



International Society for Soil Mechanics and Geotechnical Engineering

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A Message from the Vice President

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 A Message from the Vice President
- 2 Views of Young Geotechnical Engineers
- 3 TC Activity
- 5 Activity of Member
- 6 Reminiscences
- 9 Case History
- 14 News
- 16 Event Diary
- 18 Announcement
- 18 Editorial Remarks
- 19 Corporate Members



As vice president of ISSMGE, it is my great pleasure to inform the international community about the activities in the field of geotechnical engineering and soil mechanics in Africa. When I started my bid in September 2005, to act on behalf of Africa, I was convinced, for several reasons, a hard job awaited me. How to communicate much better with African geotechnical engineers was an obvious difficulty. However this technical handicap, in such way, might be tackled. Thinking about manners for setting up tools to make Africans geotechnical engineers more involved in ISSMGE activities was also another challenge. Indeed, as first statement, Africans countries or member societies affiliated in ISSMGE remain very few. Adding the fact more than 50% of African societies are unable to pay their ISSMGE subscription fees in due time. Another relevant handicap is the rate of participation of African GE, either as members or core-members, in ISSMGE TCs. Just less than ten members participated in activities of ISSMGE TCs from 2001 to 2005.

Hence, the first priority was to initiate rapidly and efficiently contacts between African geotechnical engineers. Obviously, setting up an updated file of electronic addresses revealed necessary to diffuse news and information via internet. By October 2005, I was collecting about forty (40) addresses from about ten countries. To date it is possible to communicate with more than one hundred sixty GE through about twenty eight (28) African countries. This database will surely be more enriched. Coming to TCs, for 2005-2009 bid, the total number of African members and (or) core-members is about of twenty two.

From my first contacts with Professors Pedro Sêco e Pinto (ISSMGE President) and R. N. Taylor (ISSMGE Secretary General) we agreed, for Africa region, to schedule at least two Touring Lecture sessions (2007-2008) and to organise the 2nd YGEC in 2007 prior to the 14th ARC to be held in Yaoundé (Cameroon) November 26-28th. To date, from this programme, two events were successfully held: a touring lecture on "Soil improvement" took place in Tunisia December 15-16th 2006, followed by the organisation of 2nd YGEC also in Tunisia March 16-18th 2007 which was preceded by the first 2007 meeting of ISSMGE board members in Tunis, March 15th. Next Touring Lecture session is scheduled in Nigeria (September, 2007) on Environmental Geotechnics.

At this time full attention is being made for the preparation and venue of 14th ARC. First official data confirm this big event the most successful with wishes of African geotechnical engineers. Twenty three countries submitted papers, 70% of which were from thirteen African countries. Five themes cover problems as related to African soils. It is worth noticed the big efforts deployed by the organising and advisory committees to make the 14th ARC much excited. In parallel, the scientific committee is trying to ensure a good scientific level for accepted papers as it is usually done for international conferences.

Another great positive fact is expressed by some countries which went through or being in way to become officially affiliated member societies in ISSMGE. In particular, Algeria, Cameroon, Senegal, Libya and Mozambique stand tentatively as the "serious" candidates for giving a better implication of Africa in ISSMGE activities.

It cannot be missed the unique and so valuable opportunity offered to Africa for the venue of 17th ICSMGE in Egypt (October 2009), in Alexandria Bibliotheca on the Mediterranean coast. The preparation, particularly by the Egyptian Geotechnical Society, of this biggest ISSMGE event is being in good progress. It will largely contribute, the coming decade, for the emancipation of geotechnical and soil mechanics cultures in Africa.

Finally, I greatly express my sincere regards and thanks for all my African colleagues who both supported me and provided positive collaboration to make substantial progress in the geotechnical field. Also, my great thanks go to my all ISSMGE board colleagues who, especially, participated to overcome some specific African issues. Special thanks go to my friend M. Gambin who endeavoured great efforts to access much helpful information for the African region.

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