

State Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan Mr. UTO's video message
APO 60th Anniversary Event

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Dr. AKP Mochtan, APO Secretary-General

Mr. MOGI Yuzaburo, Chairman of Japan Productivity Center,

Directors and Heads of National Productivity Center of APO members,

Dear Distinguished participants,

I am UTO Takashi, State Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan. It is my great honor to convey a message today for the 60 years' commemorative event of the Asian Productivity Organization. I sincerely celebrate the APO's diamond jubilee.

The history of the APO over the past six decades has not necessarily been easy. In a complex and rapidly changing world, such as a series of wars and conflicts, natural disasters, and economic crises, the APO has to fulfill its mission. The APO also had to grapple with social changes and issues that were not apparent 60 years ago, such as environmental and climate change issues, and aging society, to name a few.

However, the APO always provides solutions to the challenges from the perspectives of productivity improvement and a better quality of life for all, by evolving with the times and responding to the needs of its members. The APO has been working for the capacity development of its members through dispatching experts and arranging training courses. In addition, the APO introduced the concept of Green Productivity to the international community

as a practical way to enhance productivity in line with sustainable development. Furthermore, the APO has assisted its members in developing institutional systems and making plans for enhancing productivity.

In the past 60 years, the Asia and Pacific region has made remarkable economic progress. However, we should not overlook the role played by productivity movement. Japanese productivity improvement concepts, like “KAIZEN” and “5S”, have been broadly shared with APO members by the Japan Productivity Center, many experts and private companies, and have made the foundation for productivity movement in the region. At present, the strengths of each member, such as, IT for India and business excellence for Singapore, are widely shared among members as good examples. The continuous efforts and achievements made by the APO is worthy of praise.

At the beginning of the next 60 years, today’s event provides us an opportunity to recognize the challenges we are facing, to have common prospects ahead of us, and to revitalize productivity movement to deal with them.

The novel coronavirus hit mankind and the world completely changed. Countries around the world imposed COVID-19 countermeasures like restrictions on mobility which resulted in a significant drop in demand, limited supply caused by disruptions of supply chains, and the global flows of people and goods is rapidly shrinking. At this very moment, measures to improve productivity like promoting digitalization, improvement of supply methods and skill training for employees, have become increasingly important.

Last month, Prime Minister SUGA Yoshihide pointed out that the key driving forces underpinning the growth of Asia and the globe are “green” and “digital” economies.

Ensuring the sustainability of the environment and natural resources will create new business opportunities and become a growth engine. COVID-19 and the resulting restrictions on mobility prompted us to rethink our old working styles and ways of providing services and to shift to new practices such as working from home, remote medical services, and online education. As you can see, the COVID-19 crisis was and continues to be a game changer that shook the global power balance and is fundamentally expanding the frontiers of the green and digital economies.

Promotion of green and digital economies is the exact area in which the APO has rich expertise and has led productivity improvement in the region. Under this “with corona” or “post corona” era, the APO has a solid basis for further contributions to the international society.

What challenges will our descendants face 60 years from now? The world’s population will exceed 10 billion, many countries may become aging societies, and they might, unfortunately struggle with novel infectious diseases or other challenges. Who knows? However, even though the social structure or challenges may change, the importance of productivity improvement in order to maximize output with the inputs will never fade. I am sure that the APO will continue to give valuable inputs for the socio-economic development of the region by evolving with the times, as it has and as it is.

I would like to close my speech by once again expressing my respect for the APO's achievements over the past 60 years as well as my expectations for the future activities of the APO over the next six decades.

Thank you very much for your attention.