

## **PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2009**

Looking back at 2009, I think one can say it has been a somewhat successful year, considering the catastrophic economic events of 2008, which continued to spill over into 2009. Although times were tough, SACAC has maintained its presence internationally within IFAC, and locally hosted a few events. Behind the scenes, a lot of initial groundwork has also begun, in preparation for the 19<sup>th</sup> World Congress to be held in Cape Town in 2014. It was also a year of consolidation, and some refocusing on the current main objectives relating to the needs of our members. These include,

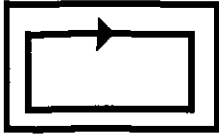
- Strengthen relationship with IFAC
- Improved co-operation between Industry and Institutions
- Building capacity within Industry
- Provide Value for membership
- Develop a strong balance sheet to support 2014

To support these objectives, it was evident that the management of our membership needs to be strengthened, and a better communication strategy developed to ensure all our stakeholders are fully informed of ongoing events at all time. To this end, an initiative has been started to ensure updated membership information is established, the website is being revisited, and visibility of SACAC is being increased in the South African environment. This will also better align our image as the National Member Organisation of IFAC in South Africa.

Currently we are enjoying a strengthening of our relationship with IFAC, as several of our members were elected to participate on IFAC technical committees, and of course, Ian Craig is currently the IFAC President-Elect. We also have Xiaohua Xia as the Chairman of the TC on Non-linear Control Systems, and Fernando Camisani is on the Policy Committee. The IFAC "MMM" conference will also be hosted in Cape Town in August 2010.

In 2009, SACAC organised only two workshop events, as work pressures unfortunately took its toll on our EXCO members, and potential organisers, who found themselves too busy with other commitments.

- The first of these events was a very successful Control Systems postgraduate day, which was hosted by Prof Chris Aldrich at Stellenbosch University in October, which was reasonably well-attended, and it was encouraging to see the wide variety of research interests across our tertiary institutions.
- A successful "Automation in a Nutshell Workshop" which was organised by Dr Kevin Brooks, took place in Midrand in November, which covered a variety of topics covering the whole automation spectrum. This event had a good turnout, and was also accepted for ECSA CPD accreditation.



## South African Council for Automation and Control

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In May we also hosted the first SACAC Past Presidents Lunch, at the Johannesburg Country Club. It was a new initiative, one of the aims being to share the success of SACAC winning the 2014 World Congress bid, as well as honouring their role in the continuing journey of SACAC. Personally, as a newer member to the organisation, it was the first occasion that I had met many of the Past Presidents, however for those present it seemed quite a nostalgic reunion, with lots of discussion and trips down memory lane, some all the way back to the eighties. It was also a great opportunity to bring together some of the countries very experienced practitioners in the art of automation, and it was decided that the event would be repeated periodically in the future.

As an ongoing effort to broaden our relationships with fellow Associations, SACAC EXCO member Mrs Sethabile Madolo attended at the IEEE 125<sup>th</sup> Year celebration in October, and I also had the pleasure of attending the SAIEE Centenary Banquet in November.

On the financial side, we currently have a reasonably healthy balance sheet, however with only 4 years to go before the World Congress, we will need to significantly strengthen it, and realise that some extraordinary effort will be required from all our members. Our treasurer Kobus Oosthuizen has already been working on this aspect, and it will be a key focus area going forward.

As we look towards 2010, there are already plans for a number of local workshops, as well as hosting the IFAC Symposium on Control in Mining, Minerals and Metal Processing ('MMM') in Cape Town in August. The 2010 MMM will also provide an early "practice run" for the main event also in Cape Town in 2014.

Another important activity will be to design the logo and associated banner for the 2014 World Congress, which will be unveiled in 2011 in Milan at the 18<sup>th</sup> World Congress. We also plan to host a Friendship Evening for invited IFAC officers and delegates in Milan, and it would be wonderful to have as many SACAC members as possible represented at this event, so please start planning already.

The selection of the Professional Conference Organiser to assist with the organisation of the World Congress is already in process, and my thanks go to Dr Fernando Camisani and his NOC committee for all the work already put into this huge task.

In conclusion, I would like to thank all my Executive Committee members for their continued support during the year, and to Jean McKenzie and Reina Aviges for their dedicated and sometimes less visible behind the scenes administration support.

To all our SACAC members, I thank you all for your ongoing backing of our organisation, and look forward to seeing SACAC continue to grow, and to host a successful 19th IFAC World Congress in 2014.

John Viljoen  
24th March, 2010