

FR. PETER-HANS KOLVENBACH'S ADDRESS
OPENING OF THE ISJACHEM CONFERENCE

Cleveland, July 11, 2000

It is a great pleasure to greet you all, members and guests of the International Jesuit Association of Chemistry and Chemical Engineering Universities and Schools (ISJACHEM), at the opening of your third worldwide meeting dedicated to the theme of sustainability.

Ecological equilibrium and a sustainable, equitable use of the world's resources are important elements of justice towards all the communities in our present global village; they are also matters of justice towards future generations who will inherit whatever we leave them. How are you going to approach this complex challenge, which touches so many aspects of our human and indeed natural existence?

I am very happy that you are approaching it in the light of the recent Jesuit publication on ecology entitled "*We live in a Broken World.*" These reflections do not seek to simplify the complexity of the scientific, social, ethical or spiritual issues involved in ecology, nor to make the pluralism of approaches more uniform. Rather, "*Broken World*" strives to bring many viewpoints together. It expresses what we Jesuits have already learned, in responding to the environmental challenges of our world, and it invites Jesuits and colleagues to continue the exchange and to deepen the collaboration.

To such sharing and deepening your third international conference is dedicated, for ISJACHEM has declared its commitment to several important and far-reaching goals.

First, you are committed to the best possible in the fields of chemistry and chemical engineering today, based on sound scientific research, academic excellence and professional discipline. For uncompromising scientific competence there is no substitute, and yet strangely such competence by itself is not sufficient.

Because secondly, you are dedicated educators in chemistry and chemical engineering within the context of Ignatian education. You teach and train your students in the many competences of pure and applied science, of engineering, of humanism and of service. So you develop and promote the concept of chemistry and chemical engineering as professions and vocations in the various societies and countries you come from.

For thirdly, you keep your knowledge of chemistry open to every branch of human culture, and you locate it in the larger context of Christian Social Thought and of Ignatian Education. One purpose for contextualising your chemistry is in order, fairly and squarely, to face the great social and ecological problems we are increasingly aware of.

You want, fourthly, to offer good formation, to prepare young men and women for the world with humane, social, spiritual and moral perspectives in the spirit of Jesuit higher education. Moreover, in mutual exchange as well as in solidarity with the poor, you pledge to prepare graduates who are committed to the development of Third World countries as well as the progress of those who are marginalized in the First World.

Finally, through education in chemistry and chemical engineering, you aim to serve justice and to take care of the environment. Working both in your own right and vicariously in your students, you take the risks of passing from science and engineering to policy and action.

These five great values of science, teaching, spirituality, formation and action are the declared hallmarks of ISJACHEM. Each value is important but, taken by itself, fairly easy to affirm. Quite another matter is to reflect honestly upon the five values espoused together, balance them against one another, and re-combine them into a vision at once hopeful and realistic, a mission at once evangelical and practical. This is what I hope that your conference will manage to do.

What is each one's Chemistry Department, Professional School and University already doing to promote the kind of sustainable environment which, in justice, we owe to the poor and to future generations? How does environmental sustainability impinge upon the decisions that we make in our complex educational institutions? Aware that the problems of injustice, exploitation and destruction of the environment have taken on global dimensions, what do you propose to do together in collaboration and networking in future? I very much look forward to hearing the results of your deliberations.

It remains for me wholeheartedly to thank everyone who has worked hard to plan and organize this conference, which I am delighted to see hosted by our John Carroll University. Thank you to the participants who are contributing so much of their prior work, too. I wish each delegate a very fruitful meeting, and God's every blessing for your communities and families. May your reflections on a more sustainable world help to develop our growing ecological consciousness into a heartfelt prayer and a shared commitment.

Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J.

Superior General