

MEDITERRANEAN ENGINEERING GROUP 2014 International Conference

27-28 November, Rome, Italy
ICE Agenzia, Via Liszt 21, Sala Pirelli

Francesco Fiermonte's presentation

1. INTRODUCTION

Undersecretary Della Vedova,
President Monti,
President Lotti,
Monsieur l'Ambassadeur du Royaume du Maroc
Mesdames et Messieurs les représentants du Corps Diplomatique
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is indeed an honor for me to introduce the Mediterranean Engineering Group Conference in this prestigious institutional context.

The Mediterranean rim is our shared home and engineering is our shared culture.

This is why I am particularly glad to welcome representatives and friends from Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina, Egypt, France, Greece, Morocco, Portugal, Tunisia, Turkey and FIDIC to the Conference.

I wish to point out that many more Engineering Associations are interested in the MEG initiative but could not participate due to former engagements.

The Engineering Associations of Croatia, Montenegro and Spain regret to be absent here today but are fully involved in the MEG process and assure their participation to the next edition.

We are particularly glad to host the MEG Conference in Italy because, as you know, Italy holds the six month Presidency of the Council of the European Union. I wish to thank Undersecretary Benedetto Della Vedova for representing the Italian Government at this Conference.

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2. CELEBRATIONS

2014 is a year of significant celebrations:

- 100 years since the beginning of World War 1,
- 25 years since the fall of the Berlin Wall,
- 10 Years since EU extended its boundaries to former Eastern European countries,
- **10 Years of MEG,**

and, probably unknown to most of you, but just as important within the logic of a Mediterranean Engineering Conference:

the 50th anniversary of the inauguration of the Milan – Naples highway; *l'Autostrada del Sole*.

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2.1 CELEBRATION: L'AUTOSTRADA DEL SOLE

L'Autostrada del Sole is an Engineering and construction achievement that remains **unparalleled** because this 750 km long highway that stretches through the Apennine mountains has been designed and constructed in eight years (Mai 1956 – October 4th 1964). Engineers and constructors worked 24 hours a day in three 8-hour shifts and the result was and still is impressive.

It took two and a half days to connect Milan to Naples in the early fifties, *l'Autostrada del Sole* chopped to 8 hours this laps of time.

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3. PRESENTATION OF MEG

So what is MEG?

MEG is a spontaneous partnership with a view to increase the potential for regional integration and cohesion among Mediterranean Associations of Consulting Engineers.

When was MEG created?

Meg was launched in 2005 at the Rome Summit as an implementation – at an Engineering Consultancy level – of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (Euro-MED), established at the Barcelona Conference in 1995.

What is MEG'S Mission?

Increase, promote and develop contacts and partnerships among member associations and networking between member firms in order to improve business cooperation and exchanges of knowledge among and within Mediterranean Countries.

MEG also aims at consultancy activity linked to the goals of the Union for Mediterranean launched in Paris in 2008.

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4. SOME HISTORICAL FEATURES

Former MEG meetings have taken place in:

Rome 2005

Rabat 2007

Cairo 2009

Davos (FIDIC Conference) 2011

Ankara 2013

Marseilles 2006

Athens 2010

Casablanca 2012

and today in Rome

The continuity of the event and the growing participation underlines the perception of the importance of this initiative.

- **MEG has been an instrument for developing partnership and joint ventures among engineering companies**
- **MEG is today a useful tool for contacts and exchanges among Associations**
- **MEG network is an instrument for monitoring engineering opportunities within national markets**

However, up to now MEG has been an initiative confined to the engineering system.

We now **need** to upgrade our organization to a more institutional level.

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5. GLOBAL VISION & PERCEPTION

As EFCA's (European Federation of Engineering Associations) President – Femming Bligaard Pedersen - underlines, ***“Engineering in a broad sense (technical and financial engineering) is key to the right priorities and the related sound political decisions.”***

And he adds:

“Engineering is of crucial importance to the operation and development of modern societies, but it is not well known or understood by politicians or by the public”.

We **must** make an effort to increase our perception and visibility both at the national and the international level.

This is why the participation of the Italian Government and the European Commission with the presence of Mr. Vittorio Calaprice allows us to think that Engineering is succeeding in its effort to be better known and appreciated and in its aim to become an engine for growth.

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6. FINANCIAL CONTEXT

On the financial side, are we sure that, as Engineers, we have a full knowledge and comprehension of the financial instruments dedicated to Mediterranean growth and integration?

INFRAMED FUND is the largest investment fund dedicated to infrastructures in the Mediterranean.

We need to extend our capacity to work with this fund. This is why Mr. Bini Smaghi's presentation on Engineering and Public Private Partnership in the Mediterranean is essential to a better participation of engineering to this investment process.

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7. INTEGRATING MEDITERRANEAN INSTITUTIONS

Within this edition of MEG, we have organized three technical sessions dedicated to Infrastructures, Environment & Energy and Smart Cities. These three sectors withhold the most important opportunities for engineering companies in the Mediterranean area.

I want to thank the President of the Italian Mediterranean Motorway Network, Mr. Cancian, for his presentation regarding the opportunities within this context and I address all my appreciation to the Discussants and the Speakers within the technical sessions for their precious contribution to the Conference.

At the euro-Mediterranean level, you will not be surprised that Infrastructures, Environment & Energy and Smart Cities are three priority Areas in which the Union for Mediterranean has structured its activities.

Sadly, the date of our Conference overlaps the 8th edition of the Mediterranean Business Week and Secretary General Sijilmassi had to decline our invitation.

However ***'If the mountain will not come to Muhammad, then Muhammad must go to the mountain'***.

I have tied strong contacts with the Secretariat of UfM and, in a celebration spirit, we have agreed to organize next year a MEG Mission to Barcelona on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Barcelona Process.

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8. NEXT CHALLENGES

Like the pieces of a puzzle, every project that engineers design and constructors build are to often random contributions within a global picture.

Policies, institutions, financial resources need better coordination if we want to achieve a strong and sustainable regional integration.

Engineering can certainly contribute to this effort if it will prove that it is able to structure and organize itself to become both a consultant for strategic choices and the instrument for their execution.

This is the challenge with which MEG is confronted today.

Only this way we shall share the feeling that *l'Autostrada del Sole* among other transports projects, energy & environmental improvements and Smart Cities projects are elements that belong to a logic of infrastructural integration that connects and integrates one of the most significant regions in the history of humanity.

Francesco Fiermonte