

## DISASTERS

# Princess Anne: disasters highlight need for local engineering skills

Princess Anne says scale of destruction in Haiti "largely due" to engineering deficits.

Princess Anne has stressed the global importance of the engineer in rebuilding the lives of those affected by natural disasters such as the recent earthquakes in Haiti, Chile and Turkey.

Princess Anne was speaking at the "Engineering a Better World" conference, organised by the ICE and the Commonwealth Engineers' Council (CEC) to increase coordination between the efforts of charities, NGOs, public institutions, private companies and engineers in humanitarian aid.

The event also marks the 2010 Commonwealth Week, which this year features a science, technology and society theme.

Over 20 organisations across the Commonwealth and Latin America supported the event, which also saw speeches from aid agencies Care International, Register of Engineers for Disaster Relief (RedR) and Merlin, alongside the Royal Engineers, Arup, the Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust and ICE President Paul Jowitt.

Alfredo Brockmann, advisor to the incoming Chilean government and structural engineer at Sinclair Knight Merz, also spoke about the recent earthquake in Chile and the engineers' contribution to the relief operations.

Princess Anne, a patron of RedR since 1988, said: "Engineering forms an essential part of the humanitarian aid effort. Understanding the value and impact of the engineering solutions and skills available – and sharing this understanding – is vital in coordinating



**Working together:** HRH The Princess Royal with ICE President Paul Jowitt and director general Tom Foulkes as they met to discuss the growing need for coordinating international and localized engineering expertise in disaster-prone areas.

**"Engineering needs to enhance local capacity and leave a legacy that is more than just bricks and mortar"**

Arup director Jo da Silva

efficient disaster response.

"The recent disaster in Haiti presents a clear example of why engineering skills are of the utmost importance in mitigating the effects of disasters. The scale of destruction we have

seen in Haiti isn't something we're used to and this is largely due to a lack of preventative engineering to ensure infrastructure is designed to withstand such forces of nature."

Jowitt said: "We know that when infrastructure fails, things go wrong. We saw it with the earthquakes in China, Pakistan, Italy, Indonesia and just recently in Haiti, Chile and Turkey. The scale of the damage and loss of life caused by these disasters just reinforces the urgency we face, in looking at how we can minimise the effects of such dramatic natural events."

Arup's director of international development Jo da Silva

said: "It is important to reflect on the lessons learned from previous post-disaster responses.

"This includes recognition by the humanitarian community of the need for engineering expertise, both in planning and implementing relief and reconstruction programmes. But also the importance of engineers in recognising the complexities of post-disaster situations, and the need to enhance local capacity and generate livelihood opportunities so as to leave a legacy that is more than just bricks and mortar."

Merlin director of programming Pete Sweetnam said: "Without the engineer, there can be no 'better society'".

## DETAILS

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1 Great George Street,  
London SW1P 3AA  
(020) 7222 7722 www.ice.org.uk

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