



Opening Plenary Speech by Chairperson Carlos Sarmiento at the SPE Virtual Conference and Exhibition on HSE and Sustainability on 27–31 July 2020.

I am delighted to join such honorable company to open the 15th international HSE conference offered by the Society of Petroleum Engineers (SPE).

I say HSE but actually it is the HSE& Sustainability conference, integrating for the first time what has become the top priority for our industry – how to enable socio-economic development that is sustainable, meets the world’s energy needs and doesn’t cost the earth.

This evolution reflects the journey that started in The Hague in 1991. Each conference since then has been a snapshot of the industry’s best thinking at a given point in time, often ahead of the curve, as it is the HSE and the Sustainability practitioners who thought lead and who pick up the weak signals and start developing practices long before they are adopted at scale.

This is what we are gathered here to do – to share knowledge, to tap into the latest thinking and practices and to meet with each other. Yes, we may be in virtual mode, but we can still meet and draw upon the social capital we have built up over many years of working together to further the collective progress of the oil and gas industry.

It’s an industry I personally have given 30 years of my life to and I feel very proud to part of this phenomenal community of brainpower, diversity and resilience that everyday fuels progress and well-being around the world.

I don’t use the word “proud” lightly and I don’t mean arrogant pride, I mean humble pride. The first UN SDG is **No Poverty** and it is a goal that still requires so much attention. I don’t think it’s a stretch to say that oil and gas has been alleviating poverty since we drilled the first well.

But we have learned that the combustion and the utilization of our unparalleled products, by us all – humanity – is encroaching on biodiversity to alarming rates and is generating unmanageable quantities of waste. We are sawing the branch on which we sit, our ways of living and conducting ourselves and our businesses are weighing too heavily on the earth’s systems on which we depend utterly for life.

Our industry is at the heart of these challenges, not as many would expect as a source of all the problems, but rather as a source of solutions. We know we can alleviate poverty and enable socio-economic development. Now we need to show that we can also alleviate carbon imbalance and enable more ecological good than harm.

This brings me to the second theme of the conference—Engagement. No disciplines in our industry engage more externally than do HSE and Sustainability and this is clearly manifest in the impressive programming created by nearly 100 industry volunteers over the last 18 months. It has been an honor for me to serve as general chair, a role I was invited to take after Jose Cotello had to step down. Jose we are thinking of you today and wish you the best of health.



Some elements of this year's program are worth highlighting. I'm delighted to see leadership emerging so strongly in the safety program—at plenary, panel, and technical session levels. Adopting the latest thinking on leadership and human behaviors will be the game changer that takes our safety performance to the highest levels we know can be reached.

The environment program's content on global conservation and on sustainable oceans looks particularly exciting while health has clearly expanded its scope to consider its role in relation to community health and thus our interdependence on each other – as the current pandemic has brought home more than ever.

Last but not least the sustainability programming is standing equal with its sister disciplines for the first time and to see the UN SDGs, Local Content and Human Rights treated as central and in such a thoughtful manner is very encouraging to me as a senior executive – keen to support such efforts and grateful that we can count such expertise in our industry.

So, with no further ado I welcome you and invite you to thoroughly enjoy 20HSE and the time you can spend with each other virtually thanks to the unflagging commitment of the SPE.

I know the HSES discipline is very proud to join with LACPEC and to be first fully virtual international conferences produced by the SPE. Thank you to all the volunteer and the staff who made this event possible – let's feel proud, let's engage and above all let's be humble and learn as much as we can from each other.

Regards,

Carlos Sarmiento