On behalf of the Royal Thai Government and the people of Thailand, I extend my warmest welcome to the delegates and participants to this ten-day Congress. The last time our country was given this honor was in August 1986, when we entertained a study tour for the sugar industry immediately prior to the XIX Congress, held in Jakarta.

Our own industry has come a long way. Previously, our sugar production could be characterized by its fluctuations, sometimes being unable even to meet domestic demand thereby necessitating imports. With the government's recognition of the sugar industry's importance to the economy, the industry grew by leaps and bounds. Large sugar mills opened up with modern equipment and technology that was able to cut cane-sugar production costs, while new ways were sought to make use of the by-products of sugarcane.

Consequently, we have been able to raise sugarcane production from 24 million tons in crop year 1986/87 to over 40 million tons in 1990/91, and to increase sugar production from 2.5 million tons to 3.8 million tons during the same period. There are now 46 sugar factories scattered throughout most parts of the country. The increases in production have resulted in exports of over 70% of production. Thailand now ranks third among the world sugar exporters.

However, the yield from sugarcane has not been impressive. And therefore, the government, through the efforts of the Cane and Sugar Board, has embarked on an ambitious Five-Year Production Plan beginning with crop year 1992/93. This Plan, recently approved by the cabinet, envisions the propagation of high-yielding cane varieties, the improvement of the cane growers' traditional practices by means of training program and technical information distribution. It is planned that all 46 existing sugar mills will increase their capacities and their factory efficiency, thus lowering the cost of production. By such steps, in spite of the present prevailing low prices of sugar in the world market, our sugar industry will be able to continue to survive. Aside from this, the government, through the Cane and Sugar Board, will be purchasing sugarcane based on cane quality beginning also with crop year 1992/93.
OPENING SESSION

In order to increase the net income of our sugar industry we have initiated an experiment on the utilization of sugar by-products. The good quality bagasse is utilized as a feedstock, for chipboard panels, and for pulp and paper factories while other left over husks are used as fuel for a co-generation power unit. The steam and electricity produced are then used in the sugar factory. The trial year program has been successful in generating and in selling excess electricity produced from the sugar mills. Further experiments are needed before we can carry out this project on a commercial scale. The co-generation technology is not only cost-saving for the sugar factory but also helps in the government's overall environmental policy and efforts to efficiently generate electrical power. A new amendment to the present law has been passed by the present government which allows private generation of electricity and sales to the national electrical grid. We look forward to expanding this program as well as developing other uses for the by-products of the sugar production process. In this manner production costs are reduced and other useful by-products are produced.

I trust that this Congress will stimulate free and frank exchange of observations, information and ideas which will eventually result in further development and progress and better understanding not only in sugarcane technology, but for the entire industry. While in our country, please take time to visit various parts of our nation and learn a little about our rich heritage, of which we are so proud. May all of you have a pleasant stay in our country and a successful Congress.

On this auspicious occasion, I now declare the XXI ISSCT Congress officially open.

Thank you.