

THE INTERNATIONAL GEOSYNTHETICS SOCIETY (IGS): NO BORDERS FOR THE GOOD USE OF GEOSYNTHETICS

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ABSTRACT

Over its 30 years of existence, the International Geosynthetics Society (IGS) has grown enormously, both in the number of members and in the scope and impact of its activities. Today, the IGS has over 3,000 members, including over 150 corporate members and 350 student members. During this period, the IGS organized a remarkable number of international conferences and regional (continental) conferences as well as hundreds of national (chapter) conferences. In addition, it has formed chapters in 38 countries or groups of countries, and implemented numerous educational, technical and outreach programs. This paper provides an overview of the history of the IGS, its standing within the context of international learned societies, an overview of its chapters, of its conferences and of ongoing initiatives aimed at providing continued advancement of geosynthetics.

INTRODUCTION

2013 marks the 30th anniversary of the International Geosynthetics Society (IGS). Over its 30 years of existence, the IGS has grown remarkably. As of January 2013, the IGS has 3,135 members, including 2,620 individual members, 356 student members, and 159 corporate members. The IGS chapters, which are somewhat equivalent to the member societies of other international societies, were initiated with pioneer chapters in western Europe, North America and eastern Asia, but subsequently spread out to the rest of the world, including South America, Africa, and eastern Europe.

During this period, the IGS has accomplished the organization of seven international conferences, thirteen regional (continental) conferences, and hundreds of national (chapter) conferences. In addition, current counts show IGS chapters in 38 countries or group of countries, with several other countries currently in the process of establishing new chapters. The society has established awards programs with emphasis on rewarding technical excellence, it has implemented numerous educational programs, compiled educational material, prepared terminology documents in multiple languages, sponsored student programs, and organized numerous outreach programs, to name a few of its activities and achievements. To provide a context to the IGS trajectory in fostering the good use of geosynthetics worldwide, this paper provides an overview of the history of the IGS, its standing within the context of international learned societies, an overview of the chapters of the IGS and a summary of its successful conference series. In addition, the

paper provides an overview of the current structure of the IGS, its operating units and a few examples of ongoing initiatives.

The information in this paper is an updated and expanded version of information partially presented by the author as part of the “President’s Corner” series of articles published in *IGSNews*, the Newsletter of the IGS.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE THIRTY YEAR-HISTORY OF THE IGS

The organization of early international conferences on geosynthetics (or “fabrics” at the time) provided the forum for discussions on the formation of an international society. An early international conference on the use of “Fabrics” in geotechnics was held in Paris, France, in 1977. However, the concept of an international society, which will later become the IGS, was only formulated in 1980 (Giroud 2008). Subsequently, during the Second International Conference on Geotextiles held in Las Vegas, USA in 1982, the formation of the IGS was explicitly discussed. Finally, the “International Geotextile Society,” as it was named at the time, was officially founded on November 10, 1983 with Charles Schaerer (Switzerland) as its President. This founding of the society initiates the 30 year-timeline shown in Figure 1.

The timeline highlights **important milestones** in the history of the society (see Figure 1, in pink). At the time of the society’s founding in 1983, the “G” in the IGS acronym originally corresponded to “Geotextiles,” but the growth of the scope of the society activities was reflected in 1994 when the IGS Assembly approved changing the society’s name into the International “Geosynthetics” Society. As also shown among the milestones in the figure, access to the highly regarded “Geotextile & Geomembranes” technical journal was added as a benefit to the IGS membership early in the history of our society (in 1987), becoming the first official journal of the IGS. A second and equally prominent technical journal, “Geosynthetics International,” became an official IGS journal in 1994. The availability of two technical journals is good evidence of the high emphasis of the IGS on the dissemination of information. It is notable that these two journals have been consistently ranked among the best journals in the field of geotechnical engineering.

Outreach to young members in our discipline has received special focus throughout the history of the IGS, with key milestones being the establishment of student membership in 1990 and the implementation of unique student awards programs since 2000. A fresh and equally relevant milestone is the creation by the IGS Council of the its Young Members Committee in December 2012, which aims at facilitating and promoting the active participation of young members (under 35 years old) in technical geosynthetics activities and the operation of the IGS.

More recent milestones in the history of the IGS include the formation of the IGS Technical Committees (TCs), approved by the IGS Council in 2010 as well as the implementation of Council Operating Units that include not only IGS Council

Committees but also Council Task Forces. Also in 2010, the IGS Council approved a statement for the Core Purpose of the IGS, a 4-year operations plan, and a long-term Big Audacious Goal. In 2011, the office of the IGS Secretariat Manager was relocated to South Florida (in Jupiter, FL), after a long, productive operation of the IGS secretariat activities from Easley, South Carolina. Also in 2011, and following approval by the IGS Council, the IGS accepts invitation by the Federation of International Geo-Engineering Societies (FedIGS) to join this Federation as its first non-founding member. Finally, and at the time of preparation of this article (January 2013), the total IGS membership exceeded the mark of 3,000 IGS members, which probably deserves a place as a milestone in the 30 year-timeline (approximately 100 members per year over the existence of the IGS).

Also shown in the timeline are the **international conferences** organized by the IGS (see Figure 1, in blue). As discussed subsequently in this paper, the international conferences, along with the regional and chapter conferences, are vital forums to discuss the continuous advancement and transfer of information regarding geosynthetics. Changes in the name of the international conferences reflect the growth of our discipline, from the first international conference (preceding the formation of the IGS) “on the Use of Fabrics,” to international conferences “on Geotextiles,” to international conferences on “Geotextiles, Geomembranes and Related Products,” to (since 1998) international conferences on “Geosynthetics.”

The international conferences also represent important landmarks in the affairs of the IGS as they are the setting of its quadrennial general assemblies, where change in the council and elected officers of the IGS occurs. The presidency of Schaerer, appointed by the first IGS Council in 1983, was followed by seven subsequent presidents which, following a procedure probably unique among international learned societies, were all elected by direct vote of each one of the IGS members. They include J.P. Giroud (USA, 1986-90), Kerry Rowe (Canada, 1990-94), Colin Jones (UK, 1994-98), Richard Bathurst (Canada, 1998-2002), Daniele Cazzuffi (Italy, 2002-06), Fumio Tatsuoka (Japan, 2006-10) and, as of May 2010, Jorge G. Zornberg (USA).

Finally, the timeline also shows a number of important **“first” occasions/events** in the history of the IGS (see Figure 1, in yellow), starting with the formation of the first IGS Council in 1983. The first issue of the IGS Newsletter (IGSNews) was published in 1985 and has been regularly published since then. The first of the current 38 chapters of the IGS was the Japanese chapter, approved by the IGS Council in 1985. With the increasing relevance of the geosynthetics discipline and of the activities of the IGS came the opportunity of recognizing excellence. Accordingly, as shown in the timeline, the first Honorary membership was awarded in 1989 (to Prof. Masami Fukuoka), the first series of IGS Awards was presented in 1990 (to J.E. Fluet and E.R. Steinle) as was the first Young IGS Member Achievement Award (to R. Jewell), the first Mercer Lecture was awarded in 1992 (to Prof. R.M. Koerner), the First Giroud Lecture (also awarded to Prof. R.M. Koerner) was presented in 1998, the first IGS Service Award (to Prof. D. Elton) was presented in 2001, and first IGS Achievement Awards were presented in 2006 in recognition to exemplary service to an IGS chapter.

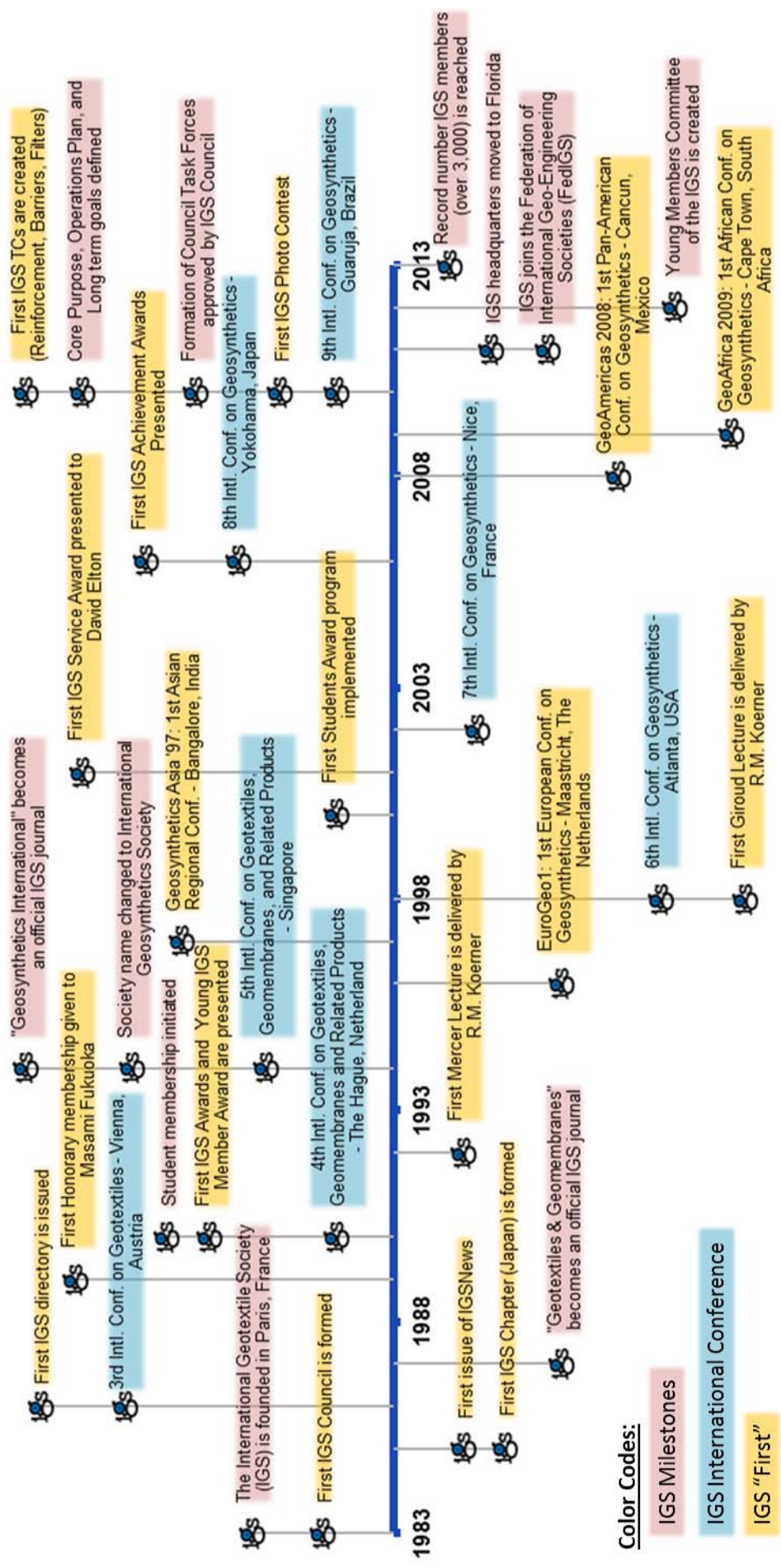


Figure 1: Overview of the thirty year-history of the IGS.

While the formation of the IGS was partly triggered by the forum of geosynthetic experts organizing international conferences (two of which preceded the creation of the IGS), it was the IGS that subsequently triggered the organization and successful implementation of other regional, specialty, and national geosynthetic conferences. Noteworthy among them are the series of IGS regional conferences, which are also organized every four years (two years apart from the International Conferences). The European regional conferences (EuroGeo series) was launched in 1996 (Maastrich, the Netherlands), the first Asian Regional conference (Geosynthetics Asia series) was held in 1997 (Bangalore, India), the Pan-American Regional conferences (GeoAmericas series) were initiated in 2008 (Cancun, Mexico), and the African Regional conferences (GeoAfrica series) launched in 2009 (Cape Town, South Africa). A more recent IGS “first” also shown in Figure 1 includes the First IGS Photo Contest in 2010, which received over 140 entries of photos documenting the good use of geosynthetics worldwide. Finally, and also in 2010, the IGS Council approved the creation its first Technical Committees (TCs) on Soil Reinforcement, Barrier Systems and Filtration all initiated in 2010.

Throughout its 30 years of existence, the army of volunteers that have served the IGS Council, its chapters, its publications, its committees, and its conferences has and continues to make a significant difference towards an expanded, good use of geosynthetics worldwide.

THE IGS IN THE INTERNATIONAL ARENA

The IGS occupies a special place among the international learned societies with focus on Geotechnical, Environmental, and Hydraulic Engineering. A current initiative of the IGS is that of increasing the connection to international sister societies. Some important steps have been recently taken in this direction, which will enhance the coordination and collaboration of the IGS with four important International Sister Societies, namely:

- the International Society of Soil Mechanics and Geotechnical Engineering (ISSMGE),
- the International Society of Rock Mechanics (ISRM),
- the International Association for Engineering Geology and the Environment (IAEG), and
- the International Commission for Irrigation and Drainage (ICID)

The interaction with ISSMGE, ISRM, and IAEG is product of the recent decision of the IGS to accept the invitation to join the Federation of the International Geo-Engineering Societies, or FedIGS (Zornberg 2011). This Federation includes these three founding member societies and now the IGS as the very first non-founding member international society invited to join. Joining FedIGS will bolster the IGS objective of increased connections to sister international organizations. Specifically, the IGS now has a direct channel of communication with three of the most relevant International Geo-Societies.

Table 1 provides a comparison of the membership, as well as the number of chapters and technical committees, of the IGS with that of the ISSMGE, ISRM and IAEG as self-reported by the various organizations in May 2012. The number of individual members of the IGS is an order of magnitude smaller than that of ISSMGE but on the same order of magnitude as the individual membership of the ISRM and IAEG. On the other hand, the IGS includes a healthy corporate membership, which exceeds (often significantly) the number of corporate members of our sister geo-societies. The table also compares the number of chapters (or member societies) among the different international sister societies. As shown in the table and discussed later in this paper, the presence of the IGS around the globe is increasing with the continued increase in its number of chapters. The IGS is now represented on all the continents with its 38 chapters, which is comparable to the number of national groups of international sister societies. In addition, the IGS has initiated the implementation of Technical Committees (TCs). While this number is comparatively small (TCs on Soil Reinforcement, Barrier Systems, and Filtration), the IGS TCs are expected to grow rapidly and to provide significant opportunities for collaboration with the ISSMGE and other sister societies.

Table 1. Number of chapters, committees and membership of the IGS and some International Sister Societies

	ISSMGE	ISRM	IAEG	IGS
Number of National Groups or Chapters	86	48	55	38
Number of Individual Members ^(*)	18,323	5,992	2,900	2,976
Number of Corporate Members	21	125	0	159
Number of Technical Committees	24	9	10	3

^(*) Includes student members

Another important development involving the relationship of the IGS with International Sister Societies is the Memorandum of Understanding recently signed between the IGS and the International Commission for Irrigation and Drainage (ICID). The IGS Officers met with the Board of ICID in October 2010, and set the base for a process that ended in October 2011 with the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding. The International Commission on Irrigation and Drainage (ICID) was established in 1950 as a Scientific, Technical and Voluntary Not-for-profit Non-Governmental International Organization (NGO) with headquarters in New Delhi, India. The Commission is dedicated to “enhancing the worldwide supply of food and fiber for all people by improving water and land management and the productivity of irrigated and drained lands through appropriate management of water, environment and application of irrigation, drainage and flood management techniques.” ICID has a consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO). Since the mission of ICID is to stimulate and promote the development of new technologies worldwide for achieving sustainable irrigation and drainage technologies, the cooperation with IGS is expected to lead to guidelines and policies that acknowledge the benefits of geosynthetics in important hydraulic projects.

In addition to these collaborative efforts with international sister societies, the IGS has formalized its relationship with standard organizations, including TC 221 of the International Standards Organization (ISO) and TC 189 of the European Committee of Standardization (CEN). Collaborative efforts are currently being planned with the various international sister societies and international standard organizations, which are expected to promote the advancement of geosynthetic technologies in multiple areas of engineering.

NO BORDERS FOR THE GOOD USE OF GEOSYNTHETICS I: THE IGS CHAPTERS

2012 was an active year regarding increasing the portfolio of chapters in the IGS, and by the time of its meeting on December 12, 2012 (12-12-12) in Bangkok the IGS Council concluded the year with the approval of four new chapters in four continents (Kazakhstan, Ghana, Iran, and Colombia). This represents an increase in the number of IGS chapters of over 10%. These new additions, which brought the total number of chapters in the Society to 38, provide good evidence of the healthy and continued growth of the IGS.

The addition of each new chapter provides the IGS with the opportunity not only to the newcomer by extending our ongoing technical activities into new geographic areas, but also to existing IGS chapters who receive additional stimulus to their ongoing activities. A good example is the recent opportunity to initiate a program aimed at providing educational material on geosynthetics to professors in the universities of some of our youngest chapters. The IGS response to this need is expected to lead to a broad initiative focused on undergraduate education on geosynthetics. This initiative will certainly benefit young and mature chapters alike.

The concept of IGS chapters developed soon after the founding of the IGS. During its 30 year-timeline, the number of IGS chapters has grown remarkably. Figure 2 shows the chronology of the formation of IGS chapters. As shown in the figure, the number of chapters has been increasing at a significantly high (and reasonably steady) rate of over one chapter per year; 1.25 chapters per year, to be more precise. As previously mentioned, Japan took the initiative of formalizing the very first chapter of the IGS in 1985. This initiative was soon followed by North America (NAGS) and the United Kingdom, which formed the first chapters in the Americas and Europe in 1986 and 1987, respectively. New chapters were continuously added to the IGS ranks and, by 1993 (the 10th anniversary of the IGS), a total of 10 chapters were already operating across Asia, Europe, and North America. By the end of the second decade in the life of the IGS, a total of 24 chapters had been formed (now in all continents). And by 2012, the number of IGS Chapters had reached 38 as a result of a continued focus on increasing the presence of the IGS and of geosynthetics to all regions.

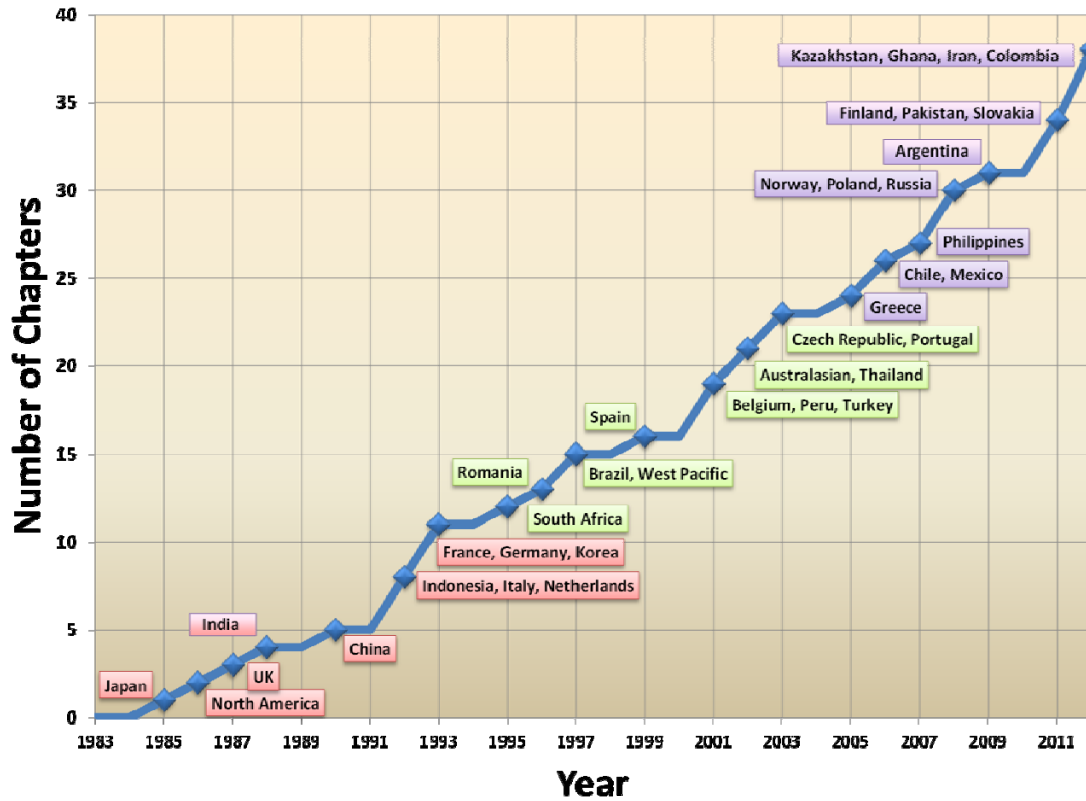


Figure 2: Chronology of the formation of IGS Chapters.

Figure 3 shows the world presence of the IGS in the form of IGS Chapters. As mentioned, during the first decade of the IGS, chapters were created in western Europe, North America and eastern Asia (countries shown in red in Figure 3). They correspond to regions in the world where the geosynthetics market is now mature regarding the currently traditional applications involving geosynthetics. During the second decade of the IGS, new chapters spread out to the rest of the continents, including South America, Africa, and Oceania (countries shown in green in Figure 3). This second generation of chapters includes growing economies in the world where the geosynthetics industry is probably still finding its acceptance by governmental agencies but that now counts with a solid group of professionals educated on geosynthetics. Indeed, many of the most spectacular projects involving geosynthetics have been constructed in some of these countries. Finally, during the third decade of the IGS, new chapters have been formed in areas such as eastern Europe, central Asia, and Latin America (countries shown in purple in Figure 3). This third generation of chapters includes countries where the geosynthetics market is mostly in the emerging stage and where technology transfer, which should be sensitive to local practices and economic conditions, may lead to a significant increase of the geosynthetics market.

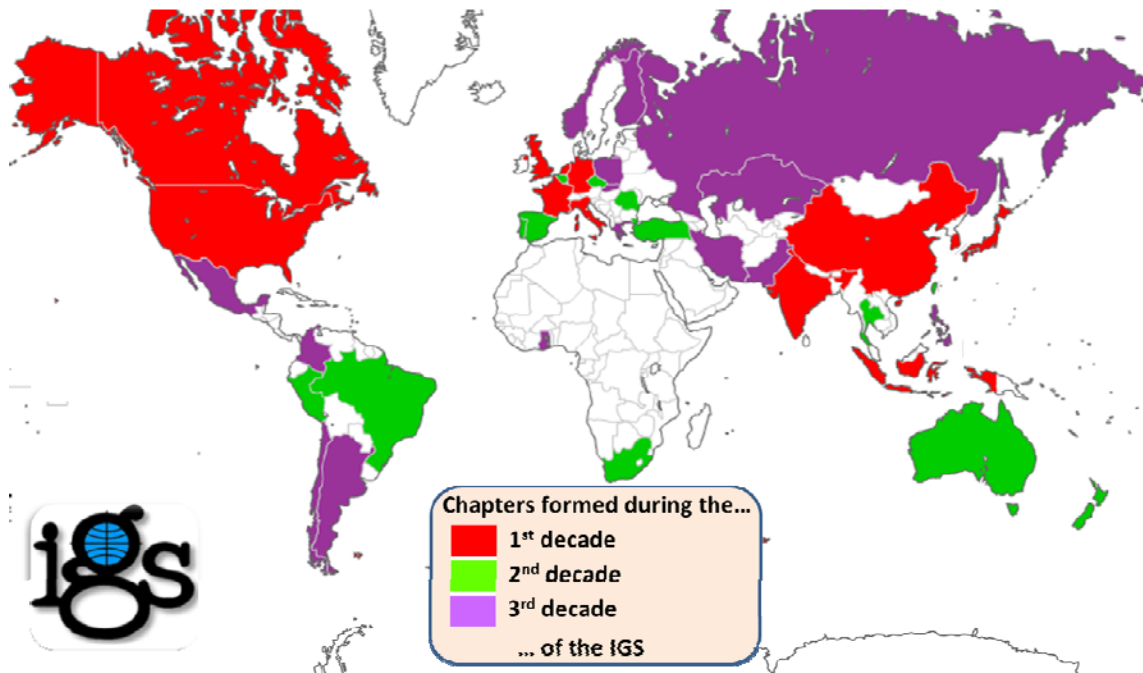


Figure 3: Chapters formed during the three decades-history of the IGS.

The number of technical activities conducted by the many IGS chapters is, simply, impressive. Starting in 2008, new guidelines were developed by the IGS to facilitate the communication and summary of the important chapter activities. The heart of this new approach is the completion by the IGS chapters of a new Standard Reporting Form. These reports have highlighted a truly impressive number of technical activities organized by the IGS chapters. These activities include, to name a few, multi-lingual national conferences, educational programs aimed at regulators, student initiatives and a healthy number of professional meetings. Ongoing initiatives being implemented at the IGS level to directly benefit the individual IGS Chapters include support to the development of online chapter membership web pages, nomination of chapter members in the various technical committees of the IGS, participation in the student awards program of the IGS, involvement in the technical program of the IGS Regional Conferences, and participation in the various ongoing educational initiatives of the IGS.

NO BORDERS FOR THE GOOD USE OF GEOSYNTHETICS II: THE IGS CONFERENCES

The Conferences of the IGS have played a remarkable role in the development of geosynthetic products and its applications. Much of the information on material properties, testing methods, applications and design approaches that we use in geosynthetics engineering has been vetted through these conferences. Of particular importance are the **International Conferences** of the IGS, which are held every four years. This series of conferences has been a premier outlet of, and in many cases has

indeed triggered, many of the advances in geosynthetics. Figure 4 illustrates the location of the various international conferences (see yellow stars, with the corresponding conference number). As illustrated in this figure, the international conferences of the IGS have been well distributed throughout the globe. The first International Conference was held in Paris (France), in 1977, and was followed by the 1982 conference in Las Vegas (USA), the 1986 conference in Vienna (Austria), the 1990 conference in The Hague (Netherlands), the 1994 conference in Singapore, the 1998 International Conference on Geosynthetics (ICG) in Atlanta (USA), the 2002 ICG in Nice (France), the 2006 ICG in Yokohama (Japan), and the most recent 9th ICG held in Guarujá (Brazil) in 2010.

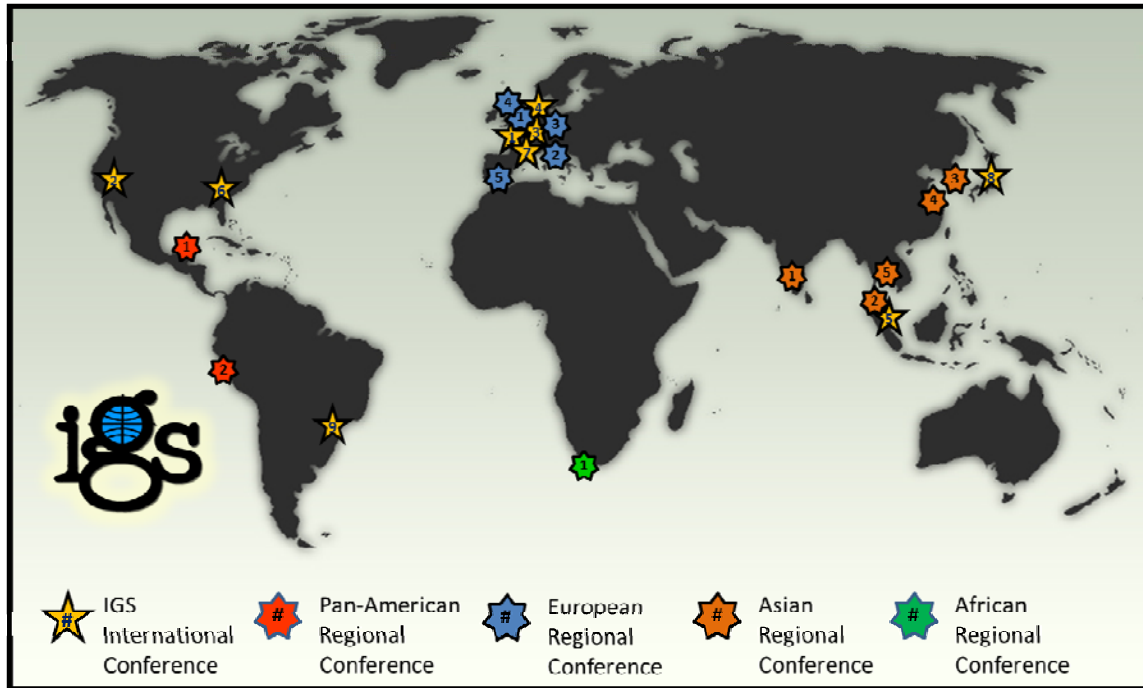


Figure 4: Past International and Regional Conferences of the IGS.

(Note: the number in each symbol corresponds to the sequence in each series of conferences)

In addition to the international conferences, **Regional Conferences** of the IGS have been organized in Europe, Asia, the Americas, and Africa. As with the international conferences, the series of IGS regional conferences are organized every four years, generally 2 years after the international conferences. Figure 4 also shows the location of the previous regional conferences of the IGS. The European Regional Conferences on Geosynthetics (“EuroGeo” series of conferences) include the 1996 EuroGeo1 in Maastricht (Netherlands), the 2000 EuroGeo2 in Bologna (Italy), the 2004 EuroGeo3 in Munich (Germany), the 2008 EuroGeo4 in Edinburgh (UK) and the 2012 EuroGeo5 in Valencia (Spain). The Asian Regional Conferences on Geosynthetics (“Geosynthetics Asia” series of conferences) include the 1997 conference in Bangalore (India), the 2000 conference in Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia), the 2004 conference in Seoul (South Korea), the 2008 conference in Shanghai (China), and the 2012 conference in Bangkok (Thailand). The Pan-American Regional Conferences on Geosynthetics (“GeoAmericas” series of conferences) started in 2008 with GeoAmericas 2008 in Cancún (Mexico), which was

followed by the recent 2012 Conference in Lima (Peru). Finally, the African Regional Conferences on Geosynthetics (“GeoAfrica” series of conferences) is the newest series of regional conferences of the IGS, having started in 2009 with GeoAfrica 2009, which was held in Cape Town (South Africa).

The venues for many of the **upcoming conferences** of the IGS have already been selected. Figure 5 shows the locations of the upcoming IGS International and Regional Conferences on Geosynthetics. The next of these conferences will be the much-anticipated Second African Conference on Geosynthetics, GeoAfrica 2013. The conference will take place in Accra, Ghana, on November 18-20, 2013. With important infrastructure needs in Africa and impressive projects address them in areas such as mining and transportation, we anticipate that major opportunities to the advancement of geosynthetics will spring from this important African event. As also shown in the figure, the next international conference, the 10th International Conference on Geosynthetics (10ICG) will be held in Berlin from 21 to 25 September 2014. The conference will take place in direct connection with the 33rd Baugrundtagung (German Soil Mechanics Conference). As the Baugrundtagung expects over 1,200 participants, great synergy and interaction is anticipated between these events, especially in the co-organized, co-located exhibition. The overlapping of lectures from both events will also attract many additional experts from the geotechnical and geosynthetics professions.



Figure 5: Upcoming International and Regional Conferences of the IGS.

(Note: the number in each symbol corresponds to the sequence in each series of conferences)

As noted, three of the conferences of the current cycle of IGS Regional Conferences took place in 2012, including the Second Pan-American Geosynthetics Conference

(GeoAmericas 2012), held in Lima, Peru, the Fifth European Geosynthetics Conference (EuroGeo5) held in 2012 in Valencia, Spain, and the Fifth Asian Geosynthetics Conference (Geosynthetics Asia 2012) held in Bangkok, Thailand. Each one of these conferences concluded with the announcement of the venues for the next series of conferences. The IGS is extremely pleased with the full suite of upcoming (2016) IGS Regional Conferences. As also shown in Figure 5, they are scheduled to take place in Miami, USA (GeoAmericas 2016, 11-13 April 2016), Istanbul, Turkey (EuroGeo6, 25-29 September 2016), and New Delhi, India (Geosynthetics Asia 2016, November 2016). Finally, the IGS Council in its meeting of 12-12-12 has already selected the venue for the subsequent (2018) International Conference on Geosynthetics (11ICG), which will be held in Seoul, South Korea in September 2018. Even though many IGS activities will take place until this event, we are looking forward to what will certainly become another landmark in the history of geosynthetic developments.

In addition to the series of International Conferences, and the multiple series of Regional Conferences organized under the umbrella of the IGS, the chapters of the IGS regularly organize **national conferences** on Geosynthetics. They attract significant local participation and provide a remarkable forum for transference of knowledge on geosynthetics. Inspection of the IGS calendar of events in the IGS website (www.geosyntheticssociety.org) includes the listing of many of these well-established events. For example, in this Spring 2013 the French Chapter of the IGS will be holding Rencontres Géosynthétiques 2013 (Dijon, France April 09-11, 2013). This will be the 9th conference of this series in France and corresponds to one of the many series of national conferences on geosynthetics organized regularly by the chapters of the IGS. Additional examples of very well established series of conferences organized by IGS chapters include the Italian, Brazilian, and NorthAmerican series of geosynthetics conferences.

The organizing committees of each one of these upcoming IGS International, Regional, and National Conferences on geosynthetics are planning well-integrated technical programs that will include innovative technical sessions, discussion panels, and educational components. Each one of them will certainly provide unique opportunities to share experiences, knowledge, advances, and opportunities related to geosynthetics and affiliated technologies.

CURRENT STRUCTURE OF THE IGS OPERATING UNITS

The governing body of the IGS is its Council, a body of 24 representatives elected for the most part by direct vote of the IGS membership at large. The leadership of the IGS Council includes five IGS Officers: the IGS president, vice-president, and immediate past president, who are elected directly by the IGS members, as well as the IGS secretary and treasurer, who are appointed by the IGS Council. Considering the significance of communications and bold goals of the IGS, the IGS Council approved a new structure of Operating Units aimed at facilitating communications and implementing tasks effectively (Zornberg 2010). Figure 6 shows the structure of the current (2013) IGS Operating Units. Compared to the structure of previous IGS Councils, the new structure involves

comparatively fewer Council Committees but it now includes a number of formal Task Forces. Under the new structure the Council Committees, which typically meet before the meeting of the IGS Council, evaluate relevant issues and make recommendations for consideration by the Council. On the other hand, Task Forces involve a small number of members who will typically meet after the council with the objective of implementing the new council decisions. In addition, a new track of Technical Committees was approved by the IGS Council. Unlike the Council Committees and Council Task Forces, the schedule of the meetings of Technical Committees does not necessarily conform to that of the IGS Council.

The chairpersons selected by the IGS Council to lead each one of the Council Committees, Council Task Forces and Technical Committees are also shown (in parenthesis) in Figure 6. The group of Committee Chairs form an Operating Unit that meets regularly in order to facilitate implementation of activities that bridge across multiple committees. The Financial Committee, the only committee required by the IGS bylaws, provides advice on financial matters to the IGS council.

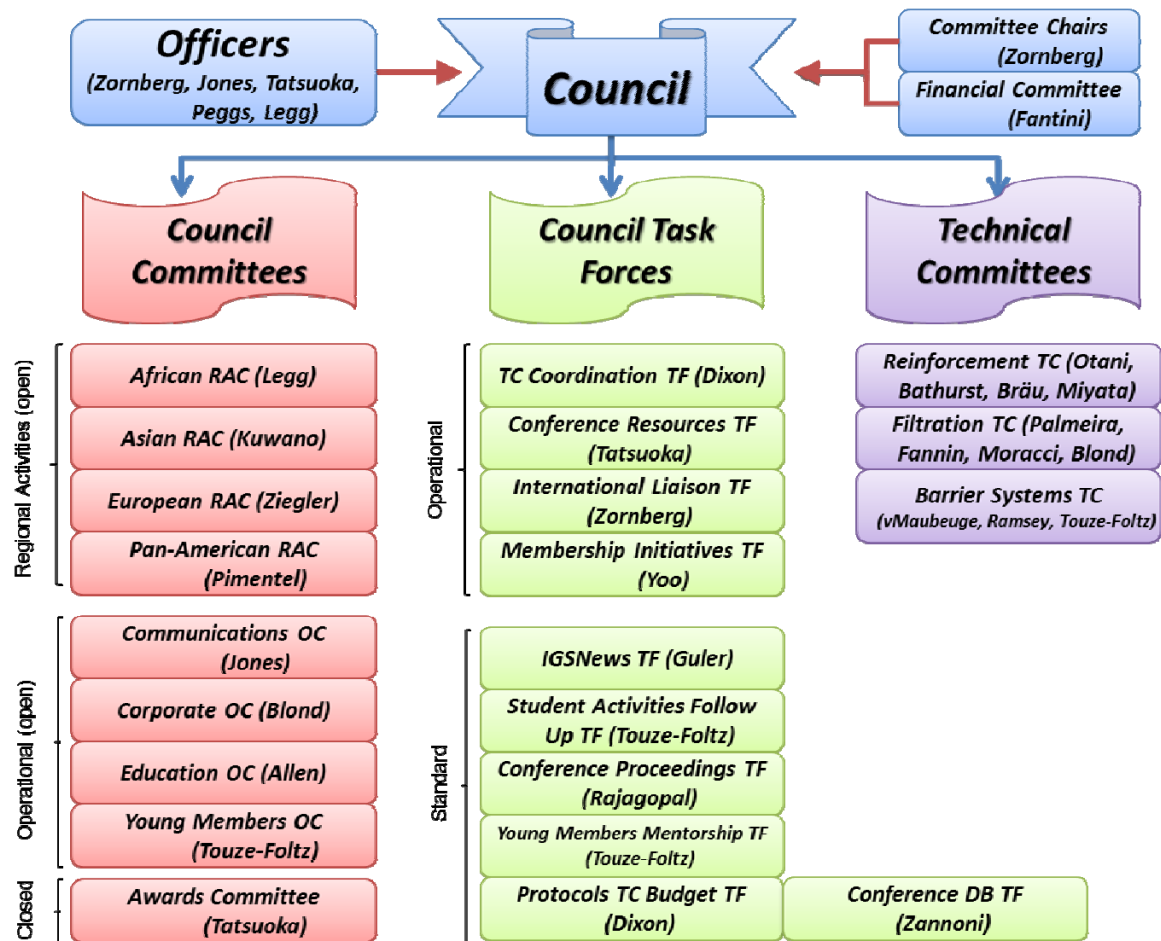


Figure 6: Structure of the Council Committees, Council Task Forces and Technical Committees of the IGS Council.

(Note: Chairpersons of the various Operating Units are shown in parenthesis)

The Council Committees of the IGS Council include a group of Regional Activities Committees, the charge of which includes promoting the activities and presence of the IGS in a given region, helping with the formation of new IGS Chapters, assisting in the organization of regional conferences of the IGS, and facilitating the distribution in the region of material to promote technical and educational events that will benefit the geosynthetics discipline. These are open committees, so representatives of the IGS chapters are encouraged to participate in the meetings and activities of these committees. Another group of committees involve the Operational Committees of the IGS Council, which are also open for participation by any IGS member. These include the Communications Committee, which is tasked among other activities to compile each issue of *IGSNews*, the Corporate Committee, which serves the needs of the corporate membership of our Society, the Education Committee, which has generated a wealth of educational documents at multiple levels and in multiple languages over the years, and the brand new Young Members Committee, which aims at facilitating the activities of the new generation of IGS members. Finally, the Awards Committee is a closed committee serving the IGS Council in identifying and recognizing the most deserving technical contributors to our industry.

While individual members of the IGS Council have diligently worked to accomplish a myriad of important activities, recent experiences have indicated that tasks are often implemented more effectively when the effort is organized under formal Task Forces of the IGS Council. A number of these Task Forces conduct continued operations. This includes the TC Coordination Task Force, which aims at organizing the new Technical Committees of the IGS, the Conference Resources Task Force, focused on consolidating the rich experience gained so far in IGS conferences, the International Liaison Task Force, which focuses on the interaction with our sister learned societies, and the Membership Initiatives Task Force, which aims at evaluating issues related to the characteristics and number of IGS members. In addition, a number of additional Task Forces are short-lived, with an expected completion of their activities in approximately one year. These include the Task Forces on *IGSNews*, Student Activities, Conference Proceedings, Young Members Mentorship, Budget Protocols, and Conference Database. These Operating Units have been assigned well-defined tasks, which are expected to be completed and delivered to the Council by the time of the next meeting of the IGS Council.

A new addition to the structure of Operating Units of the IGS Council is the set of Technical Committees (TCs) of the IGS. This includes three TCs: Soil Reinforcement, Filtration, and Barrier Systems. The leaders of these new TCs initiated their operation after having compiled proposals that were approved by the IGS council and outlined the possible activities of these TCs. These possible activities include interacting with conference organizers to lead technical sessions at upcoming conferences, with designers to produce technical documents, with academics to offer short courses, and with special emphasis on young professionals who are expected to stimulate the use of geosynthetics among the new generation of engineers.

INITIATIVES OF THE IGS

It is a daunting task to document the many initiatives of the IGS, as they are so many. Consequently, and for illustration purposes, this section summarizes two of these many initiatives. One of them is a well-established, continued effort. The second one is a new initiative.

One of the many **well-established initiatives** of the IGS relates to high-level dissemination of information on geosynthetics, which is a core mission of the IGS. This is well accomplished by the two official technical journals of the IGS: “*Geotextiles and Geomembranes*” and “*Geosynthetics International*.” “*Geotextiles and Geomembranes*” is published six times per year by Elsevier. Under the leadership of Kerry Rowe as Editor, the journal aims at increasing general awareness, prompting further research and assisting in the establishment of international codes and regulations about geosynthetics. “*Geosynthetics International*” is published six times per year by Thomas Telford. Under the leadership of Richard Bathurst as Editor and J.P. Giroud as chair of the Editorial Board, the journal covers research, behavior, performance analysis, testing, design, construction methods, case histories and field experience regarding geosynthetics. The IGS is very proud by the very high impact factor of its two journals, which constitute an excellent example of a well-established activity of the IGS that serves the IGS membership and the geosynthetics community at large. The editors and editorial boards of these two journals have been certainly driven by the same enthusiasm that has driven the rest of the IGS leadership. It should be emphasized that access to these two journals is free for IGS members with direct download available through the IGS website. This is among the most important direct benefits of the IGS membership.

A good example of one of the **new initiatives** of the IGS is the pilot program being initiated to address the educational needs in the country of one of our youngest chapters: Argentina. Specifically, the “Educate the Educator” (indeed, “Educando al Educador,” as the course will be in Spanish) will take place in Villa Carlos Paz, Argentina, from May 26 to 28, 2013. This is a good example of a joint effort between an IGS Chapter (IGS-Argentina in this case) and the IGS (through its Pan-American Activities and Education Committees). The focus of this program is on undergraduate education with the overall goal that every civil engineering student graduating from a civil engineering program in Argentina will have received a basic exposure to geosynthetics. The goal is perhaps a simple, one hour-long exposure class, but offered to every single civil engineering undergraduate student in the country. As part of this effort, 30 civil engineering professors will receive a fellowship that will cover expenses to participate in a premier training program on geosynthetics. This pilot program will benefit from the involvement of the Argentinean Council on Civil Engineering Curriculum (CODIC), an agency that has encouraged the development of this educational program. A terrific precedent of training civil engineering professors exists as a training program was previously implemented in North America over fifteen years ago (Elton 1996). After over 15 years since the excellent experience in North America, education on geosynthetics at the undergraduate level remains a current, worldwide need. The IGS is

not alone in recognizing this important need. Indeed, the Geosynthetic Institute (GSI), with its major educational arsenal on geosynthetics, and the Geosynthetic Materials Association (GMA), with its capability of mobilizing the geosynthetics industry, are equally engaged in promoting basic geosynthetic education. The opportunity exists for significant synergism in this undergraduate educational effort.

FINAL REMARKS

With the IGS now completing three decades of existence, the challenges and opportunities involving the dissemination of geosynthetics knowledge continue to be significant. Indeed, the role of the IGS in this dissemination is expected to continue to grow, and it is the intention of the IGS to tailor the assistance to the various geosynthetics interest groups according to their specific needs. A remarkable characteristic of the IGS has been its capability to evolve while, at the same time, always maintaining a clear aim at its core purpose, which is **“to provide the understanding and promote the appropriate use of geosynthetic technology throughout the world.”**

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IGS CONTACT INFORMATION

For additional information of the various initiatives of the IGS, please visit the IGS website at www.geosyntheticssociety.org or contact the IGS Secretariat Manager via email at igssec@geosyntheticssociety.org.