a famous Japanologist, to Tokyo to scrutinize the capability of the institutions in Japan to organize and implement the programs, and the funding arrangements. The Foundation finally gave a grant of US\$375,000 for the programs mentioned above. SIDAC and SBMTC, which began in 1964, lasted until the mid-1970s.



Prof. Akira Takanaka

At the initial stage of organizing the Ford Foundation-assisted programs, the Secretariat had to undertake a great deal of preparatory work in close coordination with the JPC, the implementing agency. Some of the critical ones included seeking the cooperation of the private sector corporations in Japan to make available their facilities for on-the-job training by participants of SBMTC. For SIDAC, the Smaller Enterprise Agency of the Japanese Ministry of International Trade and Industry was instrumental in formulating the program and assisting in its implementation by way of providing resource persons, materials, among others. The two programs went very well and were highly appreciated by the member countries. It is no exaggeration to say that since then many small industry-related programs of the APO were born out of these two pioneer programs.

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The APO's foundation was the spirit of mutual cooperation among its member countries as spelt out in the Convention. What is the essence of this cooperation in the APO context, and how important is it to its raison d'être and effectiveness?

One of the distinct features of the APO is the diversity among its member countries: economically, culturally, politically and ethnically, among others. Given this background, cooperation is not simply about burden sharing or paying the allocated membership contributions. It is first and foremost about being sensitive to others, particularly regarding the different ways of thinking and doing things. This is the very reason why the APO programs are designed to be practical and application-oriented. The APO programs are rarely geared for theory building. Instead, they are down-to-earth activities, which typically include a series of observational site visits to companies and/or facilities directly implementing the subject matter concerned. This on-site learning process allows participants to have first-hand knowledge and experience for comparing notes about a specific subject, while at the same time minimizes the need for providing "guidance" or "instructions", which might be misconstrued as one's imposition over others.

What Dr. Rau had envisioned earlier, namely that due recognition on the APO as a truly international institution would be given by other international organizations and also by the donor countries and agencies in the wake of our association with the Ford Foundation, proved to be correct. The International Labour Office, at their own initiative, approached us for concluding an agreement for mutual cooperation in the area of activities of common interest to both the organizations. The Economic and Social Council of the United Nations gave the APO a consultative capacity. Following this, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), Asian Development Bank (ADB), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and others, started to recognize the importance of the APO and rendered the observer status to the APO. Similar developments occurred with regard to the APO relations with national governments. From the very start, the US had helped the APO with outright grants and special funding for its activities through the International Cooperation Administration (currently, USAID) of the State Department. Cooperative ties have also been established with such governments as Germany, the Netherlands, France, Canada and others. Needless to say, such international relations had gone a long way toward establishing the respectability and reputation of the APO as a truly international entity.

While the reputation of an organization, including its respectability, are usually the qualities and judgment given by external parties, it is very critical that the same sentiment come from and are deeply felt by the member countries themselves. We are not simply talking about a member country's sense of belonging here. A more fundamental issue is involved here, namely, the worthiness of the organization itself. For this reason, it is extremely important that each of the APO member countries appreciates the strengths and merits of the style and mechanism of cooperation that are unique to the APO. Without this, there will never be a sense of pride and togetherness—the two essential elements that bind an organization.



Mr. Yamada with mission members in America.

Foundation Building Through Mutual Cooperation

Specifically, cooperation in the context of the APO means understanding the requirements of the other members. Sensitivity is again very much involved here, particularly with regard to what one could share with and provide to others. The APO works through a network of National Productivity Organizations (NPOs) in member countries. Within this network, the initiative and active participation of all NPOs are crucial for the survival and progress of the organization. This is what I would call the spirit of the APO -- the active involvement of all NPOs in sharing their talents, expertise and resources for the good of the organization. To find the best in the field, we often have to reach out beyond the member countries to solicit the involvement and assistance of other governmental, international and non-governmental organizations. I refer, for instance, to the number of experts and resource speakers deputed to APO projects by them. This aside, I would like to underline the critical importance of all member countries offering their pool of talents and expertise for use in the APO's multi-country projects, or in other appropriate forms of arrangements, like BCBN (Bilateral Cooperation Between NPOs), and the South-South Cooperation program.

Having said this, I am reminded that all these were thoroughly discussed and, most importantly, deeply shared by the APO Founding Fathers in the course of their deliberations at the preparatory meetings and conferences leading to the formation of the organization. A case in point was the offer by Mr. Goshi of the JPC to allow the use of the JPC's premises and facilities as a temporary headquarters of the APO. At that time, at the end of the 1950s, the GDP per capita of Japan was only around US\$300, which was not significantly higher than the other Asian countries that gathered and conferred on the creation of the APO. I am quite certain that in making this offer Mr. Goshi did not at all anticipate or expect that Japan would develop and progress to what it is now, including its capacity to help finance international organizations in Asia and elsewhere. Despite this, we could feel the strong confidence of Mr. Goshi himself, including that of many others who participated in the deliberations, that the APO would take off and fulfill its mission. The one reason for this, as I reflect back, was the strong sense of richness that developed among those concerned with the creation of the APO. By richness I am referring to the expectations of the delegates as to what Asians and the Asian countries could do and achieve by working together.



For clarification, it might be useful to disassociate the word “richness” from “abundance” in the material and financial sense, which we all did not have at that time. “Richness” was something qualitative, perhaps an idealistic notion, that overflowed from the common willingness—indeed commitment—to assist each other. The key words here, as written in the Convention, are “by mutual cooperation”. I would like to stress on the word “mutual” as this was the feeling that permeated the organization at that time. I must add that this feeling was so strong that it enabled the Founding Fathers to look far ahead, even way beyond their times, and laid down the fundamentals and principles of the APO cooperation that continue to be valid today.

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So, in terms of spirit of cooperation, there are no significant differences both in the principles and in its modus operandi as envisaged at the time of the APO founding, and as they are exercised now. Different expressions might have been used to translate and convey the APO's mission to the public at large so as to make it easier for them to understand. In the earlier days, the phrase used was "improving the living standards and conditions" of the people. In today's parlance, it is "improving the quality of life" of the people. The two are essentially the same. The latter, however, reflects the expanded meaning and broader applications of the concept of productivity itself, which have been very significant over the past 40 years.

What is sustaining this APO's spirit of mutual cooperation? What are the fundamentals?

Of course, there is the continued commitment of the member countries. In addition, it is most important that the organization provides programs and activities that are directly relevant to the needs of the member countries. For this purpose, I must again point out the need to take into account the diversity and pluralism among the member countries. This is very fundamental. In this, I believe, lies one of the most essential requirements for sustaining cooperation in the APO, namely, awareness of our differences.

Being sensitive to, or having awareness of, differences is only a starting point, however. In order to establish an enduring cooperative relationship, we need to cultivate other qualities, which in my experience, boil down to three elements, namely "trust", "friendship" and "partnership". All the three are closely inter-related. We could even call them sequential, that is, one follows the other. Establishing trust comes first, as without trust we cannot form a solid friendship. Once a good friendship is established, then we have the chance of building a partnership. Without trust and friendship, we could never expect a partnership to develop.

Trust Friendship and Partnership- TFP for Growth

All this may seem easy and commonsensical. But, what is common to one group might be uncommon to another. So, the challenge is to exercise all these qualities consistently, equally and purposefully. I repeatedly stress this point to my friends and colleagues in the APO Secretariat, and expect them to be permanently bound by these three qualities in their relationships with member countries and other collaborating partners. To push the point further, I often remind myself that, after all, we at the APO must pay due attention to the welfare of almost two billion people in the APO region! Without trust, friendship and partnership it will simply be impossible to fulfil the APO's mission.

In sum, differences in cultural values and systems could work for or against the operation of any multinational organization. Recognition of such differences, and, hopefully, understanding them as well, is therefore a key to initiating multi-country programs. The APO Secretariat, with a multinational staff, is an ideal mini-laboratory to discern and appreciate such differences. We should take maximum advantage of this situation to study and find out the commonalities and peculiarities among APO member countries. By doing so, we could come up with the measures for productivity improvement appropriate to each or all of the member countries. Not only this, recognizing these differences would make the Secretariat stronger and more united. For this reason, I would like to emphasize the importance of comparing notes about the commonalities and differences in our innate way of thinking and doing things, and in our mores so that we could understand each other better, and mutually share the sentiments of joy, anger, humor and pathos in our daily life.

Interview with Special Adviser to

As the most senior staff in the Secretariat in terms of length of service, if nothing else, although you have in your career with the APO rose to the rank of Special Adviser to the Secretary-General, what additional advice would you have for the staff in the Secretariat?

In the light of the growing trend and fast pace of globalization and international competition, the scope, content and modus operandi of activities for improving productivity will have to undergo timely metamorphosis. In order to cope with such a situation, the staff in the Secretariat should have the capability not only to adapt to change, but also to anticipate change, and, hopefully, to create change through innovation. For this purpose, the informal and open communication among the Secretariat staff that I mentioned earlier could go a long way, at least to start with.

Meeting the Challenges— 3 "Cs"

When the Japanese do business, they place importance on what they call Ho-Ren-So (pronunciation-wise, it means spinach in Japanese). Ho stands for Hokoku (meaning reporting), Ren for Renraku (contacting) and So for Sodan (consulting). More appropriate translation of Ho-Ren-So is communication, consultation and coordination (3Cs). All the APO staff should be encouraged to practice this, not only in the office but at home as well. By so doing, we could come to know and understand the concerns of others, and we could engage in frank and candid discussions and debate on possible solutions to problems whenever one arises.



Mr. Yamada and Prof. Takeshi Kawase (right)

There is one possible pitfall staff should watch out for, and it comes in the form of conflict of interests. Let me elaborate by first referring to the APO Staff Regulation I, Article 1, which stipulates that, "The staff members of the Organization are international public servants. As such, their responsibilities are not national but exclusively international. By accepting the appointment in the Organization, they have pledged themselves to perform their duties and to regulate their conduct with the interests of the APO only in view". This stipulation is exactly the same as the one prescribed in the UN Regulations. I have often wondered how this regulation could actually be put into practice in the daily performance of one's duties. I have been trying to be guided by my own interpretation of this regulation.

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1. It would be ideal if the work I do is good for myself as well as for the organization.
2. However, there could be situations wherein the work to be undertaken is good for me, but not for the organization in a long run.
3. The most difficult situation is when the work to be performed is definitely good for the organization, but not to my own interest.

Mr. YUJI YAMADA

the APO Secretary - General

From the organizational standpoint, in principle option (2) should not be taken at any cost. However, we tend to pick this option unwittingly or without giving due consideration to the long-term effect that such action would have on ourselves. During the past forty years with the APO, more often than not I have been placed on the horns of dilemma between (2) and (3) above, even when I know clearly the choice of action I am inclined to take would be detrimental to the APO. In the short term, it would seem to be considerable self-sacrifice to take option (3). However, it is my contention that in the long run, the outcome of such an action would definitely come back favorably to ourselves. We need to have the capability and courage to take option (3) at all times, if (1) is not possible for one reason or another. To me, such capability and courage can be built up when we have access to the right kind of information, pertinent data and knowledge, apart from appropriate experiences to be gained as a lesson, plus our own efforts for soul-searching exercise. In order to obtain from others the right kind of information and knowledge which will contribute to enhancing our own strength, one has to be open-minded and be able to listen to the opinion and comments of others, even if they are critical of him. Such criticism could present useful suggestions and food for thought for his own good.

Note by the interviewee:

If what I have said during the interview had by chance sounded unnecessarily with preaching tone, let me mention here that it was not my intention whatsoever to preach to others. My comments and observations, as they are reflected in this interview, are the results of my own soul-searching that I have gained during the course of conduct of my duties with the APO. In other words, they are what I have always been telling myself for my own sake, although oftentimes I found them very difficult to put into actual practice.

Another thing, as was mentioned earlier, is that it is practically impossible to exhaustively refer, during the interview, to all the personalities who have built up the APO. There are numerous people, other than those specifically indicated during the interview, who have unselfishly devoted themselves to digging the well in pursuit of "pure water" to be enjoyed for drinking by followers like us. Their devotion was solely for the cause of productivity enhancement in the APO region, nothing else. As was said about Rome, "The APO was not build in a day." And, as Mr. Goshi used to say, "A productivity drive is a marathon game without a finish line."

I would like to take this opportunity to express my heartfelt gratitude to all those who have helped me in acquitting myself of the duties and responsibilities assigned to me while serving in the APO. Lastly, let me say that I take immense pride in working for the APO and its member countries as a humble international civil servant.