Remarks at the IEEE Region 8 Meeting in Berlin

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(As Prepared)

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Thank you Marko. I very much enjoyed the Region 8 meeting last year in London, and it's great to be back this year. My congratulations on the big anniversary.

Region 8 is important to IEEE. If you have any doubts about that, just look at the table of guests over there. It's a who's who of IEEE's volunteer and staff leadership. And it's a statement of our commitment to Region 8 in particular and to the globalization of IEEE in general. We are committed to making IEEE a thoroughly global organization.

You're probably already familiar with the Region 8 numbers:

- Your region is, by far, our largest region by geography – it spans 130 degrees of latitude, north to south, and 150 degrees of longitude, east to west.
- Your region is our second largest by membership, with just over 76,000 members or about 18% of our total, and R8 grew about 4% last year.
- Several of our largest sections are in Region 8: UKRI is third in IEEE with nearly 11,000 members; Germany, Italy, France, Spain, and Benelux are also high on the list.
- Yours may be our most ethnically diverse region. I cannot count, in fact I don't know how to count, the number of national languages in this region, much less the unofficial ones, but I know that there are a lot.
- Your region is wealthy and it is poor. By some rankings of GDP per capita, it includes both the ten wealthiest countries in the world and the ten poorest. It also includes five of the ten fastest growing economies in the world last year.

I want you to know that working to provide better support for technologists in Region 8 is a priority for me and that we are moving forward. And I remind you of these statistics, because I want you to know that I understand that Region 8 is diverse.

First of all, I believe that it's time to expand our activities in Western Europe, with a particular focus on Brussels and the European Union. There are nearly 60,000 IEEE members in EU countries, and they need and deserve our support. I have some progress to report.

Our first interest has been in standards. We believe strongly in global standards. IEEE standards ARE global standards, produced by participants from around the world. About 20% of the corporate members of the IEEE Standards Association are headquartered in Europe. So we would like to see IEEE standards used in Europe as well as other parts of the world.

- For the past couple of years we've been working with a government relations firm in Brussels, to support this interest.

- Last year we hired our first full time employee in Brussels, Karine Iffour, who is here with us today. She has a very strong background in standards and is helping us push forward in that area.

- As a result of these actions,
  - We've been invited to participate in a major new EU activity in ICT standards.
  - We've expanded our interactions with ETSI, the European Telecommunications Standards Institute
  - And we think we are seeing action within the EU government that reflects a more global view of standards.

More recently we've begun to explore how we can help our individual members in EU countries make their interests and opinions known in Brussels. As you know, the EU government, like other governments, is trying to stimulate innovation as an economic development strategy. Last year, I met with two managers in the European Commission and learned that they see IEEE members in Europe as a potential resource in their efforts, a source of technical expertise, and a source of advice on technological trends and opportunities.

A couple of months ago, those same two managers joined a meeting of IEEE volunteers and staff in Brussels, and made the case again. They opened their remarks by saying "Farmers come to Brussels all the time, technologists don't." The farm lobby is evidently effective, and it seems time for technologists to learn from them.

So we are developing some ideas on how best to help our members be better advocates in Brussels. A few volunteers and staff met yesterday to continue that discussion, and I hope that we'll see some significant signs of progress before the end of the year.

Now let me turn to another part of Region 8.

When I talk with students, I point out all of the achievements of engineers in the twentieth century – electricity, communications, computers, consumer electronics, health technologies – and I challenge them to do as much in the 21st century as their predecessors did in the 20th century. Unfortunately my generation of engineers is also leaving behind some important unfinished business for the next generation to complete. It's that the benefits of technology that began to appear in the most developed parts of the world a century ago have not yet reached about 20% of the world's population. About 1.4 billion people do not yet have electricity, or the things that it enables, in their homes. At least a third of those 1.4 billion people live in Region 8, mostly in Africa between the Sahara and South Africa.

Last year, President Kam appointed an Ad Hoc Committee on Activities in Africa, to develop and implement ideas for how IEEE could better support technologists there. I reappointed it this year and gave it some additional strength. It will hold its first face-to-face meeting here on Sunday afternoon, and I'm looking forward to seeing significant progress.

One thing we know we can do is to enable IEEE members to engage in projects to bring technology to places that badly need it.

We have a new IEEE Humanitarian Activities Committee that will help with that. It will fund humanitarian projects in much the same way that our New Initiatives Committee has done in the past.

We are one of the founding partners of a new organization called Engineering for Change, which is bringing together technologists who want to participate. I invite you to check out their website for more information.

And a new IEEE Global Humanitarian Technology Conference, held for the first time last year, is becoming a forum for people with these interests.

Through the EPICS program, which began at Purdue University and which IEEE has sort of adopted, groups of IEEE members, primarily students, have been working on local projects around the world, especially in Africa.

Just as importantly as enabling members to engage, I believe that, on a larger scale, we need to speak out as an organization about the importance of getting the benefits of technology to every corner of the world. And to that end, we're currently working with the United Nations to support the UN Year of Sustainable Energy for All. This activity will, first of all, raise the visibility of the need. But even more importantly, three specific goals have emerged. By 2030, access to electricity should be universal, the rate of improvement in energy efficiency should be doubled, and the fraction of renewables in the world's energy portfolio should also double.

We are currently working with several of the other large engineering societies to express our joint support the UN goals. We hope to speak as the collective voice of about a million engineers. In the world of advocacy, a million engineers is a powerful chorus.

At the same time, we believe that the future prosperity of developing countries depends ultimately on their capacity for technological innovation. That capacity begins with a talented, well educated, and enabled high tech workforce. And the key to having an innovative workforce is a strong education system.

So we are expanding our efforts in engineering education in Africa, particularly in those countries that lie between the Sahara and South Africa. To that end, we recently signed a partnership agreement with UNESCO to work on engineering education in Africa. We have just established a joint working group to guide that effort. We're not yet sure where it will lead, but both we and UNESCO are committed to having an impact.

I've told you about two major thrusts that we have started in Region 8, but I don't want you to think that I, or the Board, is forgetting about the rest of the Region. I am very aware of the enthusiasm for IEEE in countries in the mid-East. I was hoping to attend MELECON last weekend and learn more about their needs, but wasn't able to work it into my schedule. I did learn, just yesterday, that we are making some progress in university accreditation in the mid-East.

I know that providing services to the eastern part of Europe is not a solved problem. And I know that members in Scandinavian countries sometimes feel isolated. We need to learn more about needs in these and other areas and I hope that we can get that process started this summer.

Before the year is out, I hope that we will understand the needs of these other parts of Region 8 well enough to plan strategies for greater support.

In closing, I would like to comment on your agenda for today and tomorrow. It's a very typical agenda for a regional meeting. You'll be talking about the business of the Region, as you should. I know there isn't much time for other topics, but I hope that you can somehow also find time, in the halls, over lunch, at breaks, to think about some of the kinds of things I've just been discussing, about what IEEE needs to do in specific parts of the Region. We know that Region 8 is diverse. We know that

what's needed in the EU is not the same as what is needed in Africa, or the middle East, or Eastern Europe, or Scandinavia. We know that we need to respond locally. One size does not fit all. And we need your help in understanding the differences.

Thank you very much for inviting me to your meeting and allowing me to share some perspective on IEEE and Region 8.