

On behalf of the International Paralympic Committee (IPC), it is a great pleasure to congratulate the International Association for Sports and Leisure Facilities (IAKS) on holding its 25<sup>th</sup> international congress this November in Cologne.

At the IPC we are currently midway through our Strategic Plan 2015-2018 which features six strategic goals, one of which is fostering key strategic partnerships.

As the global governing body for the Paralympic Movement we aim to form collaborative partnerships with organisations whereby we can build on synergies and common vision.

Such a synergy exists with IAKS. We share a common desire for creation, innovation and excellence. Through the biennial IPC/IAKS Distinction for Accessibility, we recognise and celebrate building design that blends efficient engineering together with human understanding and inclusivity.

As the Paralympic Games continues to grow in size and scale, we frequently see the challenges cities and municipal governments face when staging the event.

We work closely together with the IOC and Organising Committees to create sustainable and accessible venues, whilst at the same time look at ways to reduce costs. Therefore, we can relate strongly with this year's congress theme and have a keen interest in new approaches to funding, project delivery and sustainable operations.

Key to maintaining a healthy environment is accessibility and in my view an environment cannot be considered "healthy" if part of the population is excluded from using it. All sport venues and leisure facilities should benefit from universal design to cater for not just people with an impairment, but parents with pushchairs and today's ever aging population.

I will certainly be keen to learn about the outcomes of this year's congress.

Enjoy your time in Cologne.

Sir Philip Craven MBE

IPC President and IAKS Congress Patron