

## WFEO UNDER A NEW LEADERSHIP

Poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy and civil strife are the most pressing issues facing the developing world today. Lack of access to employment, energy, food, healthcare, sanitation, shelter and water further aggravate the situation. Y. Bhg. Academician Dato' Ir. Lee Yee Cheong stressed that engineering and technology are crucial to their solution. There is a need for developing countries to lift themselves out of poverty through developing:

- Basic infrastructure i.e., roads, schools, water and sanitation, irrigation, hospitals and clinics, telecommunications, energy, ports and airports and the like.
- Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in order to supply goods and services to agricultural and natural resource exploitation industries.

Technology diffusion will materialise through these two major efforts, leading to an indigenous industry that is able to upscale and uplift the economy. Engineering and technology have been largely responsible for wealth creation based on the experiences of high-income developing countries.

Y. Bhg. Academician Dato' Ir. Lee Yee Cheong said that there is still this universal misconception that the necessary path to economic development in developing countries is through more emphasis and investment in science and scientific research. All too often, successful economic development has been wrongly attributed to science. Y. Bhg. Academician Dato' Ir. Lee Yee Cheong pointed out that it is important that WFEO and its national and international members inform policy makers and society at large, especially in developing countries, of the respective roles of science, engineering and technology (SET) in wealth creation. As a start, the definition of SET by the International Science & Technology Major Group (STC) in their submission to the 9th annual meeting of the United Nations' Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD-9) in 2001 could be used. The text of the definition is as follows:

Science comprises a multi-disciplinary body of knowledge about nature and society gained through observation and experimentation. Engineering involves the practical application of this knowledge and of empirical experiences to create structures, facilities, processes, and products. Those processes and products that have

been established by acceptance of society and its marketplace are commonly classified as Technology.

Y. Bhg. Academician Dato' Ir. Lee Yee Cheong reiterated that engineering and technology underpin economic development, especially in developing countries and urged to promote the use of SET vigorously in place of S&T.

On the issue of WFEO, Y. Bhg. Academician Dato' Ir. Lee Yee Cheong mentioned that WFEO must live up to her *raison d'être* to represent the engineering profession at top global policy making levels. WFEO is actively engaged in the Millennium Project, an initiative by the UN Secretary General, to assist developing countries to achieve the Millennium Development Goals or MDGs by 2015. WFEO had a high profile in the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg and is assuming a leadership role in STC in the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS), Geneva, December 2003 and Tunis, 2005.

Interaction between WFEO national members and the UN and UN Agencies situated in these member countries shall boost their standing with the UN Agencies, their government and the community. Y. Bhg. Academician Dato' Ir. Lee Yee Cheong hopes that their engineers will be more appreciative of WFEO then.

Y. Bhg. Academician Dato' Ir. Lee Yee Cheong realise that WFEO remains virtually unknown to the engineers that constitute some 15 million of the membership of all the WFEO national members. He fervently believes that the greatest service that WFEO can perform will be to achieve for them world mobility in the globalised knowledge economy of this century. World mobility of engineers will require international government agreement under WTO's proposed Agreement on Trade in Engineering Services.

Engineers mostly work in their indigenous environment and for them to be interested in WFEO, WFEO leaders must demonstrate reciprocal interest. Y. Bhg. Academician Dato' Ir. Lee Yee Cheong promised that he will continue the efforts to revitalise interest in WFEO among member countries including ASEAN countries.

WFEO will continue working with UNESCO on international benchmarking and accreditation of engineering courses. Under the UNESCO/WFEO TAPE initiative (Technology and Poverty Eradication) an international conference will be organised involving engineering organisations and charities like RedR (Registered Engineers for Disaster Relief), EAP (Engineers Against Poverty), EWB (Engineers Without Borders), IYPF (the International Young Professional Foundation) and the like. These organisations are playing a vital role in mobilising engineering and technology professionals and practitioners, especially the younger set, in sustainable development initiatives and projects on the ground in developing countries.

On the role of Malaysian engineers' involvement in WFEO, Y. Bhg. Academician Dato' Ir. Lee Yee Cheong suggested that Malaysia excels in a particular area, namely construction and lead the area. Malaysia has both the knowledge and the expertise in this area with her involvement in mega projects both at home and overseas. The respect that Malaysia has gained especially from among developing countries should provide a jumpstart.

As a start Malaysia could launch a task force, combining the many local professional bodies, and may later possibly evolve into a national committee. The Institution of Engineers, Malaysia should take the lead and embrace organisations such as the Board of Engineers Malaysia and Professional Services Development Corporation (PSDC) and the like in this endeavour. The first task that Y. Bhg. Academician Dato' Ir. Lee Yee Cheong recommends is to work on

accreditation of professional programmes. A workshop on accreditation across all disciplines may be a suitable starting point, said Y. Bhg. Academician Dato' Ir. Lee Yee Cheong. He will also work on getting WFEO to co-sponsor the next World Engineering Congress in 2005, the three-yearly congress organised by The Institution of Engineers, Malaysia, the Federation of Engineering Institutions of Islamic Countries and Universiti Putra Malaysia. When asked on what is his greatest dream for Malaysia while being the President of WFEO, he said that he wishes to place Malaysia on the global engineering and professional map.

An interview with Y. Bhg. Academician Dato' Ir. Lee Yee Cheong, the President of WFEO, installed at the WFEO General Assembly in Tunis, 2003, with a mandate until the next General Assembly in 2005, by Ir. Megat Johari bin Megat Mohd. Noor and Ir. Mohd. Rasid bin Osman. ■