

Presidents Address Kobus Oosthuizen 2017

Automation and Control engineers is a diverse group, employed in a variety of industries, and utilising a wide skills set. Although a large portion of these engineers are employed in the chemical, mining and metallurgical industries, the mere fact that Automation and Control forms part of both Chemical and Electronic engineers' curricula, already results in subtle rivalry. Instrumentation and industrial networks on processing plants is the focus a certain group, while others employed in these industries practise their profession in an R&D environment or at a different level in the control hierarchy. Add to this control engineers' involvement in mechatronics, automotive control and aerospace, and the range of activities diverges even further. It hence comes as no surprise that a number of institutions has an interest in this field, and adds value to its members by participating in this space in its own unique way.

The importance of SACAC's link with the International Federation of Automatic Control (IFAC), is easily underestimated, until one gets involved in the organisation of a large event such as the IFAC World Congress SACAC hosted in 2014. An international network associated with IFAC participates at an organisational, as well as a technical level, and ensures that all IFAC and IFAC co-sponsored events adhere to IFAC's high standards in all respects. Proceeding of all IFAC events are published on IFAC-PapersOnline, which is available free of charge. This maximises the exposure a participant receives, following such an event. The diverse control community represented by IFAC provides scope for an exciting line-up of plenary speakers – all of which contribute towards a memorable and top-quality event. SACAC is continually perusing opportunities to bring high quality IFAC events to South Africa. Hosting these events locally not only makes it much more accessible to all South Africans, but also raises South Africa's profile in the international control community.

SACAC's focus for 2017 is the Control Conference Africa (CCA) 7-8 December in Johannesburg – co-sponsored by IFAC. Come and experience the IFAC-difference, and take part in the workshops preceding the conference to get your CPD points up to date before the December break. More details on this event is provided in this newsletter, as well feedback from members supported by SACAC to attend the IFAC World congress in Toulouse, France recently. The best way to remain up to date with SACAC activities and sponsorships is to join SACAC's LinkedIn group, and by requesting our secretariat to be added to the SACAC mailing list. Feel free to browse our website (www.sacac.org.za) for workshops that are offered on a "per request" basis, and look out for the latest news on local workshops and evening talks.

The strength of the South African Automation and Control community lies in its diversity and the manner in which organisations and their members interact in this space. Let's find ways, as organisations, to collaborate and complement each other, to achieve the mutual goal of serving our members practising as Automation and Control engineers.