

PRESS RELEASE**CONSULTING ENGINEERS – MANAGING INNOVATION**

A 20 strong delegation from Consulting Engineers South Africa (CESA) have just returned from the International Federation of Consulting Engineers (FIDIC) conference held in New Delhi, India where FIDIC hosted 650 delegates, with 140 emanating from India. The theme of the conference was 'Managing Innovation – The Way Forward' covering topics such as: The Driver's of Innovation; Innovation in Project Finance; Risk Management; and the Tools of Innovation. There was a strong emphasis on tracking deliverables from last year's conference and exploring the many facets of innovation, including political challenges, business issues, services provided and how best to achieve high quality sustainable projects.

The CEO's of 3 member firms and CESA Council Members presented papers at the conference. Naren Bhojaram, CEO of SSI and CESA Deputy President presented a paper on Integrity Management – the South African Experience; Francois Swart, Council member and CEO of Bigen Africa presented a paper on Innovation in Project Management – a South African Case Study; and Zulch Lötter, CEO of UWP Consulting and CESA President chaired the afternoon session for the Group of Africa Member Associations (GAMA) with a theme of the Impact of the Economic Downturn on Africa. The GAMA Africa Regional Business Forum focused on an overview of the market situation as a result of the global economic downturn and the impact on Africa.

There was much discussed about Innovation in particular that it has to become the cornerstone of maintaining a firm's competitive edge focusing on *value add* to the client. Risk Management remains a central element, but can in fact become a barrier to innovative processes. The link between sustainability and innovation was also explored and it was emphasised that meeting targets was no longer sufficient. There is a major case for restorative action going way beyond just attaining zero environmental impact, if the drivers of climate change are ever to be mitigated in any meaningful way. It was stated that innovation should be celebrated within a company where management means it, rewards it, respects it and creates an environment that will not tolerate anything less than delivering it. It is essential to ensure a blameless management culture. FIDIC is currently reviewing a number of its guidelines and policy statements and Graham Pirie, CEO of CESA has been included in the Capacity Building Committee which will review all of FIDIC related policies and guidelines which were last published in 2001.

Association Directors from 22 countries met to discuss a wide range of issues including the aftermath of the global credit crunch on local industries, industry policy issues and Association management issues. Graham Pirie, CEO of CESA, presented a paper on the impact of the global economic downturn on South Africa and listened with interest to a similar paper presented on the situation in Japan, where drivers affecting the that country are diametrically opposed to that of South Africa. Pirie stated that, "It became clear that emerging economies have been shielded from the worst effects".

A highlight of the conference was that Dr. Michele Kruger, Chairperson of the South African Young Professionals Forum (YPF) was elected International Chairperson of the FIDIC YPF for a 2 year period. Winner of the Young Engineer Award at the 2009 CESA Glenrand MIB Engineering Excellence Award's, Dr. Willem Sprong from GIBB also attended the conference.

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Pics from FIDIC

