

XIII International Congress on the Chemistry of Cement

Writing an introductory note in this issue of *Materiales de Construcción* on the occasion of the opening of the 13th International Congress on the Chemistry of Cement to be held in Madrid is certainly a pleasure. But more than that, it is an opportunity kindly afforded by the journal to express my gratitude to the many people and institutions who have generously and selflessly contributed to make the Madrid 2011 event what I am certain will be a high level... a very high level... scientific meeting, a meeting that I trust will be identified in the future as a decisive inflection point in what should be the future orientation of the science driven by the chemistry of cement.

As congress participants or readers of its proceedings will see, most of the papers constituting the scientific corpus of the 13th ICCC were written by scientific groups of renown in the area of the chemistry of cement, working out of institutions on all six inhabited continents. This note is intended as a tribute to everyone whose presence and active participation will make the 13th ICCC in Madrid not only possible, but a significant step forward in our sphere of knowledge.

The 13th ICCC features several innovations with respect to previous editions. Only time and participants' response will tell whether the efforts to modernise the congress format have been productive. At this writing, a little over a month prior to opening, 700 participants have now registered, more than attended the 12th edition in Montreal. Placing that statistic against the backdrop of the global economic crisis, we can only feel deeply gratified by the confidence that the international scientific community has placed in the congress organisation.

Of the features introduced at this edition of the congress, I would stress three.

1. For the first time in ICCC history, a series of pre-congress courses have been scheduled, whose objectives are:

- to address, with the intensity the occasion requires, a specific, short list of subject areas of particular interest in the field of cement;
- to provide attendants a broad overview of the chemistry of cement from different perspectives, under the stewardship of a highly qualified group of international experts.

These seven courses are proving to have exceptional appeal, with around 200 participants now enrolled. The organisation is naturally endeavouring to ensure that all 200 will benefit immensely from course attendance, acquiring new knowledge and interacting directly with specialists.

2. Panel discussions. These panels can hardly be said to be an innovation because they have formed part of past editions of the ICCC. Nonetheless, this formula for sharing knowledge and expressing different scientific opinions had been neglected in the most recent congresses due to the demanding pressure exerted on organisers to distribute the scant time available among hundreds of participants keen on discussing their research with colleagues from other institutions. The 13th ICCC (Madrid 2011) organisers have striven to recover a practice that should never have been discontinued. Scientific debate in its most traditional format will hold a place of privilege in Madrid.

3. I also wish to stress the special effort made by the organisation to assemble a series of particularly relevant papers that will be published in a special issue of *Cement and Concrete Research* and which will indisputably constitute the backbone of the knowledge stemming from our encounter in Madrid. My gratitude goes to each and every author for doing their utmost to meet publication deadlines so that this issue of *CCR* could be in the hands of all participants on the opening day of the congress. This apparently simple achievement has called for a good deal of energy that readers will surely be able to appreciate in just measure. I believe that this is the first time that ICCC participants have received a publication of these characteristics as part of the congress documentation.

Lastly, from the modesty that should govern a scientist's professional life, I wish to express my enormous satisfaction over what has been an exciting, once in a lifetime experience: organising an ICCC. I feel especially fortunate to have had that opportunity and am looking forward to sharing the satisfaction it has afforded me with all the Congress participants in Madrid.

From here, my gratitude for your support goes hand-in-hand with my best wishes for every success in your research.

Ángel Palomo
Chairman 13th ICCC