ISSMGE FOUNDATION
REPORT ON CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE

Your Name:	***Your Organization:***	***Date of report:***
Fayrouz Yasser	Texas A&M University	July 22, 2026
Conference Title:	***Location of Conference:***	***Dates of Conference:***
21st International Conference of Soil Mechanics and Geotechnical Engineering	Vienna, Austria	June 14-19, 2026

What you learned:

Being a part of the 21st ICSMGE conference granted me an excellent opportunity to broaden my knowledge in geotechnical engineering and getting closer to the geotechnical community, specially learning from the top-notched scientists. Through keynote lectures, technical sessions, and discussions with leading researchers, I gained new perspectives on fundamental soil behavior, sustainable infrastructure, and practical engineering applications.

Starting with the opening ceremony speech from Prof. Ballouz on the ISSMGE structure and endeavours, followed by the Terzaghi keynote by Eng. Sergei Terzaghi, which offered a personal perspective on Karl Terzaghi's legacy and its lasting influence on geotechnical engineering. This experience was complemented by visiting the Terzaghi Archive at TU Wien, where I learned about the history of modern soil mechanics and had the opportunity to see Terzaghi's original documents, laboratory equipment, and experimental work.

My discussion with Dr. Ballouz was a milestone. His advice extended beyond technical topics, emphasizing the importance of communicating research clearly and concisely, avoiding preconceived assumptions, and approaching research with the mindset of a scientist rather than trying to confirm an engineering expectation. I believe this advice will significantly influence how I conduct and present my future research.

The lecture "Geotechnics for Offshore Wind Developments" from NGI was an excellent lecture for me, as it was comprehensive for understanding the challenges of offshore wind projects. Moreover, the Menard lecture by Eng. Serge Varaksin and the presentation by Prof. Jie Han reinforced my experience in the ground improvement field. The lectures by Prof. Anand Puppala and Prof. Jean-Louis Briaud were among the most inspiring lectures. I learned about innovative ground stabilization techniques, remote sensing for slope monitoring, and sustainable infrastructure. Prof. Briaud's discussion on erosion demonstrated why simple empirical equations are often insufficient, particularly for cohesive soils, and introduced the use of AI, image analysis, and observational approaches to better understand erosion mechanisms.

Finally, presenting the poster of my paper on lateral earth pressure provided me with valuable feedback and stimulating discussions that added to my research experience, presentation and communication skills.

People you met:

It was a remarkable journey during which I had the pleasure of meeting many distinguished geotechnical experts and professors. I had the pleasure of meeting Prof. Marc Ballouz (Ex President of the ISSMGE) from whom I learned an extremely valuable lesson through his questions and discussions. I also met my distinguished professors from Texas A&M; Prof. Jean-Luis Briaud and Prof. Annand Puppala. Along with this I met my professors from Egypt; Prof. Marawan Shahien (Ex vise-president of ISSMGE Africa), Prof. Mona Badr, Dr. Shehab Wessa, and Prof. Mohammed Arab. I was lucky enough to come across my colleague Eng. Ahmed Alaa and his partners who founded Terra Firma company, which made me very proud of him. It was also a nice coincidence to meet the first PhD student of my current supervisor at TAMU; Dr. Bryan Harris who currently works for ERDC, US. One of the persons I was happy that I finally met was Hamzah Hashimi (founder of GeoStruXer) as I consider him one of the most distinguished young geotechnical engineers. I met other colleagues and new people who I was happy to get to know them and make new connections!

Main features of conference:

1. Opening ceremony: A warm welcome by the traditional music of Vienna, followed by the ISSMGE president speech of the organization structure and activities. This was followed by the story of "Where it all began", and a very detailed and interesting story about Terzaghi's contributions to the Soil Mechanics science.
2. Comprehensive technical program: The conference featured keynote lectures, honor lectures, parallel technical sessions, and an international exhibition covering a wide range of geotechnical engineering topics. The digital posters were also a very interacting feature to present and discuss with colleagues.
3. International geotechnical exchange: The conference brought together leading researchers, practitioners, and young engineers from academia and industry worldwide, providing excellent opportunities to exchange ideas, discuss current research, and know what the most recent technology in the industry is.
4. Special technical visits: The program included the visit to the Terzaghi Archive at TU Wien, which was a rich opportunity to witness the development of soil mechanics experimental work.
5. Networking and cultural events: Welcome and networking receptions, coffee breaks, an evening musical concert, and the exhibition created an excellent environment for interacting with researchers and industry professionals on different levels while experiencing Vienna's cultural heritage.
6. Closing ceremony: Introducing the ISSMGE presidency handover from Prof. Ballouz to Prof. Laloui, which was a milestone moment. Both shared their final and first speech and advice respectively. It also featured honoring of ex-board members presenting a moment of appreciation and respect.

Your comments on the conference:

The 21st ICSMGE was an outstanding and professionally organized conference that provided an exceptional environment for learning, networking, and professional growth. The hospitality of the organizing committee and the large scale of the conference, which brought together top researchers, practitioners, and students from around the globe, really

impressed me. I learned about the most recent advancements in geotechnical engineering through the excellent keynote presentations, technical sessions, and discussions. My highlight was the visit to the Terzaghi Archive which was especially memorable to be at the same place where my beloved “Godfather of Soil Mechanics” laid the foundations for this science. The social event- musical concert- created a welcoming vibe for building friendships and professional connections beyond the technical sessions. Overall, attending this conference has broadened my technical perspective, strengthened my confidence as an early-career researcher, and provided valuable inspiration that will positively influence my PhD research and future career. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the ISSMGE Foundation for their generous support, which made this invaluable experience possible.

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

Attending the 21st ICSMGE in Vienna was one of the most valuable experiences of my academic journey. With the generous financial support of the ISSMGE Foundation, together with the encouragement and support of my PhD supervisor, Prof. Navid Jafari of Texas A&M University, I was able to participate in this major international gathering of geotechnical society. The conference provided an exceptional platform to share my research, learn from leading experts, exchange ideas with colleagues from different countries, and strengthen my connection with the international geotechnical community.

The conference began with an inspiring opening ceremony, where Prof. Marc Ballouz introduced the structure, mission, and global activities of the ISSMGE. This was followed by the story "Where It All Began" of Karl Terzaghi's pioneering contributions and the birth of modern soil mechanics. The technical program included keynote lectures, honor lectures, technical sessions, digital poster presentations, and a diverse international exhibition. I was pleased to present my research through a poster entitled “Monitoring Diaphragm Wall Performance in Egypt’s 4th Metro Line: Insights on Lateral Earth Pressure” under supervision of Prof. Marawan Shahien. Presenting my work and discussing it with researchers provided valuable feedback and honed my communication and presentation skills.

A major highlight was the visit to the Terzaghi Archive at TU Wien, where I had the unique opportunity to see Terzaghi’s original documents, laboratory equipment, and experimental work. Standing where the foundations of modern soil mechanics were established by “Godfather of Soil Mechanics” was truly inspiring and mesmerizing. I also greatly benefited from the various lectures; e.g., NGI lecture on Geotechnics for Offshore Wind, lectures by Eng. Serge Varaksin, Prof. Jie Han, Prof. Anand Puppala, Prof. Jean-Louis Briaud, and Prof. Chungsik Yoo. Their lectures provided valuable insights into ground improvement, erosion, sustainable infrastructure, the application of AI emerging technologies, and geotechnical education. A particularly memorable moment was my discussion with Prof. Marc Ballouz, whose advice on scientific thinking, clear communication, and avoiding research bias will have a lasting influence on how I approach and present my future research.

Beyond the technical program, the conference offered exceptional networking opportunities through the exhibition, professional activities, and social activities. The memorable closing ceremony witnessed the handover of the ISSMGE Presidency from Prof. Marc Ballouz to Prof. Lyesse Laloui, which resembled a milestone I got to witness. Both shared thoughtful reflections and inspiring advice, along with recognition of outgoing Board members for their dedicated service, providing a fitting conclusion to an exceptional conference.

Participating in the 21st ICSMGE has broadened my technical perspective, strengthened my confidence as an early-career researcher, and inspired me to continue pursuing high-quality research in geotechnical engineering. I sincerely thank the ISSMGE Foundation for its generous financial support, as well as Prof. Navid Jafari for their continuous encouragement and support, which made this invaluable experience possible.

Photographs from Conference: Insert here or attach to email



Fig. 1. Some highlights from the opening and closing ceremony

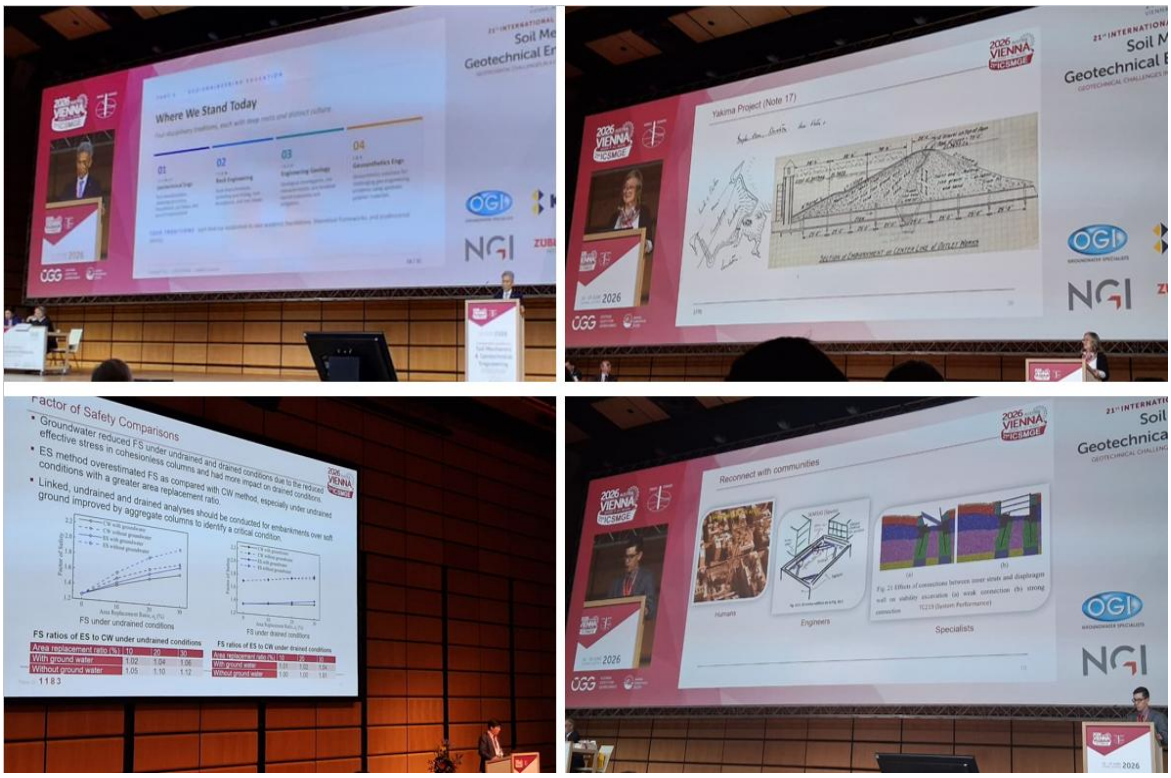


Fig. 2. Some highlights from the keynote lectures



Fig. 3. Poster presentation of my paper “Monitoring Diaphragm Wall Performance in Egypt's 4th Metro Line Insights on Lateral Earth Pressure”



Fig. 4. Geotechnical Networking

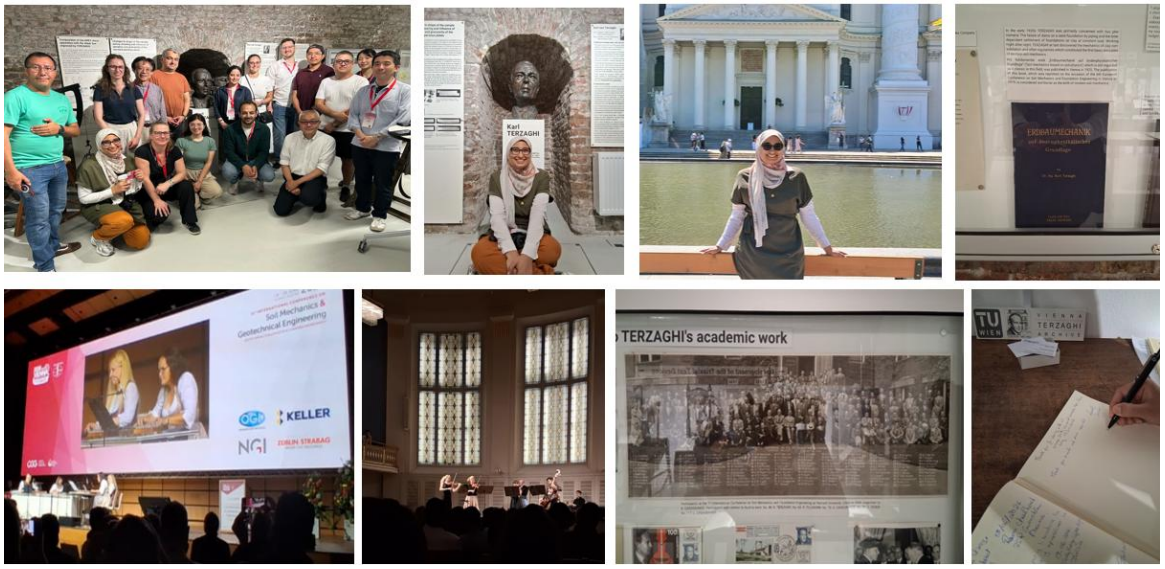


Fig. 5. Musical Concert and Terzaghi Achieve