



AQSA International Congress 2023 VVIP Official Opening Speech



Vice Chancellor of University of Technology Sarawak, Datuk Dr Prof. Khairuddin Abd Hamed

The Honourable President of ASEAN Quantity Surveyors Association (AQSA), Dato' Sr Aziz bin Abdullah

The Honourable President of seven member countries of AQSA
Distinguished Speakers, Panellists and Moderators

Distinguished guests, corporate leaders, government agencies representatives and council members of AQSA, press media, and all delegates of Congress,

Ladies and gentlemen,

First and foremost, we are absolutely delighted to welcome all delegates from the ASEAN Region to our beautiful Land of the Hornbills. This Congress is certainly a trailblazer, the first of its kind to be held here in Sibul, where a resplendent fusion of heritage, cultures and activities awaits you . . . In plural Sarawak, we propagate a fusion of hope, unity, tolerance, peace and friendship that reaffirms our diverse community's unequivocal commitment to one another . . . a testimony of "unity in diversity".

Sarawak is a portal into a fascinating world of eco-tourism, providing the best opportunities to experience and savour the extravaganza of our multitude of cultures and festivities; as well as an insight into the awesome splendor of untarnished natural beauty and landscapes. Get to enjoy Sibuh's proverbial hospitality too whilst you are here . . .

Ladies and gentlemen,

The theme for this year's AQSA Congress will focus and revolve around "digitalisation" and "sustainability" which are fundamental and key to socio-economic resilience. It is therefore, of paramount importance that the built industry makes that paradigm shift to effect the transformation required. Hence, I would hereby like to laud UTS and AQSA for jointly organising this Congress which is highly relevant at this juncture in light of the conundrums plaguing the built industry as a consequence of the pandemic. Thus, this Congress will invariably benefit all key construction players in the recovery measures instituted around the ASEAN Region.

Today, the issue of “sustainability” has never been more crucial in perpetuating a future for this world. Hence, to address the global challenges that we are facing which encompasses poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace and justice; it is thus pivotal to establish sustainable development goals which is a blueprint to achieve a better, more equitable and sustainable future for all . . . and what better way, then to leverage on digital transformation.

The core of our priorities is therefore, to ascertain how best we can achieve quantum-leap progress to support sustainable wealth and value creation for our respective nations. The crux of our challenge is to be utterly responsive and innovative, challenging status quo by continuously improving and adapting to emerging trends and changes. With the dawning of this new era, excellence shall be perpetuated and mediocrity and inconsistencies side-stepped.

Digital transformation is invariably the catalyst required to “charter” and revolutionize the course towards “sustainability” and to provide the socio-economic directions for all our futures together.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The impact of Covid-19 has invariably been far-reaching with gargantuan consequences, causing a global scale rethink on how we define and assess risks. The effects of the pandemic have dramatically accelerated the transitioning of the digital economy across the world involving all sectors – agriculture, transport, education, health, trade, food, etc. and in the course over the last three years, it was crucial for many of these sectors to embrace digitalization in order to adapt and survive by integrating digital technology into their various organizations or businesses so as to optimize work processes to enhance efficiency and efficacy.

Notwithstanding, the built industry is already a pioneer where digitalization is concerned with civil engineering and construction digitalized equipment already an inherent practice at construction sites. It ranges from fully autonomous robots through to seemingly conventional construction plants that are fitted with a range of digital systems to assist the human operator. The Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) or drone are already widely used for regular site inspections and surveys in project monitoring and control.

In addition, digital technology in the form of the Building Information Modelling (BIM) system is also used in construction project implementation. The BIM creates three-dimensional models that make all relevant information in the construction process available to all parties involved, thereby enhancing communication and work efficiency.

In terms of environmental sustainability, it is also our shared responsibility as a civil society to promote the use of digital technologies to facilitate a green and sustainable transition to safeguard and preserve our green and natural resources as well as to respect the environment and society by promoting green technology, reducing carbon footprints, lowering energy usage and eliminating pollution.

In the built industry, sustainability is about reducing environmental impact and ecological risks whilst creating projects that have positive outcomes for society and the environment. The goals of sustainable construction include the sourcing of renewable and recyclable resources as well as reusing materials where possible to avoid sending wastes to landfills. Hence, together - let us build whilst preserving our environment for our future generations.

Looking at the theme of our Congress as well as the different sub-themes to be presented, it is thus our aim to address these conundrums together and to bring all these into alignment.

The challenging questions to be posed these couple of days include inter alia:

- (1) How can we best support the uptake of digital and sustainable solutions?
- (2) How do we ensure a continuous political leadership and civil society engagement for a joint sustainable and digital transformation?
- (3) How can we do this in the midst of competing priorities as we move beyond the post-COVID pandemic?
- (4) How can we create opportunities for SMEs and move towards more fairness and sustainability in the digital economy?
- (5) How can the digitalization empower citizens and local communities, and assist our consumers at making more sustainable choices?

I trust our distinguished panel of experts and professionals will expound and provide the required enlightenment on these issues in the course of this 2-day Congress.

With that, it gives me great pleasure in declaring open this AQSA Congress 2023!

I wish you all a very fruitful Congress.

Thank you.