

**64th APO Governing Body Meeting
(Virtual Session)
7–8 June 2022**

**Remarks by APO Secretary-General
Dr. AKP Mochtan**

Excellencies, APO Directors, and
Distinguished Delegates:

Greetings from Tokyo, and a warm welcome to the 64th session of the APO Governing Body.

We had hoped to resume our GBM with in-person attendance in Bali. Regretfully, the plan is not yet feasible at this point in time. While it looks like we may have passed the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic, our recoveries remain precarious and uneven.

Overall, the global economy is still in troubled waters. The resumption of economic activities increases the demand for production material. However, disruptions in global supply chains have not been fully resolved. Many intermediary goods and parts critical to industries, farms, and services are still scarce or experiencing delays in shipment. When they become available, their prices have substantially increased, raising the pressure on small businesses and customers.

We are also seeing a new crunch caused by the scarcity of several key commodities. Climate change has been increasingly disruptive to agricultural production. Anticipatory, self-perceived shortages have given rise to a primary focus on domestic needs and restrictions on exports of some key commodities. This trend may lead to food insecurity if it spreads and widens.

In the energy and oil sectors, supply and logistics routes are disrupted by tensions in international politics. Limited producing countries and heavy dependence on oil are creating havoc across the globe.

As commodity prices skyrocket, higher inflationary pressures are rising across countries. Coupled with soaring government spending and debts to cope with the pandemic and depreciation in most local currencies against the US dollar as experienced recently, the challenges in recovery are truly formidable.

It thus appears to me that the world's economy is sitting atop three adjoining tectonic plates: the pandemic plate; the perpetual environmental challenge plate; and an emerging egocentrism plate. This might sound like a crude metaphor, but what I wish to underline is the fragility of the current global economy and how vulnerable we are.

Our task ahead is therefore to redefine the role of our organization, making greater and visible impact by crafting a new niche of contributions and redeveloping competency to enable the world and regional economies to emerge from these turbulent times through productivity.

The three years of my tenure have been exceptionally challenging. The Secretariat had to abruptly transform to deliver its services in a completely virtual mode. Having gone through this experience for more than two years, the Secretariat has gained new competencies in managing digital-based programs.

Virtual activities, however, are no replacement for face-to-face projects. They have advantages in enabling the attendance of more participants, wider outreach, and cost-effectiveness. Their impact, however, is far less in depth compared with in-person programs.

For the benefits of member countries, the Secretariat has resumed face-to-face projects for the deputation of experts and individual observational study missions. I am hopeful that the long-awaited resumption of face-to-face meetings may be realized toward the end of the year, hopefully starting with the WSM in October.

The challenges of our region's development will never diminish. They will evolve, reappearing over and over again in different forms. Productivity remains a potent solution for most present and future challenges. For this, all National Productivity Organizations must be strong; they must be the best-of-the-best productivity institutions in their countries.

This was the case at the time of the APO's founding in the early 1960s. After six decades, we must pose the question of whether we remain exemplary. Living up to the spirit of productivity, we must ensure that our achievements today are better than those of 60 years ago, and the accomplishments tomorrow or in the years ahead will be even better than today.

I would like to close my remarks by thanking the APO Chair, Her Excellency Zakia Sultana, for her wisdom and inspiring leadership, First Vice-Chair Excellency Phork Sovarinth, and Second Vice-Chair Hsu for their unceasing support and cooperation.

To all Directors, Advisers, and Delegates, please accept my heartfelt gratitude for the confidence entrusted to the Secretariat.

To all Secretariat staff members, I am forever indebted for the extraordinary dedication to the organization.

I wish you all the best of health and continued success.

Thank you.