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Pronouncement of Eng. Roberto Kochen

Technical Director

Technical Council

UPADI – Pan American Federation of Engineering Organizations

Intermediary Meeting – Aruba 2005

"Natural Disasters and the Integration of American Countries"
The Role of UPADI

Dear Members of the Technical Council of UPADI

It is an honor and a privilege to be here today, gathered with outstanding representatives of the Engineering Profession in America. It is appropriate and useful to emphasize again the importance of the engineering profession to the well being of our countries´ population, as I will address in this pronouncement.

As recent natural disasters have shown, like hurricanes Katrina and Rita in USA, we are now suffering from a deficit in public and private investments in infrastructure. The hazardous effect of a large intensity hurricane over cities like New Orleans was known in advance, but the necessary investments in infrastructure upgrades to avoid them were not done. This happened in the richest country of our planet, showing that investment in infrastructure (with all it's lateral positive effects in economic activity) is not a priority these days.

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Weaker hurricanes often spread destruction in the Caribbean region. Earthquakes often strike cities in México, Central America and the Pacific Coast. Floods and landslides very often strike Brazil and other countries.

All these natural disasters can have their effects minimized by the proper application of engineering techniques already available, saving thousands of lives lost every year, reducing the damages to the economy of American Countries, and improving the well being and standard of living of our people.

The Engineering Profession, and the Engineering Leaders gathered today here, have the possibility (or would I say the duty?) of turning decision makers and leaders in their countries more aware of the need to use Engineering more often and intensively, to minimize natural disasters, reducing their toll of lives, destruction and damages paid yearly. Most of us are heading, after this meeting, to the World Engineering Congress promoted by the World Federation of Engineering Organizations (FMOI). This is the place were we will get support for this claim – Engineering must be used more intensively to help Mankind cope better with Natural Disasters.

I would also like to give an example of the positive use of Engineering to improve the well being and economic activity of some American countries. The governments of three South America countries (Brazil, Bolivia and Peru) have joined efforts to create a highway, linking Brazil and Bolivia to the Pacific Coast in Peru. This highway has two branches – Interoceanica Sur and Norte. Its construction has already been awarded to joint ventures of local contractors. This governmental initiative, called IRSA – South America Regional Integration, is being financed by the Development Banks CAF, BID and Brazilian BNDES. It will greatly improve the economic activities in these countries, allowing linking the Atlantic and Pacific coasts by terrestrial routes, instead of sea routes. It is an example of the

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use of Engineering to promote economic development, and improve the well being of the population affected.

Last, but not least important, I would like to salute USA UPADI´s representatives, for promoting the XXX PAN AMERICAN CONVENTION OF ENGINEERS – UPADI 2006. UPADI 2006 CONVENTION will be held in Atlanta, Georgia, next year. Its theme is building a sustainable infrastructure through education, technological innovation and economic development. It fits well with the issues I addressed earlier in this talk.

USA has engaged two leading and outstanding Engineering Organizations of America, the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) and the National Society of Professional Engineers (NSPE), to organize and present the XXX PAN AMERICAN CONVENTION OF ENGINEERS – UPADI 2006. I am sure it will be an outstanding success, and we are all longing to be in Atlanta next year. México has promoted the last Convention, in México City (2004), with great success (more than 3.500 international delegates in attendance). I urge all the Presidents of Technical Committees to help USA promote a successful UPADI 2006 Convention.

I would like now to restart our Technical Council meeting, passing the Word to the Presidents of Technical Committees. Thank you.

(*) Roberto Kochen (kochen@geocompany.com.br) is a Civil Engineer, and Technical Director of UPADI – **Pan American Federation of Engineering Organizations**, gathering roughly 2,5 millions of engineers in 26 countries of America. UPADI is directed by Engineers Cláudio Amaury Dall'Acqua (President) and Cyro Laurenza (Chairman, Technical Council).