

## The IEEE Region 10 Student/GOLD/WIE Congress 2011



The IEEE Region 10 Student/GOLD/WIE Congress, or R10SC for short, has concluded. It was an exclusive and vibrant event hosted in Auckland, New Zealand, from the 7th – 10th of July 2011. This exciting event was organised by the University of Auckland IEEE Student Branch, the University of Auckland WIE Group and the Auckland GOLD Affinity Group.

The Congress provided great opportunities for networking amongst peers from a range of countries across the Asia Pacific Region, as well as presenting a number of distinguished speakers related to the theme of Emerging Technologies.

The Region 10 Student Congress was first held in 2002 in Singapore, attracting 57 delegates. The event has since been held in Hong Kong (2004), Beijing (2005), Chennai (2007) and Singapore (2009). In 2011, this prestigious event was held at the University of Auckland, New Zealand.

This year's theme was *"Emerging Technologies: Realizing innovative ideas that will define a better tomorrow for humanity"*.

Special events: Emerging Technologies Seminars, Senior Volunteers Discussion Forum, Employers forum, Leadership Workshops, Breakout/Training sessions, and exhibitions.

The R10SC 2011 united students, young professionals and women in engineering and science fields, from Asia Pacific regions, and provided them with a common platform to explore new and existing ideas, networking opportunities and discuss issues in their professional life. The confluence of delegates with industry representatives and experienced IEEE leaders during this special event aimed to energise tomorrow's leaders into taking the IEEE and their profession to even greater heights.

The delegates who represented IEEE Sri Lanka Section were, Kasun Chamika Sirimanna, chair IEEE University of Moratuwa student branch, representing the student category.

Lalintha Gayan Polpitiya, past chair of the IEEE University of Moratuwa student branch and member of the IEEEExtreme 3.0 winning team, representing the GOLD (Graduates of the Last Decade) category and

Dr. Maheshi Dissanayake, Treasurer of the IEEE Central Region sub section, representing the Women in Engineering (WIE) category.

## Day 1:



The welcome address and ice breaking events were scheduled for the opening day of the congress. After the warm welcome address by Mr. Hengjie Wang, Chairman of The University of Auckland IEEE student branch, IEEE Region 10 director Professor Lawrence Wong, R10 student representative Mr. Om Perakash Batra and R10 GOLD chair Mr. Timothy Wong elaborated on the mission and vision of the R10 SWG congress and the final objective of the event, which is to bring together the delegates of R10 in order to provide an effective and efficient networking platform. The organizing committee and the congress sponsors also shared their thoughts with the delegates. They explained the

importance of good relationship between industry and the IEEE.

The welcome address was followed by professional skills workshops in the afternoon. From the workshop options available, we three selected the visit to the “Vector house of the future”, which was a prototype of application of the smart grid technology, one of the latest hot topic in Power and energy field. “Vector house of the future” was developed to demonstrate and understand emerging energy and communications technologies and how they can be used to economically transform an ordinary household into a very sophisticated technologically advanced, easy-to-manage household. Vector is a leading electricity providing company in New Zealand and Gareth Williams, Strategic Solutions Manager of “Vector” gave us a valuable demonstration during the visit.

A demonstration was given on the practical aspects and services that may be supported by deploying a fibre-optic network over a power distribution system. Energy exhibits included a distributed generation system with solar PV, Micro wind turbine, solar hot water, combined heat and power and also energy storage's and an Energy Management System. “Vector



house of the future” successfully demonstrated how the quality of life could be improved by employing a sophisticated centralised network of all electrical household items while reducing the electricity bill using an embedded smart meter technology. “Vector house” is

used to promote discussion on the impacts caused by these changes on New Zealand domestic market from the consumer, environment, and supplier point of view.

First night of the congress was named “Ice-breaking night” and many fun activities were arranged by the organisers with the intention of getting to know our fellow congress attendees. There was a fun quiz, and of course a delicious BBQ. It was a night full of joy and laughter. Before calling it a day, we gathered in our rooms and had a friendly chat with our multicultural roommates, from countries like Australia, New Zealand, India and Nigeria.

## Day 2:

IEEE Geographic and GOLD/WIE forums were the main morning sessions of day 2. The three of us attended the respective Student, GOLD and WIE sessions. And we principally discussed about GOLD clustering, WIE activities of R10 and student branch activities in different geographical regions. We also shared our knowledge and experiences about committee structure, finances and fundraising, events and activities, member recruitment and retention, and relationships with external parties. We also pointed out the importance of organizing a South Asian Student Congress, because it will provide a great opportunity to network with many active IEEE volunteers both in and out Sri Lanka. At the geographical forum we learnt how to improve the IEEE activities in Sri Lanka, specially the importance of maintaining a strong connection between industry and the IEEE activities as well as of the importance of forming IEEE GOLD affinity group and WIE affinity group in Sri Lanka.

Next in the schedule were the emerging technology seminars. We learned about Cloud computing, high performance computing in health care and life sciences, Patenting and Evolution of engineering research and development, modern monitoring technologies for electrical integrity of generator plants, trends in energy technology such as EV's, battery storage and Smart appliances and IEEE and the smart grid.

The evening provided us with an opportunity to participate in the Employers' forum. We were able to meet employers from world leading technological companies including ABB, Mighty River Power, Microsoft, Google and inro.

The final event of the day was the glamorous official congress dinner. Delegates, dignitaries and special guests had the opportunity to mingle with each other at a harbour-side restaurant, The Floating Pavilion, situated in Auckland's prestigious and world famous



Viaduct Harbour. Dinner was followed by Region 10 award ceremony for the year 2010 and 2011. A wonderful afternoon of reminiscing and celebrating concluded with the cutting of the IEEE R10 SC cake!

### Day 3:

The plenary session commenced on IEEE topics. We had an overview of the IEEE structure, IEEE technical activities, IEEE involvement in Humanitarian Technology including improving the life expectancy of the world population through creating improved access to health care, adequate clean water, improved agriculture, better communication, and reliable electricity.

IEEE GOLD Clustering was a good session targeting improving collaboration, knowledge sharing and distribution of volunteer work and duties. We got a good experience and got a good knowledge about running an affinity group. Also we built strong connections with active IEEE volunteers of neighbouring countries.

Peter Over, IEEE New Zealand North section chair, conducted the workshop by emphasizing the value of engaging GOLD with the industry. This workshop aimed at sharing thoughts on why it is important for GOLD and the industry to engage with each other. The discussion was intended to stimulate thoughts and discuss experiences on positive outcomes of GOLD events with industry participation. We experienced and learned about various strategies to engage more with the industry to achieve maximum benefits for both parties.



Special Session for IEEE GINI was held on this day. (GINI) The Global Integrated network of IEEE is a networking structure to create a link between the Student branches and the Section.

The WIE session of day 3 was facilitated by Dr. Mark Andrews and was on the topic, overcoming obstacles faced by Women in Engineering and Science disciplines in career development. The panel discussion specifically focused on tackling gender imbalance in professional environments and the issues faced by women when they try to balance their career and family life.

In the evening we participated in the Delegate's forum concurrent with the GOLD session on career development.

The night of the 3rd day was a showcase of dynamic cultures. There were stalls set up for each country. We decorated our stall with our cultural monuments, photos, souvenirs and Sri Lankan traditional sweets and flags. Sweets were offered to visitors coming to the stall and souvenirs were exchanged. We presented a special painting depicting the "Kandy



Perahera" which emphasizes an important aspect of Sri Lankan culture, to Mr. Hengie Wang, Chairman, IEEE Region 10 Student/GOLD/WIE Congress Auckland 2011.

Day 4:

July 10th was the final day of the congress. Dr. Peter Staecker, candidate for 2012 IEEE president-elect, delivered a valuable, speech on the future directions in technology. He talked about emerging technologies and how they will change the world. We had group discussions and shared our inputs on how to improve the quality of the IEEE services and IEEE regional activities. We pointed out the values of introducing new world wide competitions like IEEEExtreme to increase the IEEE activities among undergraduates and graduate members as well as the importance of providing opportunities to master the employability of IEEE members not only in regional labour market but also in world job market.



The Congress tour was another unforgettable experience during our participation in the R10SC. We went sightseeing in and around Auckland. The tour bus travelled up Queen Street, through Auckland's central business district, past The University of

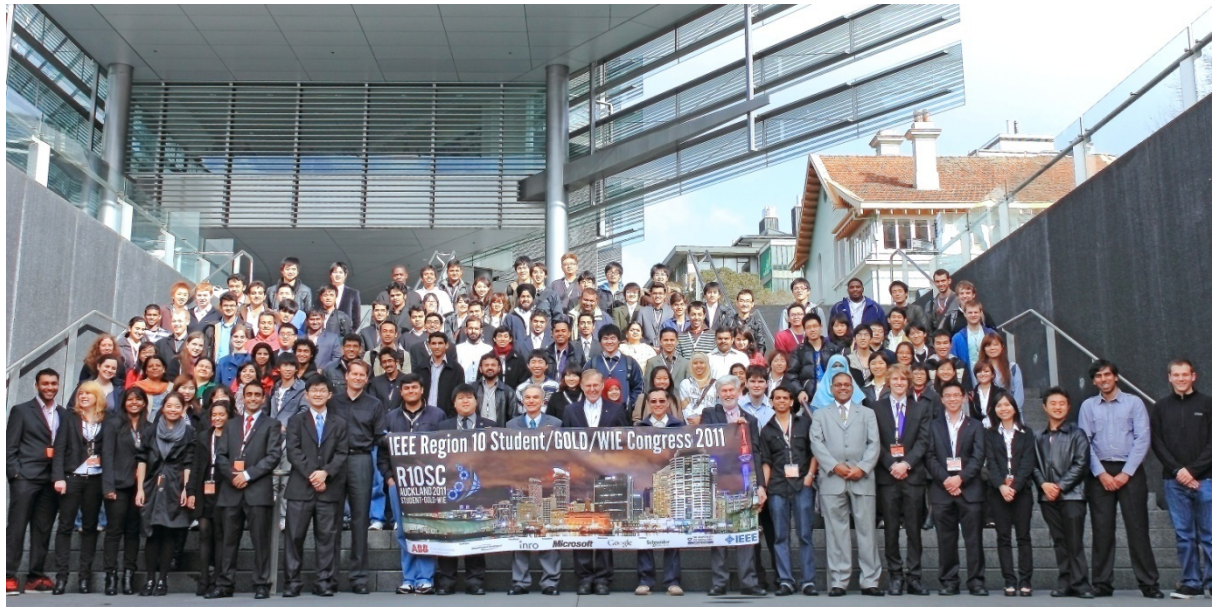
Auckland, in the heart of Auckland city and through the inner city park, known as The Domain, and also Auckland Museum. We continued through the picturesque suburb of Ponsonby, known for its historic buildings, before heading over the Harbour Bridge to the North Shore. We had a walk on the Narrow Neck Beach and in historic Devonport before continuing up to the summit of Mt Victoria, where there was a stunning panoramic view of Auckland City and the Waitemata Harbour. The buses then travelled back over the Harbour Bridge to Westhaven Marina, one of the largest marinas in the Southern Hemisphere. The last stop was at the Auckland Fish Market and the Viaduct Harbour.

The journey back home, was pleasant and uneventful. The feeling of coming back home to Sri Lanka after a week of extravagant IEEE experiences, was a warm one.

Our special thanks go to the IEEE Sri Lanka section for giving this valuable opportunity to represent our motherland. Also



we would like to thank Dr. Rohan Munasinghe, chair, IEEE Sri Lanka Section, Dr. Ruwan Ranaweera, chairman, IEEE Central Region subsection and Prof. Sisil Kumarawadu, Branch counsellor, IEEE University of Moratuwa student branch for their special guidance. The organising committee, which mainly comprised of students and alumni of the Faculty of Engineering, University of Auckland should be specially thanked for making this event a success.



We are looking forward to sharing our knowledge and experiences obtained through the R10SC, to augment the IEEE Student activities in all student branches and to establish active IEEE GOLD and WIE Affinity groups in Sri Lanka.

*Written by - Lalintha Polpitiya, Maheshi Dissanayake and Kasun Chamika Sirimanna*