Well. We have had quite a voyage over the past hour.

When I opened this conference a little over an hour ago, I described the environment facing our profession as a perfect storm – geopolitical instability, technological disruption at unprecedented speed, shifting client expectations, and the ever-present challenge of maintaining professional standards in a market where anyone can call themselves a management consultant. I said that this was a storm to be mastered, not merely survived.

What we have heard in the sessions since then has, I hope, convinced every one of you that mastering this storm is not wishful thinking. It is achievable. But it demands something of us. It demands that we are willing to equip ourselves properly, to hold ourselves to account, and to lead rather than follow.

Let me draw together the threads of what we have heard today, because the real power of this programme lies not in any single session, but in the way the three sessions connect.

Robert took us into the heart of the storm and showed us how to navigate it. His message from the White Paper was clear: in an uncertain world, strategy cannot be a rigid plan carved in stone and handed down from on high. It must be adaptive. It must be informed by data, tested against scenarios, and built with the flexibility to pivot when circumstances change – as they inevitably will. What our clients need now is precision strategy: sharp, responsive, grounded in evidence, and designed for a world that refuses to stand still.

What I found particularly insightful was the five part summary Robert gave of the Paper:

- Change is a constant but we don’t like it! We must learn to love it, because change brings progress
- Reactive compliance to regulation is not enough – it must be built into Strategy
- Lack of investment in technology is a critical threat to agility and resilience
- Diversity accelerates progress
- Peer to peer relationship between client and consultant makes for sustainable and actionable solutions.

That resonates deeply with everything I have seen in my time as Chair of ICMCI. Across 60 countries and sixty-four thousand members, the consultants who are winning client trust are those who combine strategic rigour with genuine agility – the ability to adapt their thinking, their methods, and their delivery models to meet the moment.

But here is the connection that I want you to take away from today. Precision strategy only works if the consultant delivering it is genuinely competent. Strategy without competence is guesswork dressed up in a slide deck. And that is exactly why Celal Seçkin’s presentation on the updated Competence Framework matters so profoundly.

Celal showed us a framework that has been rebuilt from the ground up through an extensive, evidence-based review. Feedback was gathered from member institutes, IQA assessors, CMC holders, and external partners. The questions asked were exactly the right ones: how are consultants *actually using* the framework? How does it connect to the standards that matter – including ISO 20700? And critically, how must it evolve to reflect the impact of digitalisation, artificial intelligence, and the global megatrends that are reshaping every industry we serve?

The result is a Competence Framework that is leaner, more practical, and more future-ready than its predecessor. It defines what a professional management consultant needs to know and be able to do in 2026 and beyond. It is not a theoretical exercise. It is the blueprint for professional credibility in an age of disruption.

Put Robert's session and Celal's session side by side, and the message is unmistakable: strategy without standards is reckless, and standards without strategy are irrelevant. Our profession needs both. ICMCI delivers both. And the CMC designation is the place where both come together in a single, verifiable mark of professional quality.

Now let me turn to the subject that ran through every session today like an electric current: artificial intelligence.

In my own presentation on ICMCI's Code for the Use of AI in Management Consulting, I set out the seven principles that we believe should govern how our profession engages with this extraordinary technology. These are not abstract aspirations. They are working principles, designed to be applied in practice, on real engagements, starting now.

But I want to make a broader point as I close this conference. AI was not a standalone topic today. It was woven into the fabric of everything we discussed. Robert's strategies for an uncertain world will increasingly be developed with the aid of AI-powered analysis, scenario modelling, and predictive tools. The competence framework that Celal presented now explicitly incorporates digital fluency and AI literacy as core requirements for the professional consultant. And the AI Code provides the ethical guardrails that ensure this technology is used responsibly.

This is exactly as it should be. AI is not a separate compartment of our professional lives. It is an accelerant. And the nature of an accelerant is that it amplifies whatever is already there.

If what is already there is genuine competence, deep expertise, ethical commitment, and a rigorous approach to client service – then AI makes us more powerful, more efficient, and more valuable to our clients. But if what is already there is sloppy thinking, superficial analysis, and no accountability – then AI does not fix those problems. It *magnifies* them. It allows bad advice to be generated faster, distributed more widely, and delivered with a veneer of technological sophistication that can fool clients into thinking they are getting something rigorous when they are not.

This is why the AI Code and the Competence Framework are not competing initiatives. They are two sides of the same coin. The framework ensures that the consultant is competent. The code ensures that the technology is used ethically. Together, they give clients something that no unregulated, uncertified practitioner can offer: assurance.

I have spent much of my time as Chair of ICMCI making the case for professional standards in an unregulated profession. It is an argument I have made in Vienna, in Brussels, Hong Kong, in Shanghai, in Beijing, in Singapore, in Australia and in many other places online. And I will be candid with you: it is not always an easy argument to make. Some consultants see standards as bureaucracy. Some see the CMC as unnecessary in a market where reputation and referral seem to do the job well enough. Some, frankly, prefer the freedom of an unregulated market because it allows them to operate without scrutiny.

But today, we have the strongest evidence we have ever assembled for why that view is not just wrong – it is dangerous.

Robert showed us that clients facing genuine storms – geopolitical risk, technological disruption, existential strategic choices – need advisors they can trust with decisions that will shape the future of their organisations. Trust in that context is not a feeling. It is a function of verifiable competence and demonstrated ethical commitment. A confident manner and a polished presentation are not enough when the stakes are this high.

Celal showed us that ICMCI is not defending a static set of requirements from a previous era. We are actively evolving what competence means, incorporating the skills and knowledge that the modern consultant genuinely needs, and doing so through a rigorous, consultative, evidence-based process. This is a living, breathing professional standard – not a dusty certificate on a wall.

And the AI Code shows that our profession is stepping into regulatory white space before governments do it for us. Governments around the world are grappling with how to regulate AI. Most of them are behind the curve. ICMCI, by contrast, has already produced a principled, practical code that consultants can adopt immediately. We are not waiting to be told how to behave. We are leading.

Taken together, these three pieces of work make a case that I believe is unanswerable: voluntary self-regulation through ICMCI is faster, more expert-led, and more globally portable than anything a single national government could impose. It is built by consultants, for consultants, with the needs of clients at its heart. But – and this is the crucial caveat – it only works if the profession embraces it. The architecture is built. Now we need the profession to live in it.

In addition, our ICMCI National Consulting Index, the NCI, clearly demonstrates the that a strong management consulting presence in a country can go hand in hand with an enhanced GDP and other indices of a country's economic health. It is all the more imperative then that our profession needs to regulate itself to behave in the most professionally competent and ethical manner possible in order to provide excellent value to our clients.

So I am going to close with four requests. Not suggestions. Requests.

First: Read the White Paper. You will find insights that will help you in consulting engagements

Second: if you hold the CMC designation, be its ambassador. Do not treat it as a line on your CV that you update once every three years. Make it visible. Tell your clients what it means. Explain that it represents verified competence, adherence to an international code of conduct, and a commitment to continuous professional development. In a market where anyone can claim to be a consultant, show your clients what a *professional* consultant looks like. You are the proof that standards matter.

Third: take the updated Competence Framework back to your national institute and use it. Make it the benchmark for professional development programmes in the year ahead. Use it to assess where your own skills need strengthening – particularly in the areas of digital fluency, AI literacy, and adaptive strategic thinking that the 2026 update emphasises. Celal and his team have given us a tool. Let us not leave it in the toolbox.

Fourth: adopt the AI Use Code not as an aspiration, but as a working protocol in your practice – starting this week. The next time you use an AI tool on a client engagement, ask yourself: am I maintaining proper human oversight? Am I being transparent with my client about the role AI is playing in my analysis? Am I protecting their data? Am I accountable for the output? If the answer to any of those questions is uncertain, the Code gives you the framework to put it right. Use it.

I began this day by saying that storms are when captains earn their keep. We have spent the past ninety minutes equipping ourselves for the voyage ahead.

Robert gave us the compass: adaptive, precision strategy that turns uncertainty into opportunity. Celal gave us the chart: a competence framework that tells us where we need to be and what skills we need to get there. And the AI Code gives us the rules of seamanship: the ethical principles that ensure we use the most powerful tools at our disposal with responsibility and integrity.

Compass, chart, and code. Strategy, competence, and ethics. These are not three separate things. They are one integrated response to the most challenging and the most exciting period in the history of our profession.

The global management consulting market is valued at a trillion dollars and growing. The demand for what we do – genuine, expert, ethical advisory services – has never been greater. But nor has the scrutiny. Clients are more sophisticated. Expectations are higher. And the consequences of getting it wrong are more severe. In that environment, the consultants who will thrive are not the loudest, the cheapest, or those who hide behind a well-known brand name. They are the most competent, the most agile, and the most trustworthy.

That is the profession ICMCI is building. That is the standard the CMC represents. And that is the future I am asking every one of you to help us create.

We are not passengers in this storm. We are not even just the navigators. We are the people our clients turn to when the seas are roughest and the stakes are highest. Let us make sure – every single day – that we are worthy of that trust.

Thank you for joining us today, from wherever in the world you are. Happy International Consultants Day. And now, go and master the storm.