

## *Its Time for Africa — The 35<sup>th</sup> International Geological Congress*

Having won the bid to host the 35<sup>th</sup> International Geological Congress (IGC) in 2008 and having been presented with the “Presidents Cup” (the world cup of geology) in Brisbane at the 34<sup>th</sup> IGC in 2012, South Africa is preparing an exciting programme for 35<sup>th</sup> IGC which will be held at the Cape Town International Convention Centre from 27 August to 4 September, 2016. Only two



prestigious IGC conferences have been held in Africa before, and one of these, hosted by South Africa in 1929, was instrumental in advancing the study of geology and the earth sciences in South Africa and the continent. It also drew attention to and played a very important role in the promotion South Africa’s mineral wealth and the mining industry, one of the main pillars of South Africa’s economy. The other IGC held on the African continent took place in Algeria in 1952.

South Africa is uniquely placed to hold a conference of this nature and share the benefits accruing from it with its African neighbours. The superlatives of South African geology range from the primitive life forms in 3.5 billion year old rocks of the world famous Barberton Mountain Land to the Witwatersrand goldfield which has produced some 35% of all the gold ever produced on the planet. The Kalahari manganese field hosts 80% of the world’s resource of this metal while Sishen is one of the world’s greatest iron ore mines. The Bushveld Complex is truly a geological wonder containing the world’s largest reserves of the platinum group metals, chromium and vanadium. Besides being a mining bonanza,

the Bushveld has attracted researchers from all over the world ever since it was first placed firmly on the map by the discovery of the Merensky Reef by Dr. Hans Merensky and his team in 1924. Other geological superlatives, often with cultural heritage connections, include the Cape Peninsula, and Cape fold mountains, the Drakensberg mountains, Karoo fossils, the Vredefort and Tswaing meteorite craters, Cradle of Humankind, Mapangube and the Lake St. Lucia World Heritage Site.

The 35<sup>th</sup> IGC will showcase many of the other outstanding geological features of the African Continent such as the Great Dyke of Zimbabwe, the Zambian Copper Belt, the Hoggar Massif in Algeria, the gold fields of Ghana, the Great African Rift valley, the Atlas mountains and the Okavango delta of Botswana.

Many of the more than 40 planned field trips will follow closely the routes of the 1929 IGC excursions and the advancement of geological knowledge in Africa since that time will be showcased.

The spectacular landscapes, geology, mineral fields and the rise of mankind in Africa are becoming increasingly recognised together with the role the continent can play in teaching us about the history of our planet. Geoheritage, geo-conservation, geoparks and geotourism as tools to educate the public

about the earth sciences will consequently figure prominently and a book on the “Geoheritage” of Africa is being planned.

The organization and management of an event such as an International Geological Conference is a huge and challenging task and planning, years in advance, is necessary. A few statistics drawn from the 2008 and 2012 events illustrate the magnitude and scope of an International Geological Conference. A total of 6260 delegates from 113 countries attended the Oslo conference with 4200 talks, 2000 posters and 37 field trips being on offer. Statistics from the 34<sup>th</sup> IGC held in Brisbane are similar, the event having attracted 5924 delegates from 137 countries with 3232 talks, 24 workshops and 29 field trips.

Mindful of the task ahead a local organizing committee (LOC) who will be largely responsible for the planning and management of the event was formed in 2010 and is constituted as follows.

The LOC comprises of a number of sub-committees

- Co-presidents, Richard Viljoen and Mxolisi Koto, Secretary General Danie Barnardo and Secretary Juanita Van Wyk
- The finance committee under the chairmanship of Craig Smith is managing the budget and financial aspects of the event
- The sponsorship committee has been tasked with identifying potential sponsors



*Members of the 35th IGC Local Organizing Committee. Back row from left to right: Juanita van Wyk, Crystal Kasselmann, Pamela Naidoo, Gerhard Graham, Richard Viljoen, Jay Barton. Front row: Martin Lekotoko, Jeanette McGill, Nthombi Mdluli Jacha, Lesley Ferreira, Danie Barnardo, Prof Ngoepe (Chair of the CGS Board) and Chris Hatton.*

and funding sources. Mike Wuth is the chair of this committee

- A scientific programmes committee is responsible for organising and administering conference sessions, poster sessions and workshops. Virtually every topic within the broader field of the geosciences will be covered and some 40 parallel sessions grouped according to three main themes: science, technology (including economic geology) and society will be on offer. A feature of the programme will be the extensive use of modern information technology systems. The committee is chaired by Jay Barton
- The field trip committee is responsible for organising and managing field trips to destinations throughout Africa and is under the chairmanship of Chris Hatton with Sharad Master
- A communications and marketing committee under the chairmanship of Nthombi Mdluli-Jacha has been tasked with developing and, managing the advertising and marketing campaign
- The legacy committee will ensure that the event will establish a lasting scientific legacy for the country and continent. One

of the main initiatives will be the preparation of a special publication on "the Geoheritage of Africa", highlighting the continent's geological superlatives. A geohost programme will ensure that less privileged geoscientists from Africa and elsewhere will be able to attend. Jeanette McGill is the chairperson of this committee and will be assisted by the drivers of the various legacy geoheritage initiatives in South Africa and further afield

- Offshore country contacts are: United Kingdom and Europe - Peter Zawada; China- Baojin Zhao; and Namibia and other African countries - Gaby Schneider
- A geoexpo committee will organise the exhibition and trade show where geoscientific organizations and suppliers as well as mining companies will have the opportunity of showcasing projects and displaying wares, expertise and services.
- Professional conference organisers have been appointed and have already become involved in various aspects of planning and in particular the marketing strategy. Our two PCO colleagues are Lesley Ferreira and Crystal Kasselmann.

During the closing function of the 2012 IGC in Brisbane, the Minister of the Department of Mineral Resources, the Honourable Susan Shabangu who had gone out of her way to be with us in Australia, addressed delegates and stressed the importance of the 35<sup>th</sup> IGC for the African continent, inviting the geoscience community to attend the event. She had a similar message to delegates at the 2013 South African Mining Indaba where she urged mining and related companies not only to attend the event but assist in the crucial role of sponsorship. We would like to invite all geoscientists from across the globe to attend the 35<sup>th</sup> IGC. We can assure you that you will be welcomed with open arms and experience the legendary warmth and hospitality of South Africa and its rainbow nation, not to mention a stimulating program of field excursions, talks, posters, workshops and business meetings. The Time for Africa has arrived!

*Co-Presidents and Local Organizing  
Committee 35<sup>th</sup> International  
Geological Congress.*

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