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I was elected president of the IAEG in Vancouver (Canada) in 1998, at the time of the 8th International Congress of the IAEG, succeeding Paul Marinos, who contributed to extending the IAEG into the environment. Within my business life I have always regarded the IAEG as a 'home', where I and my Chinese colleagues have friends and teachers in our engineering geology activities. I served the IAEG for many years, as I was elected vice president for Asia twice from 1982 to 1986 and from 1992 to 1996. The first time that I engaged with the IAEG was at a council meeting in 1982. The Indian national group led by VS Krishnaswamy had nominated me as candidate for vice president for Asia and I was subsequently voted in. During this term, the IAEG cooperated well with the national groups of India, Japan, Turkey, Malaysia and Southeast Asia. As a result, a book entitled "Engineering geological problems in Asia" was published by Science Press, Beijing. In the preface, Michael Langer wrote that engineering geology is a science, an art and a challenge. An IAEG international symposium on "Engineering Geological Environment in Mountainous Areas" was held in Beijing in 1987. This was, perhaps, the first time that environmental problems had been a specific focus of an IAEG international conference.

My second term as vice president for Asia was the preceding step to my access to presidency, and indeed a strange one for me. The Chinese national group did not submit a nomination, but the executive committee members nominated me at the council meeting despite this. I expressed my thanks to the IAEG council and tried to retreat, but my IAEG colleagues persuaded me to resume my role for a second term. They also asked me to undertake the organization of the IAEG symposium during the 30th IGC in Beijing in 1996. With the help of Ricardo Oliveira and Faquan Wu, the IAEG international symposia during the IGC were highly successful and included a workshop, training courses and a few academic symposia. With co-editor Paul Marinos, an engineering geology volume of the 30th IGC was published in 1997.

My term of IAEG presidency was during the period that symbolized the jump from the 20th to the 21st century. At that time, the worldwide community of engineering geologists was gratified by the increasingly close attention and concern of human society to environmental protection, infrastructure safety and sustainable development in guarantee of sufficient and durable resources for the future.

The IAEG has become a big family of engineering geologists around the world. The science and technology of engineering geology in Europe are now well developed and a large number of IAEG national groups are well organized, constituting a strong core of the IAEG community. In North America, engineering geology is also well developed, and the engineering geological community well organized. In particular, the AEG has a huge number of engineering geologists in the United States who are very active in academic exchange. Therefore, the executive committee should focus its work to strengthen the links with the AEG. Just after the election in 1998, I accompanied Paul Marinos to the AEG annual conference. I was really impressed by the advanced geological knowledge that was involved in the conference presentations. The efforts made in that term of the executive committee, with the help of Richard Gray, resulted in a significant increase in the number of IAEG members (with and without subscription to the IAEG Bulletin) from North America and led to improved cooperation with the engineering geological community of North America. As the first IAEG president elected from China, a developing country, I observed that IAEG activity was not well known in the developing world and many experts and engineers had not participated in the Association. Therefore, I proposed that the focus of our term of executive committee should be oriented towards the developing world and that the IAEG should become an academic and professional organization throughout the world.

I discussed with the executive members how we could best help engineering geologists in the large number of developing countries and how we could encourage them to participate in the IAEG community. We appealed to our vice presidents for Asia, South America and Africa to take responsibility for this task. We also appealed to our vice presidents for North America, Europe, and Australasia to promote exchange with engineering geologists and national groups from developing countries.

In fact, we made great efforts to tackle this challenge. Three major IAEG events during my term were held in developing countries. They were the IAEG international symposium in Kathmandu (Nepal) in 1999, the IAEG symposia at the 31st IGC in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) in 2000 and the IAEG congress in Durban (South Africa) in 2002.

The international symposium of "Engineering geology, hydrogeology and geo-hazards" in Kathmandu (Nepal) in 1999 was a really big success. Nepal is located in the mid Himalayan area, at the point where both the Major and Boundary Himalayan faults pass through Nepalese territory, forming a tectonically active

environment with very high seismicity and intense geo-hazards, as well as complex engineering geological conditions. A large number of geologists and engineers from the Himalayas region and Southeast Asia took part in the symposium and workshops and interacted closely with the delegations from Europe and North America. The fact that the Nepalese national group made great efforts to convene the symposium and workshops, showed how much they valued the event. At the same time, we all increased our awareness of how to cope with the engineering geological challenges and geo-hazards of working in tectonically active regions and young orogenic belts, in which tremendous geo-hazards occur due to coupling of endogenic and exogenic processes.

In 2000, the IAEG activity was well organized in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) in connection with the 31st IGC. It was a great meeting of the geologist community. Not only did we have a good opportunity to make scientific exchanges with other geosciences sister societies, but we also had a chance to encourage the active participation of South American engineering geologists in the engineering geological community. The Brazilian national group presented the active contribution of these geologists to the IAEG community.

In 2002, we came to Durban to hold the 9th IAEG Congress, with a theme of "Engineering Geology in Developing Countries". The national group of South Africa worked hard to prepare this congress. We were convinced that through this congress, engineering geology would blossom in Africa and we expected that more African engineering geologists would be involved in the IAEG circle.

As I wrote in the activity report of the president for the period from 1998 to 2002 (Newsletter Volume 30, #182), the IAEG was entering a new era. The original objective of the IAEG was still being achieved, especially with respect to extending the role of the IAEG to the developing world, upgrading the academic level and increasing global cooperation. The growing role of the IAEG in the global engineering geology community was evidenced by the increasing number of its members and national groups, which went up to 4,900 members and over 59 active national groups during that period.

I have been a member of the IAEG for 35 years, since 1979, and over the years, I have made many good friends and teachers within the IAEG family. I would particularly like to mention the late Marcel Arnould who encouraged me and my Chinese colleagues to actively participate in the IAEG activities. When I was elected as IAEG president, he taught me that dealing with IAEG affairs should keep every member happy and interested in the community.

During my time as president, the executive committee received strong help from Paul Marinos, as immediate past president, in solving a series of important issues, for which I am grateful. I would also like to express my sincere thanks to the secretary general and treasurer Michel Deveughèle who, as the secretary general,

was highly efficient and managed nearly all of the IAEG activities. The treasurer Pierre Potherat contributed extensively to the healthy financial state of the Association. The vice presidents, Rodney Maud (for Africa), Richard Gray (for North America), Paulo Teixeira de Cruz (for South America), Bruce Riddolis (for Australasia), Ibrahim Komoo (for Asia), Antonio Gomes Coelho (for Europe) and Niek Rengers (for Europe), all performed their duties excellently and established strong bases for the future of the IAEG as it entered the new century. Special thanks should be given to the chief editors of the bulletin, Brian Hawkins and Roger Cojean, for their significant contribution in delivering the IAEG Bulletin, which displays the academic results of the Association. I am grateful to the leaders of the commissions and the working groups for their work in upgrading the science level of engineering geology. Together, their work has established the important pillars of the IAEG as a learning society. The past presidents are all my friends and teachers, including Shadmon, Arnould, Sergeev, Langer, White, Oliveira and Marinos. They often attended our executive meetings and provided wise advice. The successful work of our national groups and our members constitutes the foundation of the prosperity of our Association and is highly appreciated.

I am grateful to all my friends for supporting me during the period when I worked in the Association and I wish the IAEG and the science of engineering geology a long prosperity in the new era.

*Sijing Wang*