

ADDRESS BY PRESIDENT OF THE MALAYSIAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS (PAM) – JIMMY C S LIM AT THE XVIIIth UIA CONGRESS IN CHICAGO 20TH JUNE 1993

1. I represent Malaysia; whilst many Malaysian and Asian Architects may be emulating Western values and ethics, we must not lose the 'Asian-ness' of our work. It is difficult as many of us had some time or other been trained in the West and many having had Western dominance for many decades. That many Asian cities should bear much similarity to their Western counterparts stems probably from a misconceived notion that a 'high-rise' aluminium and glass manifestation is the much 'sought-after' symbol of success and 'having arrived'; synonymous with becoming 'respectable' and equitable to the values of the West.
2. Since the Modern Movement and the establishing of formal Architectural training, the methodology, theoretical and teaching approach to Architecture had not changed greatly. Global technology since the Industrial Revolution has gone through the Electronics and now going into the Green Environmental Era. The aftermath, impact, residue and consequences of Industrialization is now being felt, causing alarm and concern. The 'Global warming', the depletion of the ozone layer, the increase in carbon dioxide in the earth's atmosphere etc. The sudden demand for quality of environmental control and a need for an awareness of renewable and sustainable development question existing values. The realization and refocusing on a global basis towards conservation and preservation of earth's natural resources to counter-balance the non-sustainable or reusable resources had become a compulsion and necessity. "Architecture at the Crossroads" is an appropriate theme for the XVIIIth World Congress of the UIA. In witnessing a shift in values and re-evaluation of existing norms, UIA has correctly directed the global body of architects to formulate a new role for the profession to craft a new architecture for the 21st century – a caring Architecture, a sustainable Architecture based on renewable resources, and an Architecture for global survival.
3. Steel and concrete hailed as new technology were major breakthroughs for construction, in late 19th century and celebrated all over Europe with great elation. Today that 'celebration' which propelled the West is fast exhausting and depleting the natural minerals and raw material reserves. Debris of that great 'celebration' can be seen all over Europe. The fuel and energy consumed in order to sustain the production of these materials must now evoked careful evaluation with respect to the deteriorating of the natural environment and the quality of the atmosphere. In the production of one tonne of:

	Energy Consumption (Kw/hour)	Coal (Ton)
Aluminium	20.000	6.00
Steel	3,800	1.00

Degradation of the atmosphere is caused by carbon dioxide emission and 80% is attributed to the developed North whilst the South is responsible for only 20%. The need to re-discover, re-orientate and re-focus on building materials, construction techniques and traditional values that will not degrade the quality of our atmosphere and environment becomes primary concern for Architects. The present route without foresight will lead the profession into a cul-de-sac; whereby we may be accused of being 'uncaring', or even irresponsible.

4. Can this global body of Architects say that we are contributing in a meaningful way towards looking after our natural resources? Is the environment being taken for granted? Are architects generally getting too greedy and less concerned about earth's heritage and environment? What will we be leaving behind for our future generations? These are questions, which Malaysia hopes the XVIIIth Congress of UIA will address in a meaningful way.
Both our Architecture and the natural environment are at the crossroads and solutions may be difficult, but we must and can:
 - a) plot and chart the path towards a renewable and sustainable management of earth's natural resources;
 - b) lay out some basic ground rules for a sustainable development for the future; and
 - c) restrict and define terms and references in the context of the change in global values towards maintaining sustainable and renewable developments.

5. Historically and traditionally, Malaysia had been very lucky, both environmentally and economically, The rich and natural heritage of Malaysia with its vast tropical jungles, river-networks, flora, fauna and natural formations make it one of the more interesting and dynamic of the developing tropical Nations of the South. Management of Malaysia's natural forests was started in 1902 with the appointment of the first Forest Ranger, and Malaysia had since then practised renewable and sustainable forestry management, and will achieve full sustainability by the 2000.

6. Traditionally, indigenous Architecture of the South East Asian tropical basin are predominantly timber based therefore a return to rediscover and to relearn the skills of the craftsman and artisans should be encouraged. Fundamental ideas about traditional lifestyle and construction methods need to be re-established. The misguided notion that 'reinforced concrete with brick infill' buildings are preferable and better than timber needs redressing.

7. Conservation and preservation of built heritage, already accepted and practised in the developed countries of the North must be taken seriously by the less developed South. It may be in the minds of most of us but it is a burning subject, which urgently needs to be addressed as a first step towards a sustainable future. With the shift of economic activity and center to the Asian/West Pacific region, many cities and their heritage buildings are under threat. Architects must be in the forefront, to be the 'Force of Resistance' against the 'fast-buck' or 'hit and run' developments. An overall reappraisal of the concept of planning the modern city is required. New Asian cities should consider using more building materials, which do not contribute towards depleting world resources and deteriorating atmosphere. We are convinced that clues for a sustainable Architecture, which can contribute towards global survival, can be found among Architects from within the Region IV of UIA. Architects from the Region IV has an active grouping, meeting annually to discuss topical issues at council meetings and Forums; known as Architects Regional Council of Asia, ARCASIA; boast of 15 national participants.

8. National governments must play an important and constructive role. For without a political commitment, there can be no political will to follow through. Architects of Asia still enjoy an exalted position within their respective societies and their opinions are respected by their governments. A recent ruling by Malaysia's Ministry of Housing and Local Government, on 'No trees no Certificate of Fitness' for permit application to occupy buildings of new developments, was probably one of the greatest landmark decisions in the development industry. It was seen as a victory for Architects striving for quality environment and lifestyle for a sustainable future. Every building industry needs the support of their respective governments; and for a directive, concerning quality of environment and life. To achieve an environmentally balanced year 2000 co-ordinated and committed support from the government is required. Interference from across boundary organizations although well-meaning may sometimes be misconstrued and undo much of what has been achieved by local Architects towards achieving sustainable Architecture and developments. Restrictions and boycotts on tropical timber may be counter-productive. Deprived of its trade value would discourage investment in tropical rain-forest renewal and protection, resulting in the forests being converted to other economic land use.

9. Malaysia therefore regrets a recent decision passed at the 74th Council Meeting held in Brazil in May 1991 which reads:

"Member Sections to ask their members to resist specifying materials which further the erosion of the rain-forests."

UIA ought to view the global 'family of forests' as an overall concern

and not just at tropical rain forests. Malaysia wishes this seemingly ill-informed decision by the UIA urging its members to resist specifying tropical hardwood to be withdrawn, as it will be invalidate the efforts of Architects from those countries towards achieving a sustainable Architecture. This is extremely unfair especially to Architects from countries, which depend on their tropical timber for part of their national income. Is UIA saying that Architects from these countries can no longer utilize their own natural resources in their Architecture? We in Malaysia had since 1902 practised renewable and sustainable forestry management, and we will be fully sustainable by the year 2000. This unilateral **decision by UIA** is of grave concern to us **and must be withdrawn immediately**. This concern is not only that of Malaysia alone, but of members from Arcasia as well as those from the Commonwealth Association of Architects, which has a membership of 34 nations.

At the **13th Council Meeting of ARCASIA** in Lahore, Pakistan in October 1992, the following resolution was passed:

- “1. ARCASIA deplores the biased and ill-informed generalization make by the Secretary General of UIA, Nils Carlson, which is careless of the efforts made by our ASEAN member countries in respect of tropical hardwood exploitation and utilization.
2. ARCASIA affirms and urges further efforts in respect of tropical hardwood in:
 - a) sustainability in exploitation
 - b) careful extraction
 - c) conservation of biodiversity”.

Subsequently in June 1993 at a recent International Conference organized co-jointly by the **Commonwealth Association of Architects** and the **Malaysian Institute of Architects** on “Design and Development for a Sustainable Future” among the numerous resolutions adopted for a sustainable future was one pertaining to “Construction and Building Materials”, which reads,

- “3.1 Architects must take pro-active measures to intensify the use of indigenous and appropriate materials in their designs. Biased and ill-considered pronouncements in public forum by otherwise responsible professionals with regards to building materials such as the indiscriminate boycott of tropical hardwood are inappropriate.
- 3.2 Every effort must be made to support local industries in the manufacture and processing of indigenous materials, particularly those that support sustainability.”

This is the crossroads. If Architecture as we know it today is to survive, prevailing attitudes must change. The responsibility to create structures

must be to complement the natural environment totally and which, co-jointly inspire and conjure a sense of well being of, and belonging to its occupiers. In this context the global family of Architects must be supportive towards each other, in order to discharge our responsibility; to capture and enhance our respective cultural spirit and the texture of our ethnic surroundings in our works.

A consistency of thoughts and words needs to be encouraged, only then will we be able to craft a new Architecture for the 21st Century – a caring Architecture; a sustainable Architecture based on renewable resources; and an Architecture for Global survival.