

History of FEISEAP

by Ricardo R Poblete

The exploratory meeting on the formation of a Federation of Engineering Institutions of Southeast Asia and the Pacific (FEISEAP) was convened and organized by the Engineering Institute of Thailand (EIT) under H.M. The King's Patronage in co-operation with UNESCO, held in Chiang Mai, Thailand, at the Rincome Hotel, July 3-8, 1978, which resulted in the establishment of FEISEAP in principle.

Participants at the meeting chaired by Prof Aroon Sorathesn, then president of the Engineering Institute of Thailand, included the presidents, secretaries and other officials or senior representatives of national engineering societies and institutions from some 12 countries in the region, including representatives from FEANI (Federation Europeane des Associations Nationales d' Ingenieurs), WFEO (World Federation of Engineering Organizations) and UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization).

"FEISEAP is aimed to be a mechanism for co-operation between national engineering societies in the region of Southeast Asia and the Pacific, presently composed of the 12-member nations namely, Philippines, Japan, Korea, Australia, New Zealand, Indonesia, China, Malaysia, Thailand, Hong Kong, Fiji and Papua New Guinea in order to promote the exchange of experience and information and the advancement of the engineering profession especially in regard of national and regional economic and social development."

Through the skill, efficiency and enthusiasm of the participants, the gathering was able to launch the Federation, formulate and adopt a Constitution and an initial program of activities, appoint the initial officers and establish an initial headquarters for the Federation. Dr Sorathesn as elected chairman of the meeting, Mr Mohd Razali bin Bidin of Malaysia as 1st vice chairman, Dr Chai-sung Lee of Korea as 2nd vice chairman, and Mr M R MacLean of Hong Kong as Rapporteur. The EIT through its delegation offered and provided the Secretariat services in the initial 2 years.

Unanimously elected as FEISEAP's first President is Dr Aroon Sorathesn of Thailand. Other officers are: Mohd Razali bin Bidin (Malaysia, 1st Vice President); Tan Sin Yan (Singapore, 2nd Vice President); and national members: G M Tampubolon (Indonesia), A R Yadav (Papua New Guinea), H K Cheng (Hong Kong) and E D Storr (Australia).

President Sorathesn presided in the FEISEAP 2nd General Assembly held in Kuala Lumpur Hilton, Malaysia, April 7-8, 1980, which was attended by 18 official delegates from 11 countries and 6 observers including representatives from UNESCO and UNDP. It is noted that one of the delegates who delivered a country paper on "Engineers in Management" was Ricardo R Poblete (Philippines) who was to be elected its first Filipino President ten years hence.

The 2nd General Assembly in Kuala Lumpur amended the FEISEAP Constitution in that, its President and Secretary General shall be the President and Secretary of the National Member in whose country the FEISEAP Secretariat is located. The Secretariat was transferred from Thailand to Malaysia and Ir Wong Kin Hong became the second President of the Federation, with Ir Lee Yee Cheong as Secretary General.

The 3rd FEISEAP General Assembly was held in Jakarta, Indonesia in 1982. Dr Ir G M Tampubolon of Indonesia became the third President, with Ir Sumantrias Secretary General. It will be noted that initially, the Assembly was held in the country which was next to host the Secretariat and was organized by the country presently hosting the Secretariat, e.g. Indonesia planned the 4th General Assembly set in South Korea in 1984 (later moved to 1985) and following that, South Korea took over the Presidency and the Secretariat.

The 4th FEISEAP General Assembly was actually held in Chang-won, Korea in May 1985 where the fourth FEISEAP President Nack Chung Sung was formally elected, with Joong-Kyou Kwon as Secretary General.

The succession pattern was observed until (Oct 15) 1987 when the 5th General Assembly was held in Hong Kong which was planned by Korea, but the Presidency and Secretariat passed at the request of Hong Kong to New Zealand for the next two years - where the next Assembly was held and also planned by New Zealand.

There were important changes to the FEISEAP Constitution at the 1987 5th General Assembly in Hong Kong chaired by Nack Chung Sung, which includes the reduction of the size of the Executive Committee to include only one Vice President (instead of four), aside from the Secretary General who is also a member but with no voting power.

The proposed moving of the presidency to New Zealand in 1987 and the 1990 General Assembly held in Wellington, New Zealand had justified the retention of one Vice President representing the host country for the following period, which satisfies the required four years forward planning concept.

Inspired by the success of the POLMET (Pollution in the Metropolitan Environment) conference initiated by Hong Kong which was held in 1985 and planned to be held at three-year intervals, the General Assembly (5th) adopted the proposal for the creation of a standing committee on Engineering and the Environment which was to be based initially in New Zealand with David A Thomas as its chairman.

The other standing committees are: Engineering Information, Engineering Education and Training, Professional Practice, and Rural Electrification (most recently formed).

In accordance with the agreement that the venues for the 6th and 7th General Assemblies be New Zealand and the Philippines, respectively, the General Assembly resolved that the FEISEAP officers for the next session be as follows: M W Sweetman (The Institution of Professional Engineers New Zealand), President; I E Cruz (Council of Technology and Allied Sciences of the Philippines), Vice President; A J Bartlett (IPENZ), Secretary General. The three other National members of the Executive Committee were resolved as follows: Fiji, Hong Kong and Malaysia. The representative of each National member were designated later.

In 1987, the application of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME) as Associate member was accepted. In 1988, however, Singapore who was part of the initial group of National members withdrew its member, while the China Association of Science and Technology (CAST) of the People's Republic of China became a National Member in 1989. Associate member for the Indonesian Society of Engineering Technicians (PATI) was also confirmed after the 5th General Assembly.

The election of Architect-engineer Ricardo R Poblete as president of the Council of Technology and Allied Sciences of the Philippines in November 1989, paved the way for his eventual election as the sixth President of FEISEAP in the sixth General Assembly held in Wellington, New Zealand, February 17, 1990. Also elected in the Executive Committee were: Martin H Thomas (Australia), Vice President; Ray Paris (Fiji), Hugh W Hood (Hong Kong) and Dr Smith Kampenpool (Thailand), members. Secretary General is Dr Ibarra E Cruz (Philippines).

Despite the series of calamities that struck the Philippines in 1990 and 1991: coups (Dec '89), earthquake, floods, the Gulf War and the Mt. Pinatubo eruption which caused some organizational setbacks, Poblete mobilized COTASP membership to prepare for the 7th FEISEAP General Assembly and International Conference/Exhibits on Clean Energy and Environment which has been set on February 26-29, 1992, at the Westin Philippine Plaza Hotel.

During his two-years incumbency as President, Poblete also represented FEISEAP as international member of WFEO which held an Executive Committee meeting in Washington D C, USA in August 1990, attended the WFEO Election Committee Meeting in Athens, Greece in February 1991, the IEA CE Conference in Hobart, Tasmania in April 1991, the UNESCO Co-ordination Board Meeting on May 3-4, 1991, the 80th CIE Anniversary in Taipei where he also lectured before the Taipei Architects Association in November 1991, and presided in the FEISEAP Executive Committee Meeting on December 13, 1991 in Hong Kong where the preparations for the 7th General Assembly and election agenda has been threshed out.

Poblete's term was also highlighted by the very first FEISEAP Regional Meeting held apart from the traditional Executive Committee meeting held in between the biennial General Assembly, which was held in Arusha, Tanzania, coinciding with the WFEO Congress held on September 23-27, 1991.

Hopefully, the forthcoming International Conference/Exhibits on Clean Energy and Environment which will be climaxed by the 7th FEISEAP General Assembly which will mark the end of the two-year term of Poblete, who will preside in the General Assembly held in the Philippines, which formally elect his successor and the team that will carry on the glowing torch for FEISEAP for the succeed-years. That's a big challenge for Australia's Martin Thomas and his hopeful team.

Continued by Secretariat in Hong Kong

In the address presented by Dato' Lee Yee Cheong at FEISEAP Workshop Dinner held on 6 May 1993 in Australia, it was reckoned that with the intense efforts made by President Martin Thomas and Secretary General Bill Rourke of Australia, the Federation had finally severed the UNESCO umbilical cord, after years of endeavour of New Zealand, the Philippines and Australia. FEISEAP could then truly claim to be an independent umbrella organization for the engineering institutions in the Southeast Asia and the Pacific region.

At the 8th General Assembly held at Melbourne in April 1994, the family of FEISEAP was expanded. The National and Associate Membership status of the Vietnam Union of Scientific and Technological Associations (VUSTA) and the Professional Engineers in Construction (PEC) Division of the National Society of Professional Engineers (NSPE) were respectively accepted, which enhanced the partnership in a region of rapidly increasing significance.

Along with this Assembly was a fruitful program covering the major specialist areas of interest to FEISEAP, including sustainable development and the environment, engineering education, professional practice, rural electrification, as well as technology transfer and linkages. A Task Group on Technology Acquisition was formed under the leadership of Prof Fumio Nishino of the Japan Federation of Engineering Societies (JFES). The potential of establishing a standing committee on agricultural engineering was also explored during the General Assembly. The FEISEAP Award of Engineering Achievement, which aimed at encouraging both the young and veteran engineers to make a great and constructive contribution to the engineering profession in the Region, was established.

With the taken up of the Presidency by Prof Tu Shancheng of CAST, who was also the elected Vice President of WFEO, the Secretariat of the Federation moved from Australia to China following the 8th General Assembly. Prof Fumio Nishino of JFES was elected as the Vice President and Mr Zhu Junning was the new Secretary General.

As proposed at the 8th General Assembly and endorsed by the 9th General Assembly held in Beijing on 29 April 1996, the inaugural recipient of the FEISEAP Award was Prof Aroon Sorathesn of Thailand, the founding President of the Federation, for his contribution towards the formation of FEISEAP. The 9th elected President and Secretary General was respectively Prof Fumio Nishino and Mr Mistro Higo of the JFES.

Another significant issue of the 9th General Assembly was a change made to the FEISEAP Constitution - the inclusion of the Immediate Past President into the Executive Committee. It was perceived that such modification could improve the co-ordination of works after the handover of the Presidency and Secretariat at each biennial General Assembly. There also noted the transfer of National Membership for the Republic of Korea from the Korean Federation of Science & Technology Societies (KOFST) to the Korean Professional Engineers Association (KPEA). In addition, following the proposal of establishing a Regional Network for Sustainable Management at the last Assembly, the 9th General Assembly endorsed the establishment of a network coordinating committee headed by Mr Bill Rourke of IEAust. Works had then been carried out in strengthening the use of electronic means of communication. The homepage "FEISEAP Net", a

cooperative network by FEISEAP National members on the issue of sustainable development of the engineering community, was also created under the leadership of Mr Bill Rourke.

The continuous support and exceptional contribution that Mr Bill Rourke, the past Secretary General, had given to the activities of the Federation led him the honor as the second recipient of the FEISEAP Award of Engineering Achievement at the 10th General Assembly held in Tokyo in April 1998.

This Assembly was held in conjunction with the meetings of the Standing Committee on Engineering Education and Training, and the Engineering and the Environment as well. Efforts had been made in attaining mutual recognition of the Professional Engineers among FEISEAP member economies during Prof Nishino's terms of office with the support from the member economy Australia and the Engineering Education and Training Committee, which finally led to the proposal for the formation of APEC Engineers. Another subject of discussion at the 10th General Assembly was the membership of the Hong Kong Institution of Engineers (HKIE) as representative of the engineering community of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China. Taking into the consideration Hong Kong's unique status after the return of its sovereignty to China on 1 July 1997 and the view of HKIE, the membership of HKIE as National member of the Federation was approved and was suitably incorporated in the Constitution of the Federation.

Accordingly Ir James Blake, a Past President of HKIE was elected the 10th President of the Federation at the Tokyo Assembly and JFES transferred its responsibilities for the FEISEAP Secretariat to HKIE. Dr Ginn Huh of KPEA was the new Vice President and Ir P K Kwok of HKIE, the Secretary General.

Twenty years has passed since the formation of the Federation in July 1978. It is expected that the coming years will continue to be challenging for FEISEAP on many fronts. One of the challenges of the Federation today, as considered by President Ir James Blake, is the diversification of social and economic culture throughout the Asia Pacific Region. Reinforcement of networking is thus taken as one of the major objectives in the years ahead. It is believed that Hong Kong, as well as the HKIE, as a multi-cultural community, is well placed to lead FEISEAP in attaining closer collaboration among member nations, to shape out a framework of what is Asian Engineer, and be a contributing force for the advancement of engineering science and technology as well as the socio-economic development in the Southeast Asia and the Pacific Region.

Several photos to follow.