

A message from Professor Victor F.B.de Mello

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Prof. Dr. Victor F.B. de Mello, Past-President 1981-'85

To our dear Asian colleague geotechnicians.

It seems especially significant that the region of the oldest cultures should have chanced to choose the venue of the 11th Regional Conference to be hosted by the young Korean Geotechnical Society. At the turn of the century and globalizedly accepted millenium, we profit of good omens, of our intrinsic values as cultural-sociable-communicative animals, of the inherited merit of memory and distilled abstractions, and of unpredictable neurological reconnections that generate intuitions and dreams, upon which serious work builds up creativity. And ingenious engineering is creativity rendered practical and useful.

We have crossed the threshold of a new era of communication, possibly equivalent in importance to the first cave-paintings and words of ample-spectrum meanings emitted vs. received/absorbed, secondly followed by the Guttenberg printing press. The age of instant virtual meetings and messages. Immeasurably exhilarating as a tool, for a part of our desires/needs, regrettably turned all-important by the media, its master and vehicle. How could we expect the media to demean what is their driving and thriving energy ? All praise to the inevitable prospects of virtual cross-world venues, as a tool, and preliminary efficient step. But where lies the comparison of efficient materialism versus the boundless stimuli, energies, achievements, of sentiment, affection, and the delighting in the miracle of infinite enriching differences ? The infinity of messages received by e-mail and internet, risking a percentage of errors unheeding, indelible, or recalcitrant, may be deforming in lieu of formative, leaving the dominated lone individual, ever eager acquirer, ever more passive : the antithesis of a true engineering attitude, intellectual and social. Moreover, memory infinitely expanded, and imprinted idealized solutions easily used, present grave dangers. Herein arises the emphasis on the unbeatable value of frequenting the conferences, as the agoras or market-places, of personal exchanges.

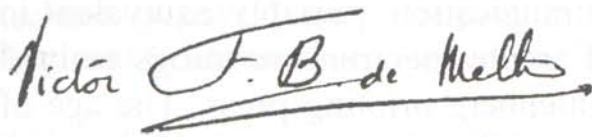
How very promising to envision this specific venue tying past and future, young unfettered dreams and energy, with the presumed values of experience and maturity. The day-to-day drone, ever more exacting and speedy, numbs us into unquestioning repetitivity : and unsuspecting we become slaves to erstwhile indispensable, useful, idealizations and prescriptions, the "base steps by which (the profession) did ascend" . It is the challenge of novelty and youth that maintains the seed of quest and

development, ever-prodding the comfort of presumed experience that has been accepted as satisfactory (satis = sufficient) . Sufficient for what ? Guarantee : at what extra cost, now unbearable ? And how far capable of meeting, with maximized economy, the ever-increasing levels of need/desires of Society, our only real Client ?

How I wish I could (or might yet) be able to attend. May there be a great attendance and success. The themes attract attention, individually, and evoking the holistic engineer :

1. Deep Estuarine Deposits, a new geologic-geotechnical quest.
2. Urban Tunneling, a profoundly professional challenge.
3. Earth Reinforcing, the new contributions from industries, to meet Nature.
4. Natural Disasters, humility in tackling immensity.
5. Professional Practice, the ethics of a very unique age-old calling of service in ever-singular prototypes directly responsible to many, multitudes. And,
6. Geotechnical Education, our responsibility to pass the baton on to the forgers of the future.

Do plant the seeds on fertile, watered ground. The tree will grow and leave us puny, but remembered.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Victor F.B. de Mello". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Victor F.B. de Mello
Past-President, ISSMGE