

Honorable guests, fellow members, ladies and gentlemen,

It is my great honor and pleasure in delivering the Chairman's address this evening. The local branch of CIWEM was established in 1987 this turns out to be the 21st anniversary of CIWEM HK. I vividly remembered when I started to pursue a career in environmental engineering, CIWEM was one of the few organizations in HK in which I would like to associate myself with, as their history, dedication, and professionalism to the environment has deeply affected my roots. The significant contributions from past Chairpersons, committee members, and the continual support from members have established a platform for environmental professionals to share their experiences and knowledge, and to express their ideas or views on different public issues related to the environment. I would therefore like to express my most sincere gratitude to the HQ in providing this opportunity, and to those colleagues that have contributed so much in the development of this HK branch.

When I was drafting up this speech, it just occurred to me that it coincided with Earth Day, a day intended to inspire awareness of and appreciation for the Earth's environment. And this led to the thought on the progression of environmental protection – what can be done to improve the current situation? Of course, the effort of one single person can be considered as rather meaningless in a global context, but involvement from the entire public, starting from environmental professionals might create a domino effect and raise the overall awareness of environmental protection in the society. CIWEM, consisted of a well-mixture of scientists and engineers, is a professional institution that can certainly be the pioneer in providing an impartial opinion on issues related to water and environmental management. I

believe environmental concerns will have lingering effects in the society for the years to come, and this will present an opportunity but at the same time challenges to environmental professionals in HK.

In a survey conducted by the American Chamber of Commerce in 2007, the satisfaction level of the quality of the natural environment in HK was only ranked second to last out of all the factors assessed, only slightly better than the office and housing costs. Similarly, air quality, conservation measures and quality of the environment continue to be the items that their members from the British Chamber of Commerce report the highest levels of dissatisfaction. What does this imply? Can HK stay ahead from the fierce competitions of other cities with such an adverse perception of our environment?

HK is small in size in terms of territory but its impact on the environment cannot be under-estimated. HK citizens are now more aware of the environmental concerns that exist in today's society, and the HK government is assisting in the movement towards the goal of sustainable development with their environmental management policies. The actual implementation of HATS 2A is a big leap forward in cleaning up our precious Harbor. However, is Chemical Enhanced Primary Treatment of sewage sufficient for the protection of the marine environment for a developed territory such as HK? Does it require further upgrading into secondary treatment status as planned in HATS 2B?

What about the waste generation problem in HK? There are currently 3 major landfills in HK, and more than 15,000 tonnes per day of solid waste was disposed of to the landfills in 2006. Based on this figure and the design capacity of the landfills of approximately 140 million m<sup>3</sup>, the

expected remaining lifetime for all the landfills is less than 10 years. What about the expected 1,600 tonnes of sludge to be generated from sewage treatment plants around HK? Is an Integrated Waste Management Facility the way forward? Are independent incineration units for Municipal Solid Waste and sludge a suitable option for HK's waste problem? Better yet, shall more consideration be given to the root cause, meaning increasing public's environmental awareness to reduce waste and water consumption?

In addition, what about air quality in HK? In a survey conducted by CUHK, over 90% of the participants were dissatisfied with the air quality. In the time of globalization, this is no longer a territorial issue of HK, but it involves a much more complex situation involving cross-boundary impacts on the environment. Greater collaboration with our neighboring cities, especially those in China provides a greater prospect for environmental scientists and engineers, working from a global perspective to reach a common goal. I believe this is already the case with many environmental professionals working at different locations in the region, especially mainland China where development of the country is at a pace never seen before. It is an opportunity for CIWEM HK to expand its coverage, be in term of organizing technical visits such as Xing Feng Landfill or study mission to Beijing. These are added value benefits that CIWEM can offer to environmental professionals in HK.

I have, up to now, certainly asked a lot of rhetorical questions related to the environment. CIWEM, being a professional institution on water and environmental management, can, has provided and will continue to provide their professional yet balanced view to the government in the formulation and execution of environmental policies and regulations in

tackling the issues as mentioned. Last year, our dedicated committee members has organized a myriad of first-class events such as International Conference on Climate Change, The 7th Shenzhen, Hong Kong, Zhuhai, Macau Water Supply Conference, Seminar on Technology Advancement towards Total Water Management in HK, and Study Mission to Beijing on Sustainable Development. The committee this year will certainly try to replicate last year's success and continue to provide quality events as a mean for members to create a network for exchanging views and sharing knowledge on environmental issues.

One of the major issues revolving about CIWEM HK is the need to obtain mutual recognition with professional organizations such as HKIE, and the recognition of CIWEM qualification by Governmental departments in their recruitment requirements. This procedure has been on-going for sometime and it is an important and challenging task for the coming committee to continue our dedicated effort of improving the situation. I will definitely put this as one of the top priorities in the upcoming term. It was nonetheless a pleasure to see in a recent government tender that the membership of CIWEM was sought as a qualification. The high subscription rate is another major cause of concern for CIWEM HK, and the situation is made worst with the strong Sterling Pound to HK Dollars. There have been many members voicing out this concern and we will continue to liaise with HQ to further improve the situation. Success of this will undoubtedly increase the exposure and membership base of CIWEM in HK, reversing the alarming trend of reduction in member numbers from the last couple of years. From the hard work from previous committees, it appears that the trend has stopped this year and there have been different proposals to increase

our membership base, and I will try my best to ensure the plan is enforced to facilitate further expansion of CIWEM HK.

Last year, it was an extreme pleasure in working under the leadership of Alex who has been inspirational in pushing many policies forward in CIWEM. It was also my honour to have an opportunity to work with all our dedicated committee members. The majority of committee member will continue to serve and this will allow continuity in the upcoming term. The high calibre of committee members such as Alex, Fredrick, Kenny, Stephanous, Damien, Winnie, Grant, Andy, Clemente, HY, and others will certainly maintain the high standards of the local branch. I am therefore confident that the committee will continue to serve our member in HK with an immaculate enthusiasm and commitment, striving towards the goal of providing a common platform for environmental professionals to exchange views and provide an unbiased viewpoint to the government on environmental issues.

Finally, I would also like to take this opportunity to make a special thanks to Philomena Lau, who has been nothing but phenomenal throughout her term of office as a Secretariat for the committee.

Thank you very much.

Norman Cheng

Chairman (2008-2009)

CIWEM HK