

CSD-12

Science and Technology Community Major Group Opening Statement By Dato Ir. Lee Yee Cheong, President, World Federation of Engineering Organisations (WFEO)

Chair

The S&T Community drew the short straw and only deliver our opening statement at the end of the first week of CSD-12. Nonetheless, we must be thankful for small mercies!

There is a serious risk of a world water crisis by the middle of the century, with rapidly rising water demands, not the least due to a population increase of another 3 billion people by 2050, and adverse impacts of climate change, notably on precipitation patterns. Also, the world of tomorrow will be even more urbanised, with a high percentage of people living in megacities in developing countries.

S.E.T is full conscious of the MDG timeline of 2015, barely 11 years away. For the least developing countries, there is sufficient mature S.E.T available for poverty reduction and improvement of the human condition and economic uplift. What is urgently needed is global and national political will and funding. .

To achieve MDGs, employment opportunity of youth and women must be available locally, especially in rural areas in developing countries. The provision of gainful employment is critical to address at source the current security concerns. This will require the development of indigenous agricultural and natural resource based sectors, especially small and medium enterprises that serve these sectors. It also requires the availability of infrastructure services such as energy, water, sanitation, transport and communications etc without which no participation in regional, let alone national and global economy, is possible. S.E.T. are essential elements in the solution.

Currently, the application of science, engineering and technology is often hampered by barriers existing between the different disciplines. However, the knowledge required for solving complex problems is more and more interdisciplinary. The S.E.T community must rectify this glaring weakness. The international S.E.T community has recently taken several new steps to generate improved interdisciplinary knowledge on freshwater, sanitation and human settlements issues. These steps include the launching of the Global Water System Project by the Earth Systems Science Partnership and a major scientific project on urbanisation challenges developed by ICSU/ISSC. WFEO is about to launch “Engineering For A Better World” Initiative with UNESCO to address how engineering and technology reduce poverty and improve the human condition by giving urgent attention to implementation of measures to achieve MDGs by 2015.

Despite some progress, capacity in science, engineering and technology to address the problems of freshwater, sanitation and human settlements remains indeed woefully inadequate, in particular in developing countries where funding for research and development is often less than 0.5 percent of annual GNP. The funding for urgent implementation of programmes is pitifully small.

Our delegation looks forward to continue to make specific contributions and proposals and receive suggestions from other delegations.