

## Welcome

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*“THE ONLY CERTAINTY I AM PREPARED TO VOUCH FOR IN THIS SO CALLED AGE OF UNCERTAINTY IS THAT THE FUTURE BELONGS ONLY TO THOSE NATIONS WHICH ARE PREPARED TO SERVE AS PARTISANS OF THE NEW TECHNOLOGICAL SOCIETY EMERGING OUT OF THE CRUMBLING STRUCTURE OF THE FIRST INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION”*. THESE WERE THE WORDS OF FORMER DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER RAJARATNAM DURING THE OPENING OF THE FIRST FIDIC CONFERENCE IN SINGAPORE IN 1982.

ACES, THE ASSOCIATION OF CONSULTING ENGINEERS SINGAPORE, WAS FOUNDED IN 1972 AND BECAME A FIDIC MEMBER THE SAME YEAR. TEN YEARS LATER, AT THE TIME WHEN “RAJA” - AS HE WAS AFFECTIONATELY CALLED - ADDRESSED THE FIDIC DELEGATES IN THIS COUNTRY, THE WORLD DID NOT HAVE A CLEAR UNDERSTANDING OF THE “NEW TECHNOLOGICAL SOCIETY” THAT WAS BEING SO PASSIONATELY DESCRIBED AS THE ROADMAP FOR SINGAPORE. AT THAT TIME I.B.M WAS BARELY BEGINNING TO SELL ITS FIRST PERSONAL COMPUTERS, THE BERLIN WALL STOOD SOLIDLY IN PLACE AND IN SINGAPORE THE CHANGI AIRPORT HAD JUST OPENED ITS DOORS.

HOWEVER, THE FOUNDING FATHERS OF THE COUNTRY HAD DECIDED, VERY EARLY ON, THAT IF SINGAPORE WAS TO FIND ITSELF AT THE WORLD’S FOREFRONT IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY, KNOWLEDGE WAS THE PLATFORM FOR GROWING THE ECONOMY. A SMALL COUNTRY OF ABOUT 700 SQUARE KILOMETERS WITH A POPULATION OF 4.4 MILLION AND NO NATURAL RESOURCES, SINGAPORE DECIDED TO GAMBLE ITS FUTURE ON TECHNOLOGY, SCIENCE, ENGINEERING AND EDUCATION, THAT IS, ON WHAT WE CALL THESE DAYS THE “KNOWLEDGE INDUSTRY”.

TODAY, TWENTY FIVE YEARS AFTER THE FIDIC CONFERENCE WAS INAUGURATED IN THIS CITY, SINGAPORE FINDS ITSELF AMONG THE COUNTRIES WITH THE HIGHEST LIVING STANDARD IN THE WORLD AND CONTINUES TO DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT A STRATEGY FOR SUSTAINABLE GROWTH BASED ON EDUCATION AND TECHNOLOGY. ACCORDING TO THE PLAN, CONSULTANCY SERVICES PLAY A UNIQUE AND INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT ROLE FOR THE DELIVERY OF QUALITY AND SUSTAINABLE PROJECTS THAT MEET THE REQUIREMENTS OF A GLOBAL ECONOMY.

FOUR YEARS AGO, DURING THE FIDIC GENERAL ASSEMBLY MEETING HELD IN PARIS THE DELEGATES DECIDED THAT TODAY WE SHOULD FIND OURSELVES IN SINGAPORE. THAT WE SHOULD MEET HERE TO LEARN FROM THE HISTORY OF THE COUNTRY AND TO HEAR ABOUT ITS FUTURE. FOR THAT REASON WE ARE ESPECIALLY DELIGHTED AND FEEL PRIVILEGED THAT THE MINISTER FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, MR. MAH BOW TAN, ACCEPTED THE INVITATION TO BE THE GUEST OF HONOUR OF THE CONFERENCE.

MR. CHAN KOK SIONG, PRESIDENT OF ACES, THANK YOU FOR YOUR HOSPITALITY. MR. LIM PENG HONG, CHAIRMAN OF THE ORGANISING COMMITTEE, THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT. DEAR LADIES, FIDIC FRIENDS AND FELLOW CONSULTANTS, THANK YOU FOR BEING HERE.

I WOULD LIKE TO CLOSE MY COMMENTS BY REPEATING A FEW WORDS WRITTEN BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE MINISTER MENTOR MR. LEE KUAN YEW: *“THE STORY OF SINGAPORE’S PROGRESS IS A REFLECTION OF THE ADVANCES OF THE INDUSTRIAL COUNTRIES – THEIR INVENTIONS, TECHNOLOGY, ENTERPRISE AND DRIVE. I MADE A PRACTICE OF FINDING OUT WHO ELSE HAD MET THE PROBLEM WE FACED, HOW THEY HAD TACKLED IT, AND HOW SUCCESSFUL THEY HAD BEEN. I PREFERRED TO CLIMB ON THE SHOULDERS OF OTHERS WHO HAD GONE BEFORE US”*.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, THAT IS WHAT FIDIC IS ALL ABOUT.