Good morning! It is my great pleasure to welcome you to FSM3!

This audience is very aware of FSM and what it is, so I am not going to take time to introduce it to you here. I would just like to emphasize the sheer volume of what FSM means though. Worldwide, the sanitation needs of 2.7 billion people are met with onsite sanitation technologies; with one billion of these people living in urban areas throughout Africa, Asia and Latin America. But even with such a huge number of people being served by onsite sanitation technologies, the management of faecal sludge that accumulates in onsite systems is still largely grossly neglected. Just five or ten years ago, even a lot of people sitting here in this room did not know what FSM was. But the times, they are a changin’, and FSM is now a rapidly growing field with growing awareness throughout the sector, as shown by the fact that hundreds of you are sitting here in this audience, and by the history of the FSM conferences, which have had exponential growth.

This conference grew out of the pit emptying think thank meeting, now close to 10 years ago. The first FSM conference was then held just four years ago. It was a seminar taking place over two days in March 2011 in Durban South Africa. The seminar consisted of 16 presentations from invited speakers and was attended by 120 delegates from four continents.

We are really indebted to that same group which also organized FSM2 in Durban, South Africa. FSM2 took place over three days, had more than 90 presentations, and was attended by 320 delegates, representing more than 30 countries and five continents.

And now, here we are at FSM3 with over 700 expected participants from 55 countries, including 100 attendees from Africa, and 250 from Asia. The conference presentation program is taking place over 3 days, with 124 podium presentations, 36 poster presentations, a full day of workshops and one day of site visits.

And just to give the organizers of next year’s conference an idea of what exponential growth means, by plotting the data and fitting an equation, it can be predicted that FSM4 will have around 1900 attendees, and FSM5 close to 5,000.

With all of this exponentially growing attention on FSM, advances have started to be made in governments and funding agencies acknowledging the importance of FSM, planning and implementing policies and regulations, technology, business model and resource recovery innovations, and capacity development.

Speaking of capacity development, as many of you have hopefully noticed, in the last year the first book dedicated solely to FSM was published, which is available in hard cover and also free of charge on the internet. I bring it up here for some shameless self-promotion, but also to make the point that the goal was to get it out as soon as possible to fill an urgent need, and for it to contain the current state of knowledge, but not that it would be a perfect holy grail for everything about FSM. Our hope was actually that it would be outdated soon. And I feel safe in saying that already, if we were writing it today, there is a lot of new information that we would have included.

But my point is really that even with all this growing acknowledgement of FSM, our work is really only beginning, we are standing at the bottom of a huge mountain of metaphorical sludge, and looking up at all that shit is a bit overwhelming. We need to all come together from all our respective fields and figure out how to tackle that mountain, and hopefully harness it for some type of resource recovery. Hopefully
in 5 years we’ll have a new version of this book that is three times thicker, and much more comprehensive, and I am challenging all of you here to make the solutions materialize.

Since the first FSM conference, the goal has been to bring together a group of practitioners who are doing actual work in the field at scale, for them to communicate, and to foster a learning environment – from young academics to national governments. So I am not going to stand up here and tell you what to take home from the FSM3 conference, but I am going to ask you to identify three key points or findings from each session, and we have asked all the session moderators to do the same. I am asking you to think about, What are the most exciting technical advances with potential to go to scale? What do you think the greatest challenges are? How can we fund FSM and sustainable service chains? Where should we focus our research efforts? Please discuss your findings with other participants, and bring them to the final plenary sessions on Wednesday, where we are hoping to have a fruitful discussion about what each of us will take home from FSM3.

Before getting started with the program, I would just like to take a minute to say thank you.

- Thank you to all of you for attending, it was a long way for many people to travel;
- Thank you to the local organizers in Hanoi, the Institute of Environmental Science and Engineering (IESE), without which this conference would be nothing other than an idea;
- Our Vietnamese hosts who have been very gracious with their hospitality, the Ministry of Construction (MOC), including the Administration of Technical Infrastructure (ATI) and the International Cooperation Department (ICD), and the Vietnam Water Supply and Sewerage Association (VWSA). Thanks to their efforts, every single delegate was able to get a visa;
- The World Smart Capital – Innovation of Cities, for doing the massive work of organizing the conference. I would like to ask Julia Ackermans to stand up, someone that every single person in this room knows;
- The 18 people on the conference program committee, organizing committee, and advisory board committee for their dedication, vision and hard work;
- The sponsors, for making the conference financially viable, and providing travel grants for 150 participants;
- All the people that reviewed abstracts, and every one that is moderating sessions;
- And thank you to everyone else whom I don’t have time to mention here – a conference of this scale is an enormous undertaking, it is impossible to acknowledge everyone, but without all of us collectively volunteering and attending it would not have been possible.

So with that, I would like to say welcome and thank you again for attending, I wish all of you a productive and rewarding week, and I challenge each and every one of you to think this week about how you can take what you learn and hear with you going forward, and how you can use it in developing new and innovative solutions to FSM. So have fun, enjoy, and good luck with the Sludge Truck Trumps!