



**International Society for Soil Mechanics and  
Geotechnical Engineering**

**Election of President for the Term 2026-2030  
Candidate Statement**

**Professor Michael C R Davies**



**If elected as your President I will focus on the following key priorities:**

**Positioning geotechnics at the heart of climate change mitigation and adaptation**

**Removing barriers so that every member and Member Society can participate, contribute, and benefit**

**and**

**Strengthening governance to ensure the Society remains effective, transparent, and resilient**

## **International Society for Soil Mechanics and Geotechnical Engineering**

### **Election of President for the Term 2026-2030**

#### **Candidate Statement**

#### **Professor Michael C R Davies**

#### **A confident, inclusive and forward-looking Society for a changing world**

Geotechnical engineering has never mattered more. As climate change accelerates, urbanisation intensifies, and infrastructure systems are pushed to their limits, the expertise of our profession is central to creating a safer, more sustainable future. At the same time, geotechnical engineers are required to deliver resilient, low-carbon, and resource-efficient solutions within increasingly tight economic constraints — a landscape that has not only accelerated innovation in practice but has also strongly shaped the academic research agenda, aligning research efforts with real-world challenges and impact.

The International Society for Soil Mechanics and Geotechnical Engineering (ISSMGE) has a proud 90-year history of leadership, innovation, and international collaboration. As President, I will build on this legacy with energy, clarity of purpose, and a strong commitment to serving all our members.

If elected, my presidency will focus on three connected priorities:

- **Positioning geotechnics at the heart of climate change mitigation and adaptation**
- **Removing barriers so that every member and Member Society can participate, contribute, and benefit**
- **Strengthening governance to ensure the Society remains effective, transparent, and resilient**

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#### **Proven international leadership**

I bring extensive global experience across research, education, and professional practice. I have held academic appointments in the USA, New Zealand, Canada, and the UK, and have worked closely with colleagues across all regions of the world. My leadership roles include Chair of the British Geotechnical Association, member of the Management Committee of the New Zealand Geotechnical Society, and senior executive positions in universities in both the UK and New Zealand, including Deputy Vice Chancellor at the University of Sussex, Dean of Engineering and Deputy Principal at the University of Dundee, and Dean of Engineering at the University of Auckland.

My service to the ISSMGE spans more than 25 years and encompasses leadership roles including First Vice President, Vice President for Australasia, Treasurer, Chair of the ISSMGE Foundation, and membership of Technical Committees TC211 and TC104. This extensive experience has given me a deep understanding of the Society, its strengths, and the opportunities ahead, positioning me to guide the ISSMGE effectively into the future.

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## **My vision for the ISSMGE**

My vision for the ISSMGE is of a Society that continues to serve its members through the activities that lie at its core: the organisation of International and Regional Conferences, the work of the Technical Committees, and the exchange of knowledge through symposia, workshops and courses. These activities are central to the Society's purpose, and they should remain so. I also believe it is important that the Society continues to recognise and celebrate excellence through the ISSMGE awards, acknowledging the achievements of individual members, Technical Committees and Member Societies.

From my conversations with members — and from my own experience — the opportunities for networking are consistently identified as one of the most valuable aspects of ISSMGE membership. It is therefore essential that these opportunities are not only maintained, but actively enhanced. This means continuing to value face-to-face interaction, while also making full and effective use of hybrid and online formats to broaden access, reduce barriers to participation, and enable more members — particularly from smaller or more geographically distant Member Societies — to connect, collaborate and contribute.

My vision is of an ISSMGE that builds confidently on the strength of its traditions, while embracing modern, inclusive ways of bringing our global geotechnical community together.

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## **1. Geotechnics and the climate challenge**

The climate emergency is the defining challenge of our time — and the greatest challenge the engineering profession has ever faced. Geotechnical engineers already play a critical role in decarbonisation, resilient infrastructure, energy transition, natural hazard mitigation, and sustainable land use. The ISSMGE must lead decisively in this space.

As President, I will ensure that climate change mitigation and adaptation become a unifying theme across all ISSMGE activities — conferences, Technical Committees, education, and outreach.

### **Key actions:**

- Work closely with partner organisations within the Federation of International Geo Engineering Societies (FedIGS) to develop and implement a coordinated international response to climate change.
- Establish a Board-level Climate Change Task and Finish Group, chaired by a Climate Change Champion who will attend Board meetings and coordinate action across committees.
- Explore recognition of the ISSMGE as a partner with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), enabling our expertise in resilient and sustainable geotechnical practice to contribute more directly to global climate action and the Paris Agreement's implementation.

## **2. An inclusive and connected global community**

With 91 National Member Societies, more than 20,000 individual members, and over 50 Corporate Associates, the ISSMGE is a truly global and diverse community. This diversity is one of our greatest strengths — yet not all groups are equally represented or equally able to engage.

My presidency will focus on removing practical, financial, and structural barriers to participation, ensuring that opportunity within the ISSMGE is based on talent and commitment, not geography or circumstance. Central to this approach will be building on, connecting, and scaling the excellent work already being undertaken by individual Member Societies to promote and support women geotechnical engineers, enabling successful initiatives to inform and strengthen practice across the Society.

### **Key actions:**

- Appoint a Diversity Champion to the Board to provide leadership, accountability, and coordination of strategies that increase participation by under-represented groups, including women and members from developing regions, working in close partnership with Member Societies.
- Introduce a new ISSMGE Award for Outstanding Women Geotechnical Engineers, providing visible recognition of excellence, leadership, and service to the profession at an international level.
- Expand and update the ISSMGE open-access educational platform to improve equitable access to high-quality technical content, particularly for members unable to attend international conferences.
- Increase the diversity of instructors, speakers, and contributors across all ISSMGE activities, ensuring that the Society visibly reflects the breadth of talent within our community.
- Actively celebrate and promote the Society's rich history and cultural diversity, including continued strong support for French as an official language and the ISSMGE online lexicon.

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## **3. Strong governance for a sustainable future**

Effective governance underpins everything the Society does. Building on the successful introduction of Board-level Committees and the excellent work of the Secretariat, my focus will be on coherence, transparency, and engagement.

### **Key actions:**

- Ensure responsible and effective use of Society funds to maximise benefit to members.
  - Reduce the Society's carbon footprint by prioritising online meetings and hybrid events where appropriate.
  - Hold six-monthly online meetings with Regional Vice Presidents and Member Society leaders to improve communication, transparency, and strategic alignment.
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**A presidency built on service**

The success of the ISSMGE has always depended on the dedication of its volunteers, the leadership of its Presidents and Board members, and the active engagement of its Member Societies. If elected, I will serve with integrity, openness, and enthusiasm — listening carefully, acting decisively, and championing geotechnical engineering’s vital role in society.

Together, we can ensure that the ISSMGE not only serves its members, but also makes a lasting and meaningful contribution to the world.