



International Society for Soil Mechanics and Geotechnical Engineering

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A Message from the Vice President

By Professor Waldemar Hachich

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This would have been the time for the message from the Vice-President for North America. My message from South America had to be put to paper ahead of schedule because of John Seychuk's misfortune of having to face some temporary strain, which ultimately led him to resign his post last August.

I cannot, therefore, refrain from saying a couple of words about John. We have worked very close for the past three years, especially as members of the Advisory Committee for the Pan-American Conference held in Venezuela in 2007. John and I have had long, enlightening discussions about the Pan-American Committee – a particularity of North and South America, the only two ISSMGE regions that have a common Regional Conference –, and proposed a revision of its statutes to make them more realistic and pragmatic, especially with respect to the choice of the Casagrande Lecturer. And John is the person to

interact with, if common sense, sound engineering judgment, and pragmatism are at issue. All our joint proposals have been approved at the Pan-American Committee meeting held in July, 2007. Interacting with "BBJ" has been both stimulating and rewarding. ISSMGE – and myself in particular – will miss his most qualified opinion here in the "New World".

Enthusiastic as ever about the geotechnical activities in the three North American member societies, John would probably have concluded his report on a high note: "the three societies in the region keep moving full steam ahead, as one can easily infer from a visit to their Web pages". Hope we continue to exchange opinions and views, John. Peace! Welcome to the group, Dennis Becker, and let us work together for a memorable Pan-American Conference in Toronto, 2011.

South American societies are also moving full speed ahead, amidst a relatively favourable prospect for many of the economies in the region. Unfortunately, however, South and Central Americans have a tendency for being excessively discreet in publicising their achievements. As an example, only about half of the member societies have active websites.

One of the societies has ISSMGE fees in arrears, a situation that we are endeavouring to see resolved before Alexandria. Perhaps even more worrisome is the lack of communication experienced for some periods of time with some of the societies, since being a member of ISSMGE should not be seen as just a matter of paying fees, but also of demonstrating engagement in the aims of ISSMGE.

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Most of the twelve member societies are not large in terms of number of members. Geotechnical communities in some countries in the region are restricted to 30 to 50 individual members. The economies of the region have always been characterised by ups and downs. During the down periods there is, in general, little geotechnical activity and therefore little incentive for involvement of our colleagues in associative affairs. When, on the other hand, there is some surge in investment for infrastructure – and we are talking about a region where a very significant portion of the population is still longing for basic infrastructure – most of them get so much involved in professional activities that writing papers and participating in meetings of Technical Committees and conferences would demand time that they could not hope to afford. In general they do, however, tackle geotechnical challenges with zest and creativity worth being widely publicised.

Uncertainties and difficulties notwithstanding, most South American Member Societies have appointed members to Technical Committees (both ISSMGE and Joint TCs), and have had their appointments endorsed by the chairmen and by President Sêco e Pinto. ABMS (Brazil), SOCHIGE (Chile) and SCG (Colombia) are the societies in the region that currently have core members in the TCs. ABMS also has two chairmen (JTC1 and TC41).

A Message from the Vice President (continued)

By Professor Waldemar Hachich

Many societies in the region hold national conferences on two-year intervals, most of them on even years. The most recent has been COBRAMSEG, the very successful Brazilian national conference, which took place in Búzios, Rio de Janeiro, last August (see report in the "Activity of Member" section). CAMSIG, the Argentinean national conference, shall take place next October, in La Plata.

SAIG (Argentina) is also organizing the 3rd South American Young Geotechnical Engineers Conference (YGEC), to take place in Córdoba in March, 2009. The Chilean society will host the 5th International Conference on Earthquake Geotechnical Engineering (5ICEGE - TC4), in 2011. The president and myself have asked ACG (Costa Rica) to host the South American Symposium on Landslides for JTC1 (probably in 2010), thus enacting a decision taken by the Pan-American Committee in July, 2007. ABMS (Brazil) will host the International Conference on Geosynthetics, in association with the International Geosynthetics Society and its Brazilian chapter, in 2010, as well as the (TC16) International Conference on Site Investigation, in 2012.

Five ISSMGE International Seminars have been organized to date in the region, thanks to the enthusiasm and incentive from Prof. Sêco e Pinto and to the hard work of each of the member societies in terms of organisation and gathering of local industry support. In Santiago (Chile) and Asunción (Paraguay), in August, 2006, support was provided by SMMS (the Mexican Society for Soil Mechanics) for the participation of Prof. Gabriel Auvinet as lecturer. In San José (Costa Rica) and San Salvador (El Salvador), in July, 2007, the GeolInstitute sponsored the participation of Prof. Braja Das. ABMS, the Brazilian Association for Soil Mechanics and Geotechnical Engineering, sponsored the participation of several lecturers in all five Seminars, including the latest one in Guayaquil (Ecuador), in August, 2008: myself, as regional vice-president, Armando Caputo, Flávio Montez and Frederico Falconi. ISSMGE has sponsored Prof. Sêco e Pinto's participation in all five events, which followed the "Guidelines for ISSMGE International Seminars" and included local as well as international lecturers, with an engaging mix of themes that ranged from routine to modern Soil Mechanics, from fundamental principles and concepts to case studies. Notes have been prepared for advance distribution to participants, in most cases in the native language. Attendance ranged between 50 and 100 in each venue. At least two more ISSMGE International Seminars are being planned for the next twelve months before Alexandria.

ABMS (Brazil) and SAIG (Argentina) have a history of over 50 years and are preparing their 60th anniversary celebrations. SVDG (Venezuela) is celebrating its 50th anniversary next November. ACG (Costa Rica) is also preparing celebrations for November, 2008 (25th anniversary). On the other side of the spectrum, ISSMGE has recently welcomed two new member societies: CTNMSIG/ UNAICC (Cuba) and SSG (El Salvador). As usual, we are not blessed by celebrations and achievements alone. We also had to confront some sad events, such as the untimely death of Issa Kort, a very dear and gentle colleague who, for many years, had been the heart and soul of SOCHIGE (Chile). But, all in all, the past three years have been quite eventful for the South and Central American region, and therefore gratifying for the regional vice-president. Better yet, the present state of affairs in the region points in the direction of an even more stimulating future.

View of Young Geotechnical Engineers

By Osamu Kusakabe and Pongsakorn Punrattanasin

Young Geotechnical Engineering Network

The young geotechnical engineering network was set up with a total number of 80 members during the ISSMGE Osaka Conference in 2005 but the group was not active in communication due to some technical reasons. The board of ISSMGE Bulletin really hopes that contributions from young members can provide good ideas to improve the ISSMGE and geotechnical society in the future. The board also hopes that young members can express, report their views and opinions as well as can report activities in the space of ISSMGE Bulletin and ISSMGE website. What ISSMGE board members discussed at the ISSMGE Board Meeting at Saint Petersburg, Russia this June about the continuation of Bulletin and the role of young members are as follows: The board needs active and voluntary young geotechnical engineers to work closely with the Vice President in their region; (1) to gather the regional information such as events, books, disaster, geotechnical achievements and to send it to the editorial board once in three months. (2) to serve as a contact person for collecting contributions such as case history and Reminiscences, and (3) to prepare the contributions from young generations in the region once in a year. The first four members who are voluntary to run the new young geotechnical network are as follows: 1) Professor Deepankar Chudhury (India), 2) Dr.Imen Said (Turnisia), 3) Makoto Namba (Brazil) and 4) Dr.Pongsakorn Punrattanasin (Thailand). The board also would like to extend an invitation to the interested young members from various countries to join the young geotech network. Interested members please kindly contact us via email to Professor Osamu Kusakabe (Kusakabe@cv.titech.ac.jp) or to Dr.Pongsakorn Punrattanasin (ppunrattanasin@gmail.com).