

Lausanne, 10<sup>th</sup> of June 2015

## **The 2015 World Tunnel Congress in Dubrovnik, a genuine success for the development of tunnelling in SEE:**

***More than 1.500 attendees welcomed; Dubai  
elected as the host of the 2018 WTC***

From May 22<sup>nd</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> in Dubrovnik, Croatia, the International Tunnelling and Underground Space Association held its 41<sup>st</sup> General Assembly along with the 2015 World Tunnel Congress, co-organised with the Croatian Association for Tunnels and Underground Structures. This international event, widely recognised among tunnelling professionals and experts, recorded more than 1.550 participants, including attendees and exhibitors. 54 Member Nations of the Association, out of 73, were present. The attention was this year focused on the promotion of tunnelling in the South-East Europe Region, represented by the 13 emissaries of its countries. Many topics have been addressed during this week, with 390 technical presentations or posters, sessions on technical innovation conducted by ITA Tech and a workshop on « Aging tunnels – safety in operation during refurbishment », at the occasion of the 10th anniversary of ITA COSUF.

The 2015 WTC also aimed at illustrating the importance of tunnelling in counteracting problems due to traffic congestion, flooding, and transportation, in order to face the climate change challenge. Such ambitions were notably asserted through the Opening Ceremony on Monday, May 25<sup>th</sup>, during which ITA's President Soren Degn Eskesen, as well as eminent technical experts and Croatian political personalities such as Andro Vlahusic, Mayor of Dubrovnik, and Nikola Dobroslavic, Head of Dubrovnik – Neretva County, expressed the important of tunnels in urban development plans, notably in the booming Croatia. A good occasion as well for ITA to recall its 7 strategic mid-term goals, in order to develop the tunnelling industry over the world.

## 2015 WTC, ITA's General Assembly: a place to reassert ITA's strategic plan

Last year in Brazil, in the framework of the 2014 WTC, ITA announced its strategy for 2014-2016. The Association took benefit of its 41<sup>st</sup> General Assembly on May 24<sup>th</sup> 2015, to reassert its 7 goals, that consist into:

1. **Consolidating ITA's relations with new Member Nations (Azerbaijan, Bhutan, Malaysia, UAE, Qatar...).** Such objective will be concretized through a solid programme of visits and a strong support of the Association when it comes to organise Member Nation Tunnelling Events.
2. **Improving Communication with ITA's Working Groups and Committees.** In this aim, the latter regularly send status reports to the Association, according to a standard process structured by ITA. Working Groups will also be tightly involved in the preparation and the planning of ITA-CET training courses.
3. **Expanding ITA's relations with industrial actors, thanks to an in depth and updated knowledge of the tunnelling and underground market.** To meet this goal, ITA has set up a tunnel market forecast statistics programme. Every three years, visits to all existing Prime Sponsors with industry experts are also organised. Between 2014 and 2015, already 10 Prime sponsors have been visited. Besides, ITA plans to integrate 4 new Prime sponsors and 8 new supporters by 2016. For now, 3 now Prime Sponsors have decided to give support to the Association: Rio Tinto, CRCHI, Geoconsult.
4. **Encouraging further Knowledge Sharing through Education and Training.** The share of expertise and good practices is a genuine strength for ITA. In this regards, since last year, the Association has organized 8 training sessions. The Association is also working to implement, on an ongoing basis, regular e-learning sessions and webinars. As well, ITA-CET has decided to send out themed newsletters twice a year, in order to intensify communication about its activities.
5. **Creating and Developing ITA Young Members Group :** After the creation of the Young Member Group, ITA strives to encourage young people to participate in World Tunnel Congresses by offering them particularly attractive rates for the Dubrovnik and San Francisco WTC. The Association also tends to incite younger members to participate to regional Member Nation Events. Special events have notably been organized in UAE, Greece and in the United Kingdom
6. **Further enhancing the awareness of major stakeholders, including city governments, for tunnelling and underground space stakes..** ITA through its committee on undergrounds space ITACUS is working actively with the ISOCARP (International Association of City and Regional Planners) as well as with UN Habitat and UN ISDR.



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## 7. Improving Communication towards Member Nations, the industrial actors and the public.

As part of its action plan, ITA launched a satisfaction survey among the stakeholders of the Association to determine overall satisfaction with the organization and solicit feedback from the membership.

The survey was performed between November 5<sup>th</sup> and December 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2014 and sent to 380 ITA members that include the 71 Member Nations, 46 working groups and Committees animateurs and chairs, 262 Affiliate Corporate Members, Supporters, Prime Sponsors and Affiliate Individual Member.

The overall results were positive, showing member agreement with ITA's strategy and functioning. Also, the Association is viewed as a dynamic place that must be known and that is necessary for the future. One of the main conclusion is that ITA should emphasis on its goals to promote underground space use and optimize the functioning (organization and publications) of working groups and committees to reach its objectives.

### FOCUS ON THE RESULTS

***60 % of the respondents think that ITA has a strong influence on the decisions regarding tunnel projects***

***The 3 most important benefits of participating to ITA's Activities are:***

- ***Obtaining technical knowledge of tunnels and underground space***
- ***Professional networking***
- ***An international outlook***

## **Tuesday, May 26<sup>th</sup>: the Open Session, focus on... Hydro Power, a mature technology in almost 160 countries in the world**

The Open Session took place on May 25<sup>th</sup>. Different from a technical session, it aimed at initiating a dialog between experts around the world, and at sharing technology and experiences in the framework of ITA's strategic goals. This year, the Open Session made a specific focus on Hydro power. ITA intended to show how the exploitation of underground spaces can be a sustainable solution for hydro power use. As a matter of fact, underground space can make hydro power scheme more sustainable in regards to environment, social and economic aspects, when used in suitable settings and with clear understanding of all risks, particularly geotechnical risks. Several key international speakers attended this Open Session, and evocated concrete examples of Hydro power concepts in Croatia (notably describing the HPP Ombla multi-purpose hydroelectric project), China, Norway,



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Thailand, Germany and Bhutan). The numerous interventions led to the conclusion that, by financing concepts based on renewable energy and on revenues, hydro tunnels and related structures, surge shafts, penstocks and underground powerhouses, are the most reliable long-term solutions for energy supply.



Open Session on Hydro, from left to right: Mr Dorij Phuntshok, Drukgreen, Bhutan, Mr Hartmut Reiner, Munich, Germany, Mr Gérard Seingre, Nant de Drance, Switzerland, Mrs Jenny Yan, CREC, China, Mr Zvonimir Sever, Elektroprojekt, Croatia, Mr Harald Wagner, ITA, Thailand, Mr Jon Ulrik Haheim, Statkraft, Norway, Ms Ruth G Haug, ITA, Norway.

## ITACUS' session and underground urbanism

The 2015 WTC was also the occasion for ITA's Committee on Underground Space (ITACUS) to lead a lively session on underground urbanism, around keynotes presentations, interviews and interactions with the public, on Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup>. The urban planner and designer Elizabeth Reynolds came on purpose from London to present a publication redacted jointly by experts from ISOCARP and ITACUS. Centred on 5 case studies on the use of underground space, such work is the result of a two-year cooperation between planners and engineers. It aims at demonstrating to planners the value of underground space as part of the urban environment. Moreover, the session permitted to identify innovative solutions to incite politicians to "tunnellise" their central urban areas and enable ambitious underground projects.

The ITACUS Steering Board Members, who were all present at the session, interacted with the public and unveiled the current trends in the underground space development, with

### **THREE NEW INITIATIVES ANNOUNCED AT ITACUS' SESSION:**

- 1. ITACUS firstly announced the creation of a joint-activity group on urban underground resilience.***
- 2. The Committee also decided to set up ICARUS, the International Centre for Applied Research on Underground Space. Such research centre will constitute an underground innovation lab dedicated to the development of innovations and to the promotion of habitable and safe underground solutions.***
- 3. Finally, ITACUS announced the launch of a joint-activity group on underground freight.***



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interesting insights on the cases of Stockholm, Paris, Helsinki, and Singapore, and on cross-sector collaborations.

## ITA's General Assembly on May 27<sup>th</sup>: what's next?

While the first General Assembly, held on Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> and presenting its new Member Nations, was focusing on an general balance of the Association's activity, ITA 27<sup>th</sup> of May General Assembly centred the discussions on the future perspectives of ITA's activities. **The cities of San Francisco, in the United States, and Bergen, in Norway, will thus host the next 2016 and 2017 WTCs.** Nowadays indeed, the two countries face **huge underground challenges**. In North America, in addition to the Alaskan Way tunnel, one can notably quote the construction or extension of metro lines planned in Seattle, and the extension of metro lines planned to Los Angeles, New York, Baltimore, San Francisco or Boston. An example that puts aside the numerous sewers and flood protection tunnels that are planned all over the country. In Norway, numerous tunnels are being settled today, while many others are still in their project phase. Also, several undersea road tunnels, such as the Ryfast and Rogfast projects, the future connection under the Oslo fjord, or tunnels for the Folo railway line, are at stake.

The General Assembly also organised the vote about the future 2018 World Tunnel Congress host. **Dubai (United Arab Emirates) came out as the winner**, ahead of Dehli, India... In the Gulf Cooperation Council region indeed, many metro projects are underway or planned, notably in Doha, Qatar, as well as in Riyadh, Mecca or in Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. In the area, several drainage tunnels are planned or in construction. A railway line linking the different countries is also under consideration.



Dubai chosen for 2018 WTC: Nick Chittenden, BASF, UAE, Olivier VION, ITA Executive Director, Ms Eng Salma Almaamari, Vice President SoE UAE, Mr Soren Eskesen, ITA President, Mr Eng rayed Al Arashi, SoE UAE Board member, Mr Tarcisio Celestino, ITA Vice President, Mr Davorin Kolic, WTC 2015 Chair



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**The word of H.E. Eng. Essa Al Maidoor, President of the Society of Engineers - UAE**

*“On behalf of the Board of Directors and Members of the Society of Engineers – UAE, we would like to thank you for all your support and trust. It is such an honor to host the World Tunnel Congress and ITA-AITES General Assembly 2018 in Dubai. We will ensure that the World Tunnel Congress 2018 will be one of the sought after event globally. WTC 2018 theme is **“Smart Cities: Managing the Use of Underground Space to Enhance the Quality of Life”**. We believe in the importance of highlighting the use of underground space towards Sustainable and Smart Cities.”*



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## More photos of the event:



ITA General Assembly



2015 WTC, Opening Ceremony:  
Introduction of Andro Vlahusic, Mayor of Dubrovnik



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2015 WTC, Opening Ceremony:  
Nikola Dobroslavic, Representative of the President of the Croatian Republic, shaking hands with Davorin Kolic, President of the Croatian Association for Tunnels and Underground Structures

**About the International Tunneling and Underground Space Association:**

*The International Tunneling and Underground Space Association (ITA) is a non -profit and non-governmental international organization, which aims at promoting the use of underground space as a solution to sustainable development. Founded in 1974 and operating out of Lausanne, Switzerland, ITA currently associates 73 Member Nations, 200 affiliated members, 15 Prime Sponsors and 60 supporters*

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