Presented by
Professor Lyesse Laloui

February 2026

CANDIDATE FOR ISSMGE PRESIDENCY

A Vision for a Stronger Global ISSMGE

Nominated by

Belgium, Bulgaria, China, Czech and Slovak, Ghana, Hong Kong, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Lithuania, North Macedonia, Pakistan, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, South Africa, Turkey, UAE, Ukraine, Uzbekistan

SUMMARY

1. BIOGRAPHY

Professor Lyesse Laloui

I am Chair Professor and Director of the Soil Mechanics Laboratory at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Lausanne (EPFL), where I lead pioneering research in geomechanics, geo-energy, and environmental geotechnics. I completed my Master's degree in Civil Engineering at the École Nationale des Travaux Publics in Algiers and later earned an Advanced Masters and a Ph.D. with honours in Soil and Structural Mechanics from École Centrale Paris. I have held research fellowships at École Centrale Paris and at EPFL before being appointed Professor at EPFL in 2006 where I have held key academic leadership roles.

I am a member of the Swiss Academy of Engineering Sciences and Academia Europaea, and have received honorary doctorates from Heriot-Watt University in the United Kingdom and the Technical University of Cluj-Napoca in Romania. I have delivered more than sixty keynote and invited lectures across five continents and am the recipient of major distinctions including the ASCE Kersten Lecture (2020), the Vienna Terzaghi Lecture (2022), the DFI John Mitchell Lecture (2025), and the Kimberly-Clark Distinguished Lectureship Award (2025).

I currently serve as Vice President for Europe of ISSMGE, having organised five National Assemblies and chaired the advisory committee of ECSMGE 2024 (Portugal), and have contributed to numerous international technical committees, expert panels, and collaborative research programmes. I am also Director for Europe of the International Associated Research Centers for the Urban Underground Space. My international appointments include adjunct and visiting professorships at Duke University (USA), Northwestern University (USA), King Abdulaziz University (KSA), and Hohai University (China).

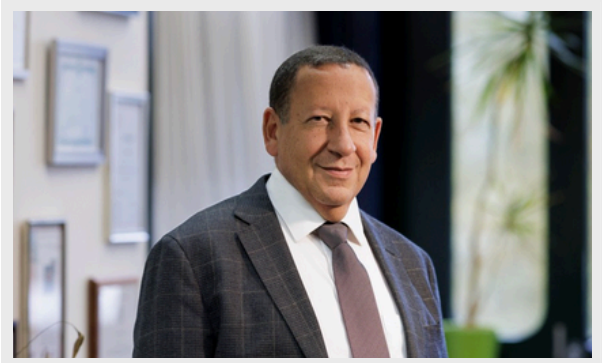
I have published and edited more than four hundred peer-reviewed journal articles and thirteen books. My most cited work concerns energy geostructures, bio-improved soils, and CO_2 and nuclear waste storage.

I am the founding Honorary Editor-in-Chief of the journal Geomechanics for Energy and the Environment. In 2025, I was recognised among the top 0.05% of scholars worldwide by ScholarGPS. I currently rank as the #1 active global scholar in Analytical Technique, #1 in Geotechnics in Europe, and among the top three active researchers globally in Geomechanics, underscoring the international visibility of my work and the depth of engagement I bring to the scientific and professional advancement of our discipline.

Beyond academia, I have extensive managerial and governance experience. I serve on the boards of several companies with a combined portfolio of almost USD 5 billion, contributing to strategic planning, financial oversight, and organisational development. I am also the co-founder of several technology-based start-ups, among them Enerdrape, Geoeg, and Medusoil, where I have played a central role in guiding scientific innovation toward commercial applications and sustained growth. My leadership extends to the coordination of major international research collaborations and multidisciplinary teams, reflecting a long-standing engagement with complex organisational and strategic responsibilities.

With a rare combination of scientific excellence and global perspective, I am committed to advancing the geotechnical profession through innovation, education, and international cooperation.

My full CV is available here.



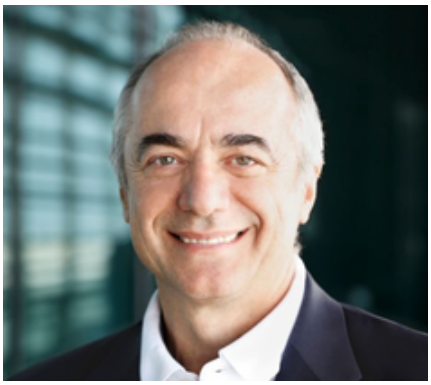
ENDORSEMENTS

PROF. Pedro Sêco E. Pinto
PORTUGAL

"Professor Lyesse Laloui is a man of prodigious energy and fine intellect whose solid scientific background, excellent teaching ability, and significant contributions to geomechanics, sustainability, and geo-energy have opened new avenues of research.
His devotion to ISSMGE activities and talent for creating synergies between academia and industry make him an ideal candidate for the ISSMGE presidency."

Prof. Antonio Gens
SPAIN

"I enthusiastically support Professor Lyesse Laloui's candidacy for ISSMGE President; his pioneering research, innovative ground improvement techniques, active industry engagement, entrepreneurial spirit, and the fostering of collaboration, strengthening the connections between member societies, and the creation of a strong European community as Vice-President for Europe uniquely position him to effectively advance the Society and our discipline."



Prof. J. Carlos Santamarina
UNITED STATES

"Lyesse Laloui exemplifies leadership and practical expertise in geotechnics. His pioneering innovations in energy geotechnics, hands-on consulting, and key contributions to international codes have advanced academia and industry.
I strongly endorse Lyesse Laloui for the ISSMGE Presidency, knowing his vision, generosity, and dynamic leadership will greatly benefit our international community."

Prof. Dietmar Adam
AUSTRIA

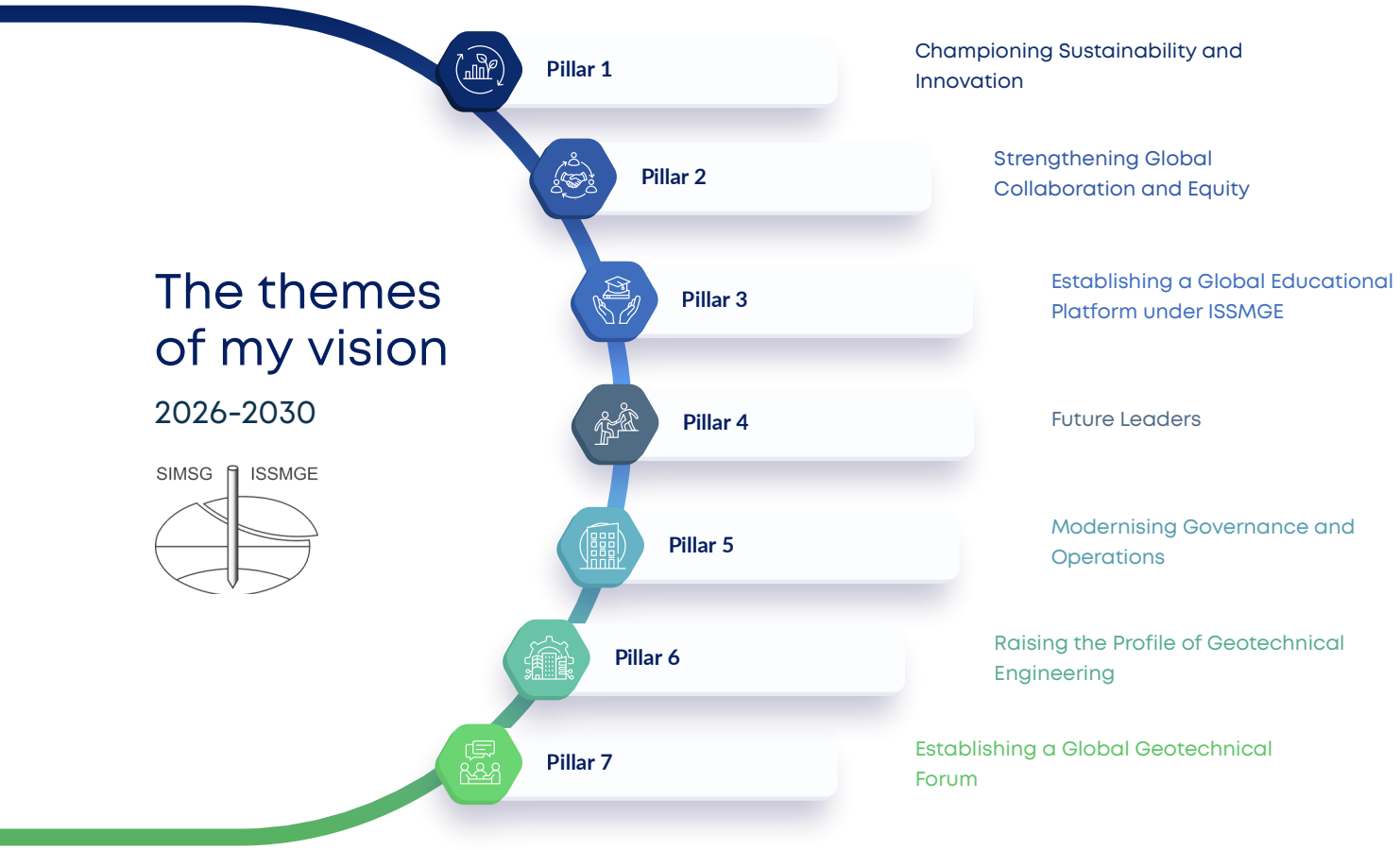
"The upcoming ICSMGE in Vienna will focus on "Geotechnical Challenges in a Changing Environment." Professor Lyesse Laloui is ambitious and clear about the challenges ahead with his innovative and visionary program to lead the ISSMGE into a sustainable future. His expertise, international reputation, and long-standing commitment to our society make him an excellent candidate for ISSMGE President."

2. INTRODUCTION

I stand as a candidate for the Presidency of the International Society for Soil Mechanics and Geotechnical Engineering with a clear and forward-looking vision. My ambition is to modernise the Society, expand its global reach, and strengthen its impact on the world's most pressing geotechnical and societal challenges.

My candidacy is founded on more than three decades of leadership across academia, industry, and entrepreneurship. A North African by birth, a European by professional base, and a global citizen through international collaboration, I offer a new model of leadership for ISSMGE. My work bridges continents and sectors and is grounded in a deep commitment to scientific excellence, professional integrity, and inclusion.

This document sets out the seven strategic pillars that form the foundation of my vision. These pillars outline how ISSMGE can evolve into a more modern, inclusive, impactful, and globally recognised organisation while respecting its heritage as the world's leading geotechnical community.



PILLAR 1

CHAMPIONING SUSTAINABILITY AND INNOVATION

Objective

Position geotechnical engineering at the forefront of the global response to climate change, renewable energy, and sustainable infrastructure.

Rationale

Geotechnical engineers are uniquely placed to deliver practical solutions for a planet in transition, from stabilising infrastructure to enabling energy storage, carbon management, and resilient cities.
Under my leadership, ISSMGE will become a recognised voice for sustainable and innovative geotechnical practice.

Key Actions

- Establish new Technical Committees to address emerging sustainability and innovation challenges facing the geotechnical profession.
- Strengthen collaboration between technical committees, universities, and industry on sustainability-oriented research.
- Encourage and promote innovation awards and demonstration projects focused on climate resilience.
- Build stronger links with international organisations such as UN agencies and development banks to position geotechnical expertise within sustainable-development initiatives.
- Make ISSMGE carbon-neutral through responsible event management, digital participation tools, and a global sustainability programme.

Expected Outcomes

- Recognition of ISSMGE as a proactive contributor to climate adaptation and sustainability supported by the establishment of new and active Technical Committees addressing emerging challenges.
- Increased research funding and project opportunities connected to green infrastructure.
- Tangible reduction of ISSMGE's environmental footprint, for example through CO_2-neutral conferences supported by certified carbon-compensation schemes.

PILLAR 2

GLOBAL COLLABORATION, EQUITY, AND KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

Objective

Foster a truly global and balanced ISSMGE that supports societies across all regions and levels of development.

Rationale

The strength of ISSMGE lies in its diversity, yet many member societies face persistent challenges such as limited funding, weak infrastructure, and lack of access to international collaboration. This pillar commits to practical support, solidarity, and long-term capacity building, ensuring an inclusive Society where all members can contribute.

Key Actions

- Launch a Global Partnership Platform connecting developed and developing societies for joint training, research, and funding opportunities.
- Introduce a Conference Support Framework offering travel and participation support for members from developing regions.
- Promote regional technical events and workshops to reduce cost barriers and increase participation.
- Introduce an ISSMGE Touring Lectures Programme, prioritising developing societies and early-career engagement.
- Explore matching-fund models to help national societies with limitedfinancial capacity.
- Ensure equitable representation of developing regions in technical committees and leadership roles.
- Establish a Global Scholarships and Apprenticeships Programme enabling engineers from developing societies to access international training, short research residencies, and practical exposure on major infrastructure projects.
- Develop and implement a structured Job Shadowing Program within ISSMGE to foster mentoring, leadership development, and intergenerational knowledge transfer.

Expected Outcomes

- Increased participation of developing societies in ISSMGE activities and leadership.
- Strengthened international solidarity and balanced representation across ISSMGE.

PILLAR 3

ESTABLISHING A GLOBAL EDUCATIONAL PLATFORM UNDER ISSMGE

Objective

Create a dedicated educational arm within ISSMGE to deliver accessible, high-quality professional training and certification worldwide.

Rationale

Lifelong learning and accessible training are essential to a strong profession. While ISSMGE already facilitates technical knowledge sharing, structured, affordable, and internationally recognised training opportunities remain inconsistent across regions. A formal educational platform will advance professional standards globally and offer new opportunities for members.

Key Actions

- Develop a unified ISSMGE Education and Certification Framework offering regional and international qualifications.
- Review and update the ISSMGE Virtual University to ensure alignment with the Society's evolving educational goals, regional needs, and digital delivery standards.
- Partner with universities, professional societies, and industry to design modular online and in-person courses.
- Create Regional Centres of Excellence to coordinate and deliver training, beginning with developing regions.
- Seek external partnerships and funding to support training in financially constrained societies.
- Encourage collaboration between technical committees and the educational arm to translate research outcomes into learning modules.

Expected Outcomes

- Recognition of ISSMGE as a global authority in professional geotechnical education.
- Broader access to accredited training and career advancement.
- Higher professional standards and enhanced mobility of engineers worldwide.

PILLAR 4

FUTURE LEADERS

Objective

Empower and attract the next generation of geotechnical engineers through coordinated global initiatives, opportunity, and inspiration.

Rationale

The future of the profession depends on a strong pipeline of young engineers. While youth networks exist, they are fragmented and under-resourced. A unified, global programme will strengthen participation, visibility, and leadership development.

Key Actions

- Consolidate existing young-member groups under a unified global network.
- Promote geotechnical engineering as a career of impact, emphasising its role in climate resilience, infrastructure safety, and the energy transition.
- Support regional conferences, technical competitions, and exchange schemes that provide young members with visibility and leadership experience.
- Encourage the thematic development of Young ISSMGE and Young Regional Conferences through structured input from senior members and industry partners, enhancing relevance to practice while maintaining strong youth leadership.
- Strengthen and empower youth representation in ISSMGE governance.
- Expand access to mentorship, scholarships, and international training opportunities.

Expected Outcomes

- Increased attraction and retention of young professionals.
- Stronger diversity, equality and inclusion across the Society.
- A sustainable and empowered leadership pipeline for the decades ahead.

PILLAR 5

MODERNISING GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONS

Objective

Align the Society's governance structure and management systems with its incorporated legal status and global responsibilities.

Rationale

As ISSMGE expands in size and influence, it must evolve from a traditional professional association into a modern, well-structured international organisation. Incorporation gives the Society the opportunity to clarify responsibilities, professionalise administration, and ensure that governance reflects the standards expected of a global institution. Modernisation will strengthen transparency, agility, effectiveness, and long-term growth.

Key Actions

- Establish a professional Executive Branch responsible for daily operations, finance, communications, and programme coordination.
- Define clear operational boundaries between the Executive Branch, the Board, and the Council, ensuring that elected leadership provides direction while professional staff deliver execution.
- Review internal procedures and financial management systems to align with best-practice corporate governance.
- Reorient Technical Committees across ISSMGE toward defined outputs and outcomes, reinforcing their role as delivery mechanisms for guidance, innovation, and professional practice.
- Introduce secure digital tools for communication, documentation, and transparent reporting.
- Provide administrative and logistical support to developing regions to improve engagement with central governance.
- Develop clear criteria for regional representation and participation in decision-making.

Expected Outcomes

- A clear, accountable governance structure reflecting ISSMGE's incorporated status.
- Stronger coordination between elected leadership and professional administration.
- Sustained organisational growth enabling ISSMGE to expand its programmes, partnerships, and membership base.
- Recognition of ISSMGE as an influential global authority within international civil and environmental engineering.

PILLAR 6

RAISING THE PROFILE OF GEOTECHNICAL ENGINEERING

Objective

Enhance public understanding of geotechnical engineering and position the profession as essential to global sustainability, safety, and resilience.

Rationale

Geotechnical engineering underpins almost every form of infrastructure, energy development, and environmental protection, yet the profession remains largely invisible to the public, policymakers, and funding agencies. To ensure a strong future and attract new talent, ISSMGE must advocate for the importance and impact of its work.

Key Actions

- Develop a coordinated global communications and outreach strategy highlighting geotechnical contributions to sustainability, resilience, and innovation across regions and member societies.
- Promote storytelling and case studies showing how geotechnical solutions protect communities and enable development.
- Forge partnerships not only with media and educational institutions but also with practitioners, consulting firms, contractors, funding agencies, and development institutions to ensure consistent, high-visibility advocacy.
- Strengthen ISSMGE's visibility and credibility in the context of geohazards and major infrastructure challenges by proactively communicating geotechnical expertise following significant events, and by positioning the Society as a trusted technical voice for policymakers, media, and international institutions.
- Support member societies with communication toolkits, outreach templates, and guidance on engaging national stakeholders and policymakers.

Expected Outcomes

- Broader public, governmental, and industrial recognition of geotechnical engineering as a critical enabler of sustainable development.
- Stronger engagement between ISSMGE, the private sector, and funding bodies.
- Renewed professional pride and attractiveness of the discipline to young engineers.
- Growth in ISSMGE membership incorporating participants from a wider section of the geotechnical engineering sector including institutions, consulting firms, and corporate partners, reflecting the full scope and diversity of the profession.

PILLAR 7

ESTABLISHING A GLOBAL GEOTECHNICAL FORUM

Objective

Create a flagship international platform that brings together geotechnical engineers, policymakers, financiers, and industry leaders to address shared global challenges.

Rationale

Technical expertise alone is not enough to shape global decision-making.
By creating a dedicated platform for dialogue between engineers and decision-makers, ISSMGE can influence infrastructure investment, climate action, and resilience planning while showcasing the societal value of geotechnical innovation.

Key Actions

- Launch a Global Geotechnical Forum as an annual event engaging leaders from engineering, government, and finance.
- Build partnerships with multilateral institutions, development banks, and private-sector organisations.
- Dedicate each Forum to major global themes such as sustainability, innovation, resilience, and inclusivity.
- Use the Forum to attract external funding, strengthen international collaborations, and showcase the work of member societies.

Expected Outcomes

- Recognition of ISSMGE as a global voice for geotechnical engineering.
- Stronger connections between engineering expertise and policy and investment communities.
- Increased opportunities for member societies to influence and benefit from major global development initiatives.

4. WORKING TOGETHER FOR A STRONGER ISSMGE

My presidency will be guided by three core principles:

Connection
Building bridges between regions, disciplines, and generations.

Credibility
Ensuring that decisions are transparent, evidence-based, and deliver measurable results.

Commitment
Focusing on implementation and long-term impact, not declarations.

I envision an ISSMGE that is:

- Respected globally for its leadership in sustainability and innovation
- Structurally strong, transparent, and efficient
- Inclusive of all regions and levels of development
- Inspiring to future generations of geotechnical engineers

This presidency is founded on partnership. National Societies are not stakeholders at the periphery of ISSMGE; they are its backbone. My commitment is to listen, to support, and to ensure that the Society's activities, resources, and visibility serve your needs, your priorities, and your members.

This presidency is not about me; it is about what we can build together. It is about strengthening your voice, supporting your development, and enabling ISSMGE to act as a reliable, effective, and trusted global organisation on your behalf.

I invite each National Society to be an active partner in this journey. Together, we can move ISSMGE from representation to impact, ensuring that geotechnical engineering not only supports but actively shapes a more sustainable, resilient future for our societies.

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