



**Malaysia Host to Wiset 2022 Conference**

by Ir. Rusnida binti Talib and Ms. Choong Pooi Ying

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After nearly two years of virtual events due to the unprecedented Covid-19 pandemic, a hybrid mode conference has finally returned, providing an opportunity for networking and collaboration. The 3rd International Conference of Women in Science, Engineering, and Technology (WiSET 2022) was successfully organized by the Women Engineers Section (WES) of the Institution of Engineers Malaysia (IEM) at Wisma IEM, Petaling Jaya, Malaysia from October 13th to 14th, 2022.

The International Network of Women in Engineering and Science (INWES) is a global network of organizations dedicated to supporting women in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) across more than 60 countries. INWES operates as a not-for-profit corporation governed by a Board of Directors representing organizational and individual memberships. It aims to strengthen the influence of individuals, organizations, and corporations in shaping STEM policies worldwide, as well as promote the education, recruitment, retention, support, and advancement of



professional women and students through the combined efforts of its member organizations and experts. The Asia Pacific Nation Network (APNN) is a regional network with 8 member countries, including Malaysia. APNN was established to hold Asian regional meetings of INWES and promote the presence and roles of women scientists and engineers in Asia and the Pacific Nations.

Recent statistics have shown an increase in the number of female students enrolled in Science, Engineering, and Technology courses at universities. However, the representation of women scientists, engineers, and technologists at the top management decision-making level in government and in private companies remains significantly low, not only in Malaysia but also worldwide. The aims of this conference were to identify challenges faced by women in science, engineering, and technology (SET), to address issues related to women in SET, and to share perspectives on devising strategies to address the gender imbalance in the STEM fields, thereby creating opportunities for the future. The theme for WiSET 2022 was 'Engineering for a Sustainable Future,' with discussions which would focus on engineering, sustainability, and the role of women engineers in society. The conference had the following objectives:

- To engage, inspire, and build the next generation of women in Science, Engineering, and Technology.
- To empower women in Science, Engineering, and Technology through entrepreneurship.
- To energize future leaders and build excitement in STEM fields.
- To promote globalization and integration among women in Science, Engineering, and Technology.

WiSET 2022 welcomed a total of 70 delegates from the Asia-Pacific region including Malaysia, with participants attending both in person at Wisma IEM and virtually online. The conference featured keynote speeches from Dr. Jung Sun Kim, President of INWES, and Dr. Ariunbolor Purvee, Chair of the Asia Pacific Nation Network (APNN). The event brought together panellists and speakers from both government and the private sector, and male panellists were also included to ensure diversity and inclusion in the discussions.

**The conference's first day included keynote speeches and three sub-theme sessions:**

'Women in the Digital Transformation Era' featured panelists Ir. Abdul Razak Bin Yaakob (Vice-President of IEM), Ts. Sharifah Zaida Nurlisha Binti Syen Ibrahim (Vice-President of the Malaysia Oil and Gas Engineering Council), and Ir. Sharifah Azlina Binti Raja Kamal Pasmah (Executive Director of HSS Engineers Berhad and CEO of HSS Engineering Sdn. Bhd.), and was chaired by Ms. Irene Loke.

'Engineering & Sustainability' featured panelists Ir. Dr. Siti Hawa Binti Hamzah (former director of the Engineering Accreditation Department of the Board of Engineers Malaysia) and Ir. Raftah Binti Mahfar (Director of SCG Consultants Sdn. Bhd.), and was chaired by Dr. Habibah Binti Haron.



**First Admiral (Retired) Dato' Ir. Ahmad Murad Bin Omar (left) and Ir. Abdul Razak Bin Yaakob (right) giving speeches**

'Women in Leadership in the Current Norm' featured panelists First Admiral (Retired) Dato' Ir. Ahmad Murad Bin Omar (Vice-President of IEM and Executive Chairman of Omahams Corporation Sdn. Bhd.) and Ir. Rusnida Binti Talib (Organizing Chair of WiSET 2022), and chaired by Ms. Michelle Lau.

The second day of the conference featured a one-and-a-half-hour forum session on 'Women Empowerment and Leadership: Towards a Better World.' The panellists, who included senior engineers from the private and government sectors, engaged in interactive and thought-provoking discussions, sharing their real-life experiences and perspectives on women empowerment and leadership. To encourage participation from the younger engineers and to obtain a balanced perspective, a male panellist was also included. The forum was chaired by Ms. Choong Pooi Ying (**pictured below**), the youngest serving committee member on IEM WES

The conference also included paper presentations by attendees, providing them with an opportunity to share their work and personal experiences. Topics presented included sustaining technical capability in water management at petroleum processing facilities in Malaysia, digital dashboards in project control for future workforce, and utilizing virtual reality in welder training via the VR kit.



A new approach was adopted in WiSET2022 to foster interactive participation, where attendees formed teams to brainstorm how they could apply leadership, digitalization, and empowerment concepts discussed during the conference in their current career roles. This activity was aimed to empower the attendees, particularly the younger female engineers and the future engineers, and to provide a platform for the exchange of ideas. Feedback from the attendees indicated the positive impacts of the

conference in enhancing the understanding of the role of women engineers in the industry, in providing networking opportunities, and in inspiring the participants to take charge of their careers.

At the end of WiSET 2022, a resolution was adopted by the attendees, serving as a cornerstone for future WiSET conferences and a guide for all female engineers and future engineers. The resolution emphasized the importance of women empowerment and effective leadership in achieving sustainability and successful digital transformation.



**One of the Panellist Giving Speech**