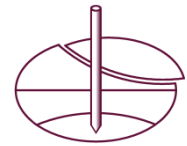




**ISSMGE FOUNDATION
REPORT ON CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE**

Your Name: Mario Schulz-Poblete	Your Organization: PeraGage South Africa	Date of report: 9 May 2023
Conference Title: UNSAT 2023: 8 th International Conference on Unsaturated Soils	Location of Conference: Milos, Greece	Dates of Conference: 2 – 5 May 2023
What you learned: I learned much from the various technical talks such as those on soil-vegetation-atmosphere interaction and full-scale modelling. However, I was very encouraged to learn through the response to my presentation that there is a significant appetite amongst researchers for sharing research involving fieldwork and applying unsaturated academics to practice. This has spurred me on to further my partnerships in academics to allow further implementation of unsaturated principles to designs in which I am involved.		
People you met: In attending this conference, I was hoping to meet Prof. Sandra Houston who was due to present the opening special themed lecture. I was fortunate enough to have her attend my presentation and meet her afterwards for a brief discussion on our shared interest in the implementation of unsaturated soil mechanics in practice. In addition to this, I reconnected with old and new friends and colleagues from the University of Pretoria and discussed future academic-commercial collaborations. I also met Ibrahim Mashhour, a fellow African delegate from Egypt, with whom I engaged in several interesting conversations over the course of the conference.		
Main features of conference: The conference was structured around 8 special themed lectures, as well as a Plenary lecture and a Blight lecture. These special lectures were distributed between the three days and featured big names in the international unsaturated soil mechanics community including Professors Houston, Romero, Tarantino, and more. Welcome drinks, lunches, and a wonderful conference dinner all afforded plenty of opportunities to interact with other delegates and stimulate some thoughtful discussion and relationships.		
Your comments on the conference: The island conference location was an encouraging environment for delegates and partners to engage in both academic and congenial discussions. Talks and presentations on unsaturated monitoring and the different aspects thereof were naturally the most attractive to me, but I especially enjoyed the Friday morning session on the various applications of unsaturated soil mechanics on the preservation of historical buildings and landmarks.		



Please attach short report (maximum 400 words) suitable for publication in the ISSMGE Bulletin:

The glimpse of Milos Island from the air was a welcome one after a long trip from the tip of Africa. Almost immediately there were old and new friends with whom to get acquainted as attendees slowly started gathering on the small island for the conference. The calmness of island life was oddly juxtaposed with the flashes of serious participants clearly making last minute changes to their presentations. However, once the conference started in earnest most of those worries disappeared into the background as the mood on the island lent itself to a more congenial atmosphere than most.

For some the conference started on Tuesday 2nd May with the Workshop & Short Course focusing on Unsaturated Soil Mechanics in the field (workshop on monitoring) and in engineering practice (short course). Wednesday 3rd May marked the official start of the conference presentations with a special themed lecture by Prof. Houston titled 'Unified Two Independent Stress Variable Approach to Moisture-Change-Induced Unsaturated Soil Volume Shear.' The remainder of the day's presentations continued the themes of fundamental unsaturated soil behaviour and coupled suction-moisture processes. Presentations on Thursday 4th May comprised mostly of parallel sessions of numerical modelling, testing, and case study discussions respectively. The author's own work was featured in a midday session on unsaturated infrastructure and was fortuitously well-attended, opening the door to interesting discussions with other delegates. The day ended with a lively session in the parallel hall on unsaturated soil mechanics in tailings which was popular and well debated. The fact that this was followed by an excellent conference dinner gave the whole affair the air of an ancient Greek symposium.

The final day started with the most interesting session of the whole conference; work on preserving historical structures using unsaturated soil principles which was presented from locales as varied as Guatemala, Cambodia, and of course Greece. The remainder of the day focused on geo-environmental applications and long-term measurement of suctions in-situ.

Anticipation for the conference was high after twice being postponed due to the pandemic, and it proved to be a unique and enjoyable conference owing to the picturesque island setting and the interesting work presented. No doubt all delegates are now looking ahead to the next conference planned for Boston and hope they won't have to wait quite as long for another taste of an UNSAT conference!

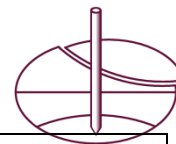
Photographs from Conference:



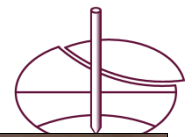
Opening session



Current and former University of Pretoria delegates



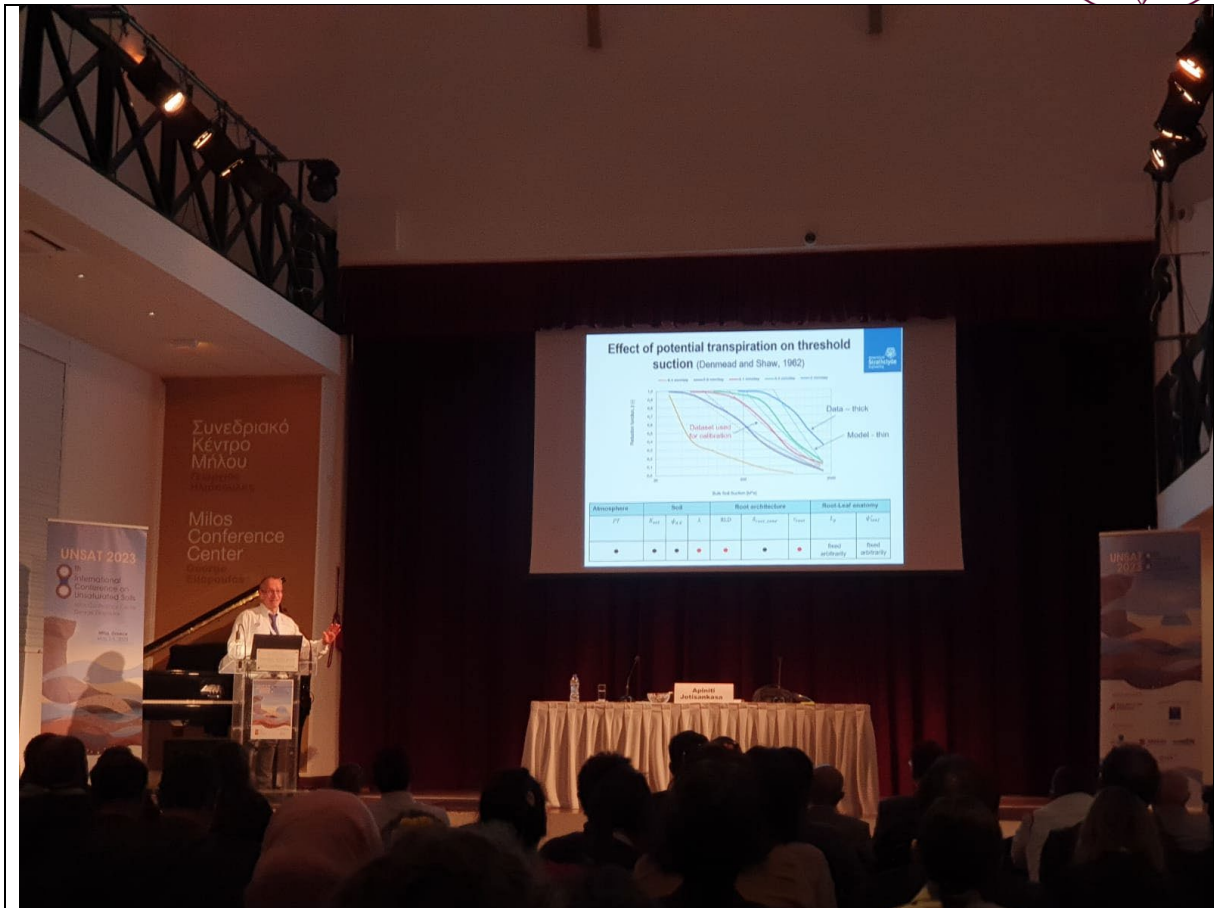
Meeting with Ibrahim Mashhour from Egypt



Dr Gaspar from Sheffield University presenting on swelling clays



Professor Romero from Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya presenting on scaled experimental work



Professor Tarantino from University of Strathclyde presenting on soil-plant-atmosphere interactions