

Happy 40th Birthday, IFToMM!

Ars longa, vita brevis
Hippocrates (ca. 460 BCE–ca. 377 BCE)

To the IFToMM President
To the IFToMM Executive Council
To the IFToMM community

It is my greatest pleasure to participate in this celebratory event, and to take the opportunity to wish IFToMM many, many years ahead. However, we must stop for a moment and think of an existential question: *is there reason to celebrate?* I personally think so. IFToMM was born out of a need, the need to bring together researchers from the two opposite poles of the geopolitics that dominated a good part of the 20th Century. IFToMM's place of birth is Zakopane, Poland. The celebration is taking place in Guanajuato, Mexico, a place famous for its births, not the least the insurrection of a handful of rebels that eventually led to Mexico's birth as an independent country.

Paraphrasing a famous speech, may I say that *two-score years ago the IFToMM founding fathers brought to life a dream*, the dream to be able to talk about research in the broad area of *Mechanism and Machine Science*—a.k.a. the *Theory of Machines and Mechanisms*, if we go by the name of the multi-discipline coined in the 19th Century in Russia—regardless of barriers. The new generations, those born in the eighties and later, may not realize that the exchanges taking place nowadays, on a daily basis, around the world, among researchers of the most diverse ethnical and political backgrounds, in conferences of all kinds, would not be possible as such at the time of IFToMM's birthday. There were two geopolitical poles, described once by a colleague of the now defunct German Democratic Republic, *as immiscible as fire and water*.

IFToMM may not have played a major direct role in the dismantling of the political and physical barriers of the cold war, but it certainly helped keep alive a glow of hope that things would be different in the future. As a matter of fact, the dismantling of those barriers brought about one existential question to IFToMM: with the barriers that motivated the creation of IFToMM in 1969 in Zakopane, Poland, now dismantled, was there still reason for IFToMM to exist? Twenty years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, IFToMM is a strong 44-member international organization devoted to the *Promotion of Mechanism and Machine Science* (MMS).

There is thus reason to celebrate and to wish IFToMM all the best in the years to come. IFToMM, and MMS with it, will be able to face the challenges of the future. Nowadays challenges are not the same as those IFToMM faced 40 years ago. But neither were the challenges of 1969 the same as those faced by MMS at the times of the birth of the industrial revolution. Those challenges were about producing machinery that would free mankind from the tedious and highly demanding task of feeding a growing global population. Once this challenge was met, if only partially, the challenge to produce machinery that would be the most efficient came across. Nowadays the challenge is to produce the most efficient and *greenest* machinery. We cannot anticipate what new challenges will be faced by MMS 100 years from now, but I am sure that IFToMM will still be around, and will promote the ways and means to face those challenges.

I wish IFToMM many celebrations like this one. Long live IFToMM!

Jorge Angeles, IFToMM President (1997–2000)
Montreal, Canada, September 20th, 2009