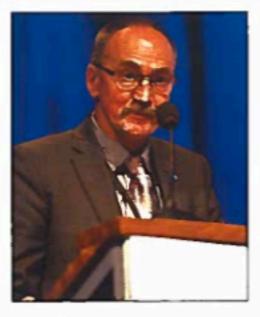# ICOLD's new President sets out his priorities ...

In his inaugural speech at the closing of the 25th Congress in Stavanger, Prof Anton Schleiss spoke of the honour the General Assembly had bestowed on him, which gave him the confidence to bring ICOLD forward over the next three years. He expressed his intention to work with the Board to fulfill a number of key objectives.

The first priority, he said, was to increase the participation of young delegates in Congresses and Annual Meetings, above all those from the developing and emerging countries. In this respect he felt the national and local organizing committees should be motivated to support young delegates.

Another aim, he continued, was to enhance the worldwide dissemination of ICOLD publications. He pointed out that these represented a very rich source of high quality knowledge. "They are the promotion vehicles of ICOLD; they are the voice of ICOLD", he said.

His third priority was to enhance relations with universities, research institutes, professional associations, and also key companies in the dam industry'. "For the evolution of state-of-the-art practices" he said, "it is important that relevant questions are addressed in research projects". He suggested that consideration should be given to establishing a cooperative membership for key industrial companies in the dam industry.

Another objective was to ensure the financial stability of ICOLD, and Prof Schleiss expressed his desire to work with the Board to develop strategies which would ensure the financial sustainability of ICOLD under different scenarios.

Referring to controversial public discussions about whether dams were needed, he recalled an incident when, at the beginning of his professional career, he had witnessed first-hand the effects of poverty in a developing country, seeing dirty water, and people struggling for food. He described how this had made him feel proud to be contributing to a new dam project, which was part of the urgently needed infrastructure. Since then, Schleiss said, dams for him had been "a question of the heart"; he then stressed that he meant this in a literal rather than purely emotional sense, pointing out:

H stands for health. Dams ensure water, which is the basis for good health.

E stands for energy, required for developing the welfare of society.

A stands for available and affordable.

R stands for renewable.

T stands for trans-boundary and transportation. Dams are trans-boundary infrastructures that satisfy the needs of large communities and societies.

During the week in Stavanger, Prof Schleiss continued, delegates had often seen rain, but also a lot of water, during the excursions, in the setting of a wonderful landscape. "As engineers", he said, "this teaches us that the following formula applies:

No water = no dams".

He added that this formula could also be turned around, to become:

No dams = no water.

But he felt this second formula was actually not complete, as dams have a huge leverage. For many regions of the world, he said, the formula would be:

No dams = no water, no food, no energy, no development, no future for the young generation!

He stressed that the ICOLD family was proud to be contributing to a sustainable future for the young generation, by fulfilling its mission, to ensure dams were built and operated safely, efficiently, economically, and in an environmentally sustainable and socially equitable way.

He concluded: "ICOLD is assisting nations to meet the challenges of the 21st century in the development and management of the world's water and hydropower resources. History shows us that water and energy infrastructures have been always related to the development and welfare of all societies in the world. These structures are still urgently needed: they are, and will be, of fundamental importance since they can really satisfy the human vital needs of water-energy-food.

ICOLD's technical committees, Prof Schleiss commented, with their excellent work, were preparing the basis for "better dams for a better world".