



### **International Forum on Challenging Inequalities**

by Ir. Prof. Dr Leong Wai Yie

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The 11th International Forum of NGOs in official partnership with UNESCO was held at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, France from 16<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> December 2019, on the theme “Challenging Inequalities”. Organized by the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee in close cooperation with the UNESCO Secretariat, the focus of the forum was on areas such as youth, income, technology, gender and education.

The main objective of the Forum was to identify concrete examples of good practices and grass-root actions as well as to develop a set of recommendations to tackle inequalities. Dr Leong Wai Yie was invited to represent the World Federation of Engineering Organisations to share on the policies, practices and challenges of equalities in the engineering community, discussing to a great extent the inequalities in policies, STEM education, career and leadership positions in ASEAN and in the Asia-Pacific countries. Initiatives to further promote equalities were highlighted from the viewpoint and efforts of NGOs and governmental agencies.

The forum also discussed the challenges of understanding how inequality futures could become ‘equality’ futures, and how action by governments, engineering community, civil society, businesses and citizens could make a difference. This would help to widen the focus on inequality and its consequences to encompass greater equality, and how it could be achieved, pointing to a number of transformative pathways which could help move us towards a fairer world. The forum also shared on several examples from around the world of rule-changing measures in trade and finance, taxation and asset distribution, work and employment, education, health care, social protection and housing that could contribute to reducing inequalities.

Speakers also commented on policies which had been implemented recently in countries and regions that had undergone a reduction or stabilization of rising inequalities. These countries had targeted several dimensions of inequalities by combining measures that nevertheless might have differed from one country to another. These countries also benefited from positive conditions including economic growth (which is often a prerequisite for governments to have the capacity to mount major new programmes), political stability, and a shared concern for rising inequalities. The engineering community certainly has an important role in worldwide efforts to reduce inequalities in the identified sectors.



The panelists sharing their views on “Challenging Inequalities”



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