Opening speech by AMEU president

I have great pleasure in welcoming you to the 23rd Technical Convention to be held in the lovely coastal town of Cape Town. I want to immediately thank the city for agreeing to host this prestigious event.

Cape Town had suffered an AMEU Convention drought for 22 years after the late Alwin Fortmann handed the chain to Fred Daniel at the Cape Sun hotel on that morning of 4 October 1989. It is recorded that in his acceptance speech Daniel cited that "the 1990s prove to be challenging years, but should provide the AMEU the opportunity to be part of pegging the future for the country" (translated from Afrikaans).

Fred had no idea… that in 2011 we would be turning to technology for answers!

Of course the challenges we face today are very different from those in 1989. Just to mention a few:
- Shortage of supply
- Shortage of funding
- Lack of skills
- Copper and energy theft
- Universal access, etc.

Technology can certainly assist us in surviving these challenges, but there are also some policy interventions required. The sudden abandonment? Delay? Rethink? of the electricity distribution restructuring process had caused serious damage to the industry in the 15 odd years of talk. Whilst many had their reservations to the proposed implementation of REDs, few doubted that it was necessary for the country. Could it be that Prof. CT Gaunt prophesied in 2006, whilst delivering his paper, "Secret for a RED future", at the AMEU Convention in Midrand, when he figured that there should be an incremental approach and that "NERSA could be strengthened by incorporating EDI Holdings"?

Perhaps a bit far fetched! – you decide.

Cape Town is going to be great! The exhibition stands were booked out as soon as they became available. There is a small change to what you might be used to in that the Monday evening will now be a Presidential Cocktail and the Tuesday evening will be a Mayoral Gala. Sadly, there will also be no transport to and from the convention. The only transport will be from the convention centre to Silvermine for the hikers. The initial registration numbers for this convention are also encouraging.

At this point I want to thank the presenters for offering to deliver papers and wish them well in their presentation thereof.

I also want to thank the 2011 convention team for their effort in ensuring that this event will be a resounding success. Believe me it was not easy this time around.

And to you, the delegates, absorb, learn, contribute, network and have fun!

Michael J Rhode
President of the AMEU