

Speech for the opening ceremony of CHEMPOR 2014

Sebastião Feyo de Azevedo, on 10 September 2014

Secretary of State for Higher Education, Professor José Ferreira Gomes

President of the Municipality of Porto Assembly, Dr. Miguel Pereira Leite

Dean of the Faculty of Engineering and Head of the Chemical Engineering Department

President of the Engineers Portugal, Eng. Carlos Matias Ramos

Vice-President of the Portuguese Society of Chemistry, Eng. Alberto Canelas Pais

Chairman of the Board of SONAE, Eng. Belmiro de Azevedo

Chairman of the Board of CIN, Eng. João Manuel Serrenho

Director of CUF, Eng. Diogo Almeida Santos

Director of Technology Commercialization Accelerator of COTEC Portugal, Professor Pedro Vilarinho

Organisers of this conference

Speakers

Dear participants

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen

Let me start by greeting my colleagues in this opening panel and welcoming all the more than 330 delegates to CHEMPOR 2014 - the 12th International Chemical and Biological Engineering Conference.

All those of you that know about my trajectory of academic and professional life, understand how very pleased I am in being here, presiding as rector to the opening session of a conference in my own field of work, organised by my departmental colleagues and by Engineers Portugal, an institution that I served as national vice-president during 6 years, in the Faculty that I served as academic, as researcher, as Head of Department and as Dean for more than 40 years.

The other reason to be pleased is, of course, that this meeting has all to do with my programme of work for the University of Porto, for the next 4 years – a programme made of commitment to national and international cooperation, with other academic institutions, with companies and other organizations from our society.

This is what CHEMPOR 2014 is about - an event that brings together members of the scientific community and highly skilled staff from the industry; an event that promotes the development and dissemination of knowledge in these vital field for human well-being of Chemical Engineering, Biotechnology, Energy and Environment.

Cooperation, and especially international cooperation, is the only way for the future in our open and global world of this XXI century.

The proactive contact and cooperation between academic and research communities, and between these and the society as a whole, is decisive for educational, scientific, technological and intellectual advancement in all fields of study.

On this major issue of cooperation, let me share with you this thought – our success in doing well, through national and international cooperation, is largely dependent on how much and how strongly we are able to promote a major value in our open society. The keyword for this value is TRUST, and this value we shall be able to promote in as much as our quality is perceived and understood by all stakeholders and partners, both at national and international level.

The dimension of cooperation that we are able to promote and attract is thus simultaneously a promoter of our development and a key indicator of the stage of development where we stand.

So, to organize a meeting like CHEMPOR is a major contribution for progress. The Department of Chemical Engineering of FEUP and Engineers Portugal are therefore to be congratulated for organising this conference and I take this opportunity to congratulate all those that contributed for the conference to happen, in the persons of Professors Arminda Alves and Fernando Pereira.

Also, I take this occasion to pay a tribute to all those that in the somehow distant year of 1975 had vision and were brave enough to organize CHEMPOR 1, in Lisbon. I am speaking of late professor Romero and late professor Bott, the group of Birmingham. I am very pleased to greet Professor Luis Sousa Lobo, one of this group of organizers, who is among us today, very active as always.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me give you a very short introduction to the University of Porto and to its Faculty of Engineering.

The University of Porto was formally established on the 22nd of March 1911, but its origins date back to the 18th century, with a succession of institutions, the first of them created in 1762, that after several merges gave rise to the University in 1911.

One of such institutions was the Polytechnic Academy of Porto, created on the 13th of January 1837, where the first studies of engineering at higher education level started in Portugal.

With the founding of the University of Porto in 1911, the Polytechnic Academy was abolished and integrated in the new Faculty of Sciences. The subjects which at the Academy corresponded to the courses of Engineering were declared associated to this Faculty of Sciences. They gave rise to the Technical Faculty in 1915, which would in turn later in 1926 become the Faculty of Engineering that we have today.

So, we are speaking of more than 175 years of engineering higher education in Porto.

Specifically, over the past 40 years, the University of Porto has been putting a lot of effort into expanding its international scope, as well as promoting the exchange of advanced knowledge with experts across the globe.

Today our institution is the second largest of Portuguese universities, with more than 32.000 students, more than 1800 FTE Faculty and more than 1600 technical support staff.

We are organised into 14 faculties, covering essentially all areas of knowledge, and we are the academic partner of a business school, in association with the major companies and institutions of the region.

About 10% of our students come from 112 countries.

About 10% of our students work for their PhD.

Our research is mainly organised into 51 certified research units and is responsible for more than 20% of the Portuguese scientific production indexed in the Web of Science.

Several indicators of academic quality show a continuous progress along the years, and particularly a consolidated reputation nationally and at international level.

In the current academic year 2014-2015, we attracted 4000 new students in the first round of admissions, this corresponding to the highest percentage of places filled in Portuguese public higher education: 96%.

As in previous academic years, the University of Porto exhibits this year the highest index of satisfaction of demand, measured by the ratio between students in first option and places available – 1.83.

The two top courses measured by the highest entry grades are from U.Porto; 3 courses are in the top 5; 10 courses are in the top 25. These figures are indicative of the university's reputation and attractiveness, and also of its top grade entry requirements.

Internationally, the University of Porto is catching up with the top 100 European universities, being clearly within this group in the field of engineering.

In the recent information from URAP 2014 – University Rankings by Academic Performance - engineering in Porto comes as 77th in the world and 17th in Europe.

It is clear that we must do better, much better, tomorrow, than we are doing today, but we have reasons to say that we are doing reasonably well.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I know that some of you are in Porto for the very first time. According to historical descriptions, we can trace back to the days of the Romans, more than 2000 years ago, the existence of a settlement known as Portus Cale, located by the Douro River, close to where the Luis I bridge and the Port Wine cellars are today. The name of Portugal derived from Portus Cale. So, we come from ancient civilizations. Therefore, I would like to invite you to enjoy the architectural heritage and the cultural and human wealth that our city has to offer, and also to invite you to visit the University of Porto.

We appreciate very much you being here. We wish you a pleasant stay in our city and a very fruitful conference.

Thank you.

10 September 2014

Faculty of Engineering, University of Porto

Sebastião Feyo de Azevedo, Rector