Opening Address

Good morning, honourable guests, distinguished speakers, fellow engineers, ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the Standing Committee on Concrete Technology, I welcome you all to this Annual Concrete Seminar 2009. I am sure your active participation in today's seminar will make this event a great success!

For those participants who may not be familiar with the Committee, I would like to give you a brief introduction first. The Standing Committee on Concrete Technology was formed in 1982, with its principal function to act as the central body for handling inter-office liaison amongst government departments on matters related to concrete technology. In more specific terms, all matters related to specifications and standards for concrete construction, testing and maintenance; performance of constituent materials; research and development on the use of concrete fall within the ambit of the Committee.

Currently the Committee is reviewing the adequacy and relevancy of the concrete-related standards used in Hong Kong with the objective to enhance quality and cost-effectiveness in concrete production and construction. The reviews in the pipeline include the aggregate standards, application of Ground Granulated Blast furnace Slag (GGBS); and updating of the local construction standards CS1 and CS2.

The Committee has also a role to play in contributing to sustainable development in concrete production. Some of you may still remember the shortage of natural sand supply from Mainland China some time ago. With the gradual depletion of the natural river sand and for environmental protection reasons, the substitution of natural river sand by crushed rock fines as fine aggregate for concrete mixes is expected to become the norm rather than exception in the longer term. In this connection, the Committee has revised the specifications with a view to encouraging a shift to the more use of crushed rock fines in concrete production. This is one of the many aspects that the Committee has contributed to achieving a sustainable environment.

With the growing concerns over the world in these days about global warming, pollution, carbon emisions, limited landfill space, depleting natural resources and sustainability, I trust the construction industry could do a lot more in contributing to achieving a sustainable environment. In pursuit for this, the theme for the concrete seminar this year is "Concrete for achieving a Sustainable Environment".

As you are aware, concrete is a material which can be easily prepared and moulded into shapes to form structural members and systems. Its great simplicity lies in the fact that its constituents are common and readily available almost everywhere. As a result of its easy availability, wide functionality and flexibility, it has become by far the most popular and widely used construction material in the world. With over billion tons of concrete being produced all over the world annually, the concrete industry is the largest consumer of natural resources and one of the biggest contributors to greenhouse gas emissions. In order to reduce the harmful effects of such a valuable construction material, it is imperative that the concrete industry takes steps to change concrete into a "green" material.

To this end, there have been a lot of researches and technological developments within the concrete industry in recent years, focusing on issues such as the improvement of the service life of concrete structures, reduction of carbon dioxide emission in the production of concrete, conservation of natural resources by recycling of construction and demolition waste materials, etc..

In today's seminar, we shall have the opportunity to learn about the latest development on various fronts: including Environmentally Friendly Contemporary Concrete, Benefits of Blast Furnace Slag, use of Alternative Binders, Concrete Science on Global Warming, Concrete related Carbon Dioxide Emissions, Concrete for Sustainability and Integrated Approach on Concrete Repair.

I hope all of you will enjoy today's seminar, make good use of it as a platform for exchange of information and experience sharing and seriously think about your contribution to sustainability and reduction of carbon emissions to mitigate the global threat from climate changes. Thank you.

Ir Norman W P Mak
Chairman, SCCT