Visit by Dr Roberto Saracco to The Institution of Engineers, Malaysia (IEM) on 15 November 2005

By: Dr Roberto Saracco and Ir. Mah Soo (FIEM)

Dr Roberto Saracco, IEEE Communications Society Vice President for Society Relations, in conjunction with his visit to Malaysia from 14 to 17 November 2005, had requested Dr Daniel Wong, Assistant Professor from Malaysia University of Science and Technology to arrange for a courtesy meeting with IEM and IEM has kindly agreed. A meeting was arranged on Tuesday, 15 November 2005 at 5.30 p.m. The IEEE Communications Society (Comsoc) is one of the largest technical societies in the IEEE with over 50,000 members and has set up relationships with various related societies from different countries, whilst IEM has over 15,000 members with interests in many disciplines. Comsoc found it interesting to note that the IEM acts as a certification body on behalf of the Board of Engineers, Malaysia (BEM) to conduct Professional Interviews before any engineer is given recognition for registration as a Professional Engineer by BEM. Also IEM is assigned to conduct training courses, conferences, seminars and talks to engineers and their attendance would be given Continual Professional Development (CPD) hours. For re-registration as a Professional Engineer with the BEM, an average of 50 CPD hours per year over a 3-year period is required. It is clearly a strong motivation for members to participate and IEM, at the same time, has a strong obligation to offer significant learning opportunities to its members.

The objective of this meeting was to meet with the relevant people at the IEM and to have a dialogue to exchange information on the two organisations and explore opportunities for collaboration between the two professional learned organisations.

The IEM was represented by the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the IEM Electrical Engineering Technical Division, Ir. Yusouf bin Ahmad and Ir. Mah Soo respectively. Ir. Prof. Dr Ow Chee Sheng, President of IEM, though he was engaged in another parallel meeting with Prof. John Archer, the President of the Institution of Chemical Engineers, U.K., found time to meet Dr Saracco, participated in part of the discussion and presented a souvenir to Dr Saracco. On the Comsoc side, in addition to Dr Saracco, Ir. Jaafar Haji Mohamad Abu Bakar from Telekom Malaysia Research and Development, and Comsoc Malaysian Chapter Chair and Dr Daniel Wong joined in the discussion.

The discussion pointed out that:

- Comsoc is very much interested in maintaining ties with the relevant local society that could bring the specific geographical flavor and expertise to the benefit of the whole Comsoc community.
- Comsoc is convinced that by acting through this liaison and with the local chapters, much more value could be delivered to its members and such value may attract those local engineers who would be interested in a global vision. This is not intended to generate a flow of membership from one Society to the other, rather to increase the total membership and the value perceived by the members.
- Comsoc provides, through conferences, both local and global, magazines and tutorials, a considerable amount of learning opportunities. It is understandable that the attribution to conferences, papers and tutorials is a value that could be used by other societies for continual professional development.
- IEM would be interested in enlarging its list of reviewers, from global professional organisations, for papers being submitted by its members. This would also ensure broader peer review.
- In the course of the discussion, it had been a subjective point of view of those involved, that the technical world is getting broader and broader in terms of what an engineer needs to be informed. Hence there is a value for engineers who are in telecommunications to be exposed to technologies that are not part of their profession. The same goes for others. IEM remarked that their monthly bulletin purposely consists in articles on various engineering disciplines to keep this broad view and to make sure at the same time that there is always something of interest for everybody. On the Comsoc side, being the society focusing on telecommunication engineers, there is not such an issue but for sure their members might benefit from some exposure to other disciplines. In addition it is getting more and more problematic to define what a Telecommunication Professional should be.
- Comsoc has illustrated the ideas that are currently being considered for a portal that should be fed continuously by the various societies to create a view on geographic specific issues. As part of this, a brief presentation of the EU tools that will be discussed in the St Louis meeting of the working group on Sister Societies was given raising significant interest on their side.

The meeting concluded at 7.30 p.m. with Comsoc leaving some documentation on the present structure for Sister Societies with IEM for their consideration and discussion with their members to evaluate the interest to establish ties with Comsoc. On Comsoc side, it was indicated that the report of the meeting would be submitted to the next BoG in St Louis for consideration and decision on subsequent actions.

All the participants of the meeting were then invited for some local DeepaRaya delicacies at the 2nd Floor, IEM Building, Petaling Jaya. ■