

A Tribute to Prof. Dr. Naim Afgan (1929-2019)



INTRODUCTORY WORDS

20th Anniversary of SDEWES A Tribute to Late Professor Naim Afgan and His Legacy to ICHMT and SDEWES

by

Kemal Hanjalić
Professor emeritus

Delft University of Technology, Delft, Nederland,
University of Sarajevo, Sarajevo, Bosnia & Herzegovina

<https://doi.org/10.2298/TSCI200906264H>

Dear Colleagues and Friends, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to address the respectable audience of this, I would say, a jubilee conference on Sustainable Developments of Energy, Water and Environment Systems. I am particularly pleased that the opening session is dedicated to late Prof. Naim Afgan, a member of the Academy of Sciences and Arts of Bosnia and Herzegovina, a native of Bosnia (born in Banja Luka), and the founder of SDEWES. Prof. Naim will be remembered by many as one of the pioneers and doyens in the Sustainability and Resilience Concepts in the region of former Yugoslavia. And, I feel also happy that this event is formally hosted in my native City of Sarajevo, though, sadly, only virtually and under the exceptional circumstances which prevented many participants from being physically present.

I said it is a jubilee event, we may label it as SDEWES 20-20-20, because this conference, held in 2020, was conceived almost precisely 20 years ago at a meeting of few enthusiasts in the spring of 2000 in Dubrovnik. And the present conference happens to be the 20th in the series under the name of SDEWES. Over the past two decades, the conference has grown and evolved at an amazing pace beyond expectation, justifying fully its concept and scope, and proving that its originators were on the right track.

The topic of sustainability and the *raison d'être* behind its choice for the conference scope and title, long recognized as highly relevant and indispensable for a balanced development of our world, has remained uncontested until the present days. Much has been said about the utmost importance, threats and urgency of ensuring the full and lasting sustainability of our world since, as we all know well, *infinite growth on a finite planet is not possible*. The essence of the issue is best summarized in the compelling thought attributed to the French poet and philosopher Paul Valéry (though said in a different context): “*The future is not what it used to be*”. The SDEWES conference series has certainly increased the worldwide awareness of the sustainability threats and contributed in various ways towards their mitigation.

Because this is the 20th anniversary event, it might be appropriate to say few words on how it all began and why in Dubrovnik. This town of immense beauty, with centuries long tradition in regulating and preserving its environment, has long been a favourite place for various gatherings – political, cultural, professional, scientific and others. But, even more relevant for the present event is the fact that Dubrovnik was long the traditional venue for hosting conferences and events organized by the *International Centre for Heat and Mass Transfer* (ICHMT), which in fact triggered the idea to create the SDEWES institution and to begin with conference series and many other related activities.

The ICHMT was founded in 1968 in the Nuclear Institute Boris Kidrič in Vinča near Belgrade to serve as a neutral platform for meeting of scientists from the East and West in the midst of the Cold War in late fifties and early sixties of the last century. At that time, two emerging technologies, the nuclear energy and space exploration were both faced with insurmountable challenges of extracting and managing huge amounts of heat. The American, British and French scientists on one side and the Russians on the other were researching the problem intensively but with almost no direct contact or communication. Some visionaries in the Vinča Institute lead by late Naim Afgan and Zoran Zarić came to the idea of bringing the two parties to a neutral terrain, at that time the non-aligned Yugoslavia. Supported by a number of distinguished personalities from both parts of the world, they founded the organization under the name of ICHMT, with Zoran Zarić as the Secretary General and Naim Afgan as the Scientific Secretary. The first few conferences were held in 1968-69 in Herceg Novi in Montenegro, but the venue moved soon to Dubrovnik, which subsequently hosted dozens of meetings of various kinds and levels – conferences, seminars and summer schools. The dissolution of former Yugoslavia in 1990 interrupted all activities and international communications, and the Centre was moved in 1993 to the Middle East Technical University in Ankara, Turkey, where it still operates.

As said, the idea for initiating a new series of international scientific gatherings in Dubrovnik, though not exactly on the present topic, was born among functionaries of the ICHMT. Some may ask, what has HMT (Heat and Mass Transfer) to do with Sustainability? Well, I am sure, many of you will find a connection, as heat, mass and momentum transport are in the core of most processes of energy conversion, water management and environment protection.

In 1999, at a meeting of the Executive Committee of ICHMT, I was asked about the situation in the post-war Croatia and of the prospects for reviving the practice of organizing again some events in Dubrovnik. I communicated the idea with Naim Afgan in Belgrade, who recommended contacting Professor Željko Bogdan from Zagreb. With few colleagues, among whom I remember Prof. Orest Fabris from Split and Branko Iljas from Energetika Marketing in Zagreb, we met in Dubrovnik in June of 2000 and discussed the idea, the topic,

scope and format of a possible conference. Prof. Naim Afgan could not attend, but in the next few months we continued our communications. The concept and the title were soon crystalized with a major input from prof. Naim. A number of junior colleagues joined – Neven Duić, Nikola Ružinski and Goran Krajačić from the University of Zagreb, Avram Bar Cohen from Minneapolis, Maria Graza Carvalho from Lisbon, Gian-Pietro Celata from Rome, Alfons Kather from Hamburg, Louis Serra from Zaragoza, Rene Vidil from CEA Grenoble. And, the SDEWES was born with its first conference held in Dubrovnik in June 2002, with Željko Bogdan as the Chairman and Neven Duić as Co-Chairman of the Local Organizing Committee, and Naim Afgan as the Chairman and myself as Co-Chair of the International Organizing Committee. As we all know, the event has emerged into one of the most prominent, influential and widely recognized global gathering of scientists, engineers and experts of varied profiles from all over the world who share the concern for destiny of our Planet and desire to preserve its sustainability, especially of its major commodities – energy, water and the environment.

I am convinced that I share views of all of you that the success of SDEWES conference series should be credited primarily to dedicated and enduring efforts of its Chairman, Prof. Neven Duić, his Co-Chairs, members of the Organizing Committees and of the International Scientific Advisory Boards and, last but not least, the administrative and technical staff of the conference and the SDEWES Centre, to whom I express my sincere congratulations and appreciations.

And, of course, a tribute and gratitude go to late Prof. Naim Afgan whose vision, professional integrity and above all his enthusiasm and energy, will long be remembered and serve as inspiration to emerging generations to strive for the fulfilment of his Sustainability and Resilience goals.

I wish you all a very fruitful, enjoyable and fulfilling event, for the first time in a virtual environment.

Presented at the 4th SEE SDEWES Conference,
June 28-July 2, 2020, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina