

Opening Address for the 22nd World Gas Conference

by Hiroshi Urano

President of IGU, 2000-2003

Tokyo International Forum, June 1st, 2003

His Imperial Highness, the Crown Prince;

Honorable Ministers of State and Members of the National Diet;

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:

On behalf of the International Gas Union, it is a great honor and pleasure to welcome you to the World Gas Conference in Tokyo.

Since the first World Gas Conference organized in London in 1931, IGU has – in partnership with the National Organizing Committee of each respective host nation -- succeeded in holding 22 of these distinguished international gatherings.

With over four thousand and five hundred registered Delegates and Accompanying persons -- the largest number ever to attend a World Gas Conference -- this Tokyo Conference is also IGU's first in Asia. Therefore, we are particularly proud and grateful for your willingness to travel such great distances from over 70 countries and regions to Japan for this Conference.

I would also like to convey our deep appreciation to all of the ministries and agencies of the Japanese Government and to the Tokyo metropolitan government for their strong and sustained support, as well as to all of the members of Japan's National Organizing Committee and its member companies and organizations who dedicated so much time and effort to ensure the success of this Conference.

Through the decades, IGU's mission to promote the technical and economic progress of the gas industry worldwide has served as a catalyst for building each Conference as a forum for bringing together leaders and experts. Today, this has evolved to mean that – as a protagonist for fuelling the 21st century – we are also engaged in resolving some of the most pressing opportunities and challenges facing every community and nation around the world.

In developing our strategic plan for the 2000 to 2003 triennium, our focus has been on

nurturing the potential of IGU as a credible source of expertise and leadership – for, we face a growing need to apply our international human network to the resolution of global concerns such as those raised at the Rio Summit in 1991; namely, the mitigation of global warming and the achievement of sustainable development for all.

By using the word “we,” I am not only referring to “we” in the gas industry. Rather, “we” should also include the growing number of industries that interface with the gas industry, such as through technology partnerships. Thus, our aim is to build new bridges for constructive international discussion and collaboration on global environmental challenges and opportunities -- for today and the future – and so, we are gathered today to launch our exploration for: “Catalysing an Eco-Responsible Future.”

Based on our industry’s successful track-record in research & development, as well as in fostering technology partnerships, I strongly believe we possess the capacity to build bridges for a new – and sustainable -- civilization; that is, natural gas – as a fuel and through its technologies -- is uniquely well-endowed as a “bridging energy.”

Our ability to provide the “bridging energy” is, moreover, based on our established track-record in providing the vital leadership for coupling new technologies to create commercially and environmentally viable energy supply systems. This week we expect to discover new ways to build and enhance our momentum for the years to come.

The 21st century will, to be sure, witness dramatic new efficiencies in gas-based combustion technologies. However, with this Conference, we are also at the advent of an entirely new era; namely, that of hydrogen technologies. As an especially well-adapted source and carrier of hydrogen, our industry will be at the forefront of building synergies between natural gas-based combustion and hydrogen technologies. Offering a new array of tools for mitigating global warming, our industry will have a leading role in the competition to build successful new alliances and partnerships among a diverse array of industries -- from auto manufacturing to fuel cells, information technology, and even urban architecture and design. While, as I just said, we will have a leading role in this competition, we should, nevertheless, seek to foster this competition even further, for it could be, perhaps, the strongest driving force for achieving sustainable development.

We very much hope this Tokyo Conference will provide everyone with lasting and

enjoyable memories as IGU's first in the Asia-Pacific with a dynamic and vast emerging energy market.

I must, however, say with deep regret that the outbreak of SARS -- and the impossibility of postponing this Conference -- made it necessary for us to request the voluntary withdrawal of our colleagues and friends who were planning to attend from the WHO SARS Affected Areas.

I would like to salute the courageous and unselfish decisions made by our friends of these nations and regions who willingly agreed to withdraw their participation in order to ensure we could open this Conference today. As a way of paying tribute to their invaluable contribution and sacrifice, let us join in seeking to fully consider and reflect their aims and aspirations this week.

It will, I believe, be of historical significance that the timing of this Conference coincides with an accelerating period of change, not only in technology, but also in the fundamental structure of our energy markets and our Conference program has attempted to incorporate many relevant topics to reflect these developments.

The social program includes an array of tours to help you to see and experience contemporary Japan from a variety of perspectives.

I am most confident that you will make new and rewarding discoveries this week and I am very grateful to each of you for your participation.

The 22nd World Gas Conference is now Open!

Thank you.