

Report back on the ITA 2014 General Assembly Fortieth Annual Meeting held at Iguassu Falls, Brazil

The International Tunnelling and Underground Space Association (ITA) held its fortieth annual meeting in Iguassu Falls, Brazil, from 9 to 14 May 2014, in conjunction with the World Tunnel Congress 2014 'Tunnels for a Better Life', organized by the ITA and the Brazilian Tunnelling Committee. More than 1500 persons participated in the conference. The Association registered 12 new Affiliate Members in the preceding year, which resulted in a total of 71 Member Nations and 285 Affiliate Members (taking into account some resignations). Fifty-two of the 71 Member Nations either participated or were represented in the General Assembly. Ron Tluczek, Chairman of SANCOT, represented South Africa on behalf of the SANCOT Committee.

A task force worked during the previous year to clarify the mission, the goals, and actions of the ITA. A new vision statement was defined for the Association, which was presented and approved at the General Assembly, as follows:

'ITA, the leading International organization promoting the use of tunnels and underground space through knowledge sharing and application of technology'.

Seven strategic goals were defined:

1. Consolidate / activate Member Nations – particularly newly joined Member Nations
2. Improve communication and functioning of Working Groups and Committees
3. Expand industry relations
4. Encourage knowledge sharing through education and training
5. Create and develop an ITA Young Members Group
6. Promote the use of underground space
7. Improve communication with Member Nations, industry, and public

The General Assembly voted on and approved the creation of a Young Member Group of the ITA, whose main goals are:

- a) To provide a technical networking platform within the ITA for young professionals and students
- b) To bridge the gap between generations and to network across all experience levels in the industry
- c) To promote awareness of the tunnelling and underground space industry to new generations
- d) To provide young professionals and students with a voice in the ITA, including the Working Groups
- e) To look after the next generation of tunnelling professionals and to pass on the aims and ideals of the ITA.

The Open Session, which took place on 13 May, was dedicated to 'Underground Space and Natural Resources' with a special focus on mining. It was stated that mining operations are always complicated as they follow the

geology, and the use of ramps, access tunnels and tunnel boring machines (TBMs) is becoming more standard around the world. There are many opportunities and challenges, and both industry and the mining fraternity have to adapt to face these challenges. The experts who participated in the debate advocated mutual co-operation between the civil and mining industries. An arduous task, but one which could bring benefits to both parties.

Sergio Brito, President of BVP Engineering, spoke about the challenges faced by the Brazilian mining industry. He stated that Brazil needs to be more competitive at its copper mining projects, where the majority of the ore is excavated by means of open pit mining. Another challenge that Brazil will have to face is that of underground mining. Currently, about 80% of ore production is derived from open pit mining. A rapid change in this industry is expected over the next 20 to 30 years, due to the decrease in available ore at shallow levels, the need to preserve the environment, and the emergence of new technologies. It is estimated that 50% of the ore production will be obtained from underground mining within 20 years.

South African representatives participated in three Working Groups. Ron Tluczek participated in Working Group 2 (Research), Tony Boniface in Working Group 12 (Sprayed Concrete Use), and Monica Walnstein participated in Working Group 21 (Life Cycle Asset Management). With the assistance of Frank Stevens and Montso Lebetsa, Monica made a presentation to Working Group 21 on some aspects of life cycle asset management in South Africa.

Four reports were published in the previous year:

- 'Refuge Chambers' by ITA Working Group 5
- 'Guidelines on Monitoring Frequencies in Urban Tunnelling' by the ITAtech Activity Group on Monitoring
- 'Guidelines on best practices for segmental backfilling' by the ITAtech Activity Group on Excavation
- 'An engineering methodology for performance-based fire safety design of underground rail systems' by the ITA CUSUF Committee.

All these documents are available free of charge on the ITA website and available for comments.

The forthcoming annual meetings of the ITA General Assembly will be held at the following venues:

- *Dubrovnik, Croatia*: 22–28 May 2015, during the ITA-AITES WTC 2015 'Promoting Tunnelling in South East European Region'.
- *San Francisco, USA*: 22–28 April 2016, during the ITA-AITES WTC 2016 'Uniting our Industry'.
- *Bergen, Norway*: 9–16 June 2017, during the ITA-AITES WTC 2017 'Surface Problems – Underground Solutions'.



From Left to Right: Soren Eskesen (president of the ITA), Tarcisio Celestino (Organizer of the Brazilian World Conference and Vice President of the ITA), Monique Walnstein, Tony Boniface and wife Veronica, Ron Tluczek (SANCOT chairman) and wife Merry

H.J. Tluczek