

# WPC's role in forging the past and crafting the future

BY DR PIERCE RIEMER  
DIRECTOR GENERAL, WORLD PETROLEUM COUNCIL



To welcome delegates to the 1st World Petroleum Congress in 1933 its founder Mr Thomas Dewhurst, a geologist by profession, expressed the view that "Since World War I the developments which have taken place in each and every branch of petroleum technology have been astounding, actually like a revolution. The stage has therefore been reached when it is not merely desirable, but even imperative, that representatives from as many countries as possible should meet to discuss problems of this newer and better world of petroleum technology". He was speaking to representatives of 28 nations in London and here we are now in Qatar in 2011 with over 90 countries attending.

Our forefathers in 1933 had a dream. Mr Dewhurst stated "Some day the World Petroleum Congress might become a 'League of Nations' for Petroleum Technologists, and indirectly and subconsciously play a part in international good feeling and fellowship." Good feeling and fellowship was maintained by the WPC throughout the years and after Doha we move to the next Congress in Moscow in 2014.

The purpose of the WPC was "The management of the world's petroleum resources for the benefit of mankind" and that purpose hasn't changed. Content and issues have. In the beginning it mainly comprised oil and gas technology and science. Today the much broader agenda includes managerial, financial, environmental and social issues. Mr Dewhurst and his colleagues would be surprised to see these accomplishments today, but I am sure would also be very happy to observe that what they started is continuing to go from strength to strength.

Energy is the lifeblood of economic and social development. The share of oil and gas is essential and rising. Oil and gas will not last forever, but it will be vital for global development in the many decades to come. Transitions will take place towards other forms of energy production and use but the oil and gas industry will always be an active leader and partner and the people who will shape the future will be at the 20th WPC in Doha.

With the focus on the future and what is required from a technological point of view we often forget that we will need more people on the ground to do the work. This is a real issue and the number of young people joining the industry or even graduating in relevant areas has been steadily decreasing in many countries. This growing skills gap may impede the industry's very ability to operate, especially in respect to major exploration and production projects. This challenge is particularly significant in the

context of the world's rapidly growing demands for energy and calls for greater adherence to responsible social and environmental practices.

In response to this challenge the World Petroleum Council formed its youth policy. A Youth Committee was created that has grown in size each year since its formation in 2006. It brings a higher profile to the issue and forms an alliance with young people themselves in order to find possible solutions to our challenges. We feel that it is important that young people are at the forefront of resolving the issues, as they are the ones who will inherit this industry and should be involved in crafting its future. The Youth Committee has prepared a unique programme of activities for young people at the Congress including a special round table with industry leaders to discuss the burning questions of today.

The future of the WPC depends on its ability to stay neutral and non-political. It is imperative to be willing to intelligently and comprehensively discuss issues no matter how controversial. The greatest impact will be achieved by working closely with other organisations and professional bodies. Not only those who work in the industry but everyone. ■

## History of the Congress

2011: 20th WPC	Doha, Qatar
2008: 19th WPC	Madrid, Spain
2005: 18th WPC	Johannesburg, South Africa
2002: 17th WPC	Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
2000: 16th WPC	Calgary, Canada
1997: 15th WPC	Beijing, China
1994: 14th WPC	Stavanger, Norway
1991: 13th WPC	Buenos Aires, Argentina
1987: 12th WPC	Houston, United States
1983: 11th WPC	London, United Kingdom
1979: 10th WPC	Bucharest, Romania
1975: 9th WPC	Tokyo, Japan
1971: 8th WPC	Moscow, Russia
1967: 7th WPC	Mexico City, Mexico
1963: 6th WPC	Frankfurt, Germany
1959: 5th WPC	New York, United States
1955: 4th WPC	Rome, Italy
1951: 3rd WPC	The Hague, Netherlands
1937: 2nd WPC	Paris, France
1933: 1st WPC	London, United Kingdom