

Welcoming remarks

Alfonso López Arroyo, Chairman of the 10WCEE Steering Committee

General Director of the Instituto de Cooperación Iberoamericana, President of the IAEE, Spanish authorities, ladies and gentlemen:

When the Spanish Association for Earthquake Engineering accepted, in 1988, in Kyoto, the responsibility of organizing the 10th World Conference on Earthquake Engineering, its Executive Committee was aware of the difficulty of attaining the excellent level of past Conferences, in particular that of the one in progress at the moment. We knew that the organization would require cooperation of institutions and technical associations and would ask for great personal efforts of many of us. We accepted this burden as well as the criticism of officials and colleagues that had doubts about our ability to overcome the difficulties we were facing. It is our sincere hope that the work done along the last four years will show now in the development of the Conference during this coming week.

Two main ideas have guided such work; to ensure the presentation at the Conference of the latest achievements in earthquake engineering and to favor the communication among the Conference attendees facilitating their participation in all sessions of their interest. Mr. Blázquez, the Steering Committee Director, will explain later how these objectives have been made compatible with the constraint to one week and with the large number of papers received by the Committee for presentation.

The offer of our Association to organize the Conference originated in part from our hope that such an important event will give a strong stimulus to the practice of earthquake engineering in our country. The time of development of the Spanish nuclear power-plants program being over, the activity in the different fields related to the Association goals was very much reduced; we are confident that the direct knowledge of the problems currently under study by the international community will help to re-activate the interest of our associates and of other professionals in Spain.

There was another objective behind our offer for the 10WCEE: to restore the interest of Spanish authorities in considering the seismic action, whenever proven necessary, in construction, urban and land planning or civil defense. There is a long tradition in our country of almost absolute disregard of the earthquake effects by the Administration, interrupted by bursts of concern, just after catastrophic shocks, that materialize in measures which are forgotten a few years later. This is the case, for example, of the instructions for rebuilding cities destroyed by earthquakes in South America signed by Philip II (XVI century) or those prepared after the big earthquakes of Lisbon, 1755, Alicante, 1829, Andalusia, 1884 and the Philippines, 1885. It is our tenet that the Spanish Association for

Earthquake Engineering should continuously remind the Spanish Authorities of the responsibility they have in reducing the damages that future earthquakes may produce in our country.

Two books related with the first and the last earthquakes of the previous list, will be given to you during the Conference. They have been selected as representative of two different approaches to the earthquake phenomenon that may be denoted as "scientific" and "practical" respectively: the first one drives to the analysis of the earth structure, the origin of earthquakes and the possible ways of their prediction, while the second is concerned with the provision of rules applicable to build earthquake resistant constructions. Both are relevant (and complementary) to the process of reducing the damage from catastrophic earthquakes, which is the final aim of our Association. I am sure that the contributions you present at this Conference will work towards this goal.

Thanks for your participation. I wish all of you a pleasant stay in Madrid and a fruitful Conference.

Editor's remark: This address was originally delivered in Spanish. Simultaneous translation into English was provided.