



December 2020

ISSN 2374-1082

## INTERVIEW

## Member and Global Activities

## Interview with Nei Kato, Vice-President MGA

By Stefano Bregni, Global Communications Newsletter Editor-in-Chief, Vice-President for Conferences, and Nei Kato, Vice-President for MGA

With this issue we begin a new series of eight interviews with the Officers of the IEEE ComSoc Member and Global Activities (MGA) Council, which will be published every month in the *Global Communications Newsletter*.

In this series of articles, I will introduce the Vice-President MGA and the five Directors on the MGA Council 2020-21 (namely: Membership Services and AP, NA, LA, EMEA Regions) and the Chairs of the Women in Communications Engineering (WICE) and Young Professionals (YP) Standing Committees. They will present their sector activities and plans.

Opening the series, this month we begin with Nei Kato, IEEE ComSoc Vice-President for Member and Global Activities for the term 2020-21.

Nei has been a full professor with the Graduate School of Information Sciences and the Director of the Research Organization of Electrical Communication (ROEC), Tohoku University, Japan for over 20 years. He served as the Editor-in-Chief of *IEEE Network* (2015-2017), a Member-at-Large on the Board of Governors, IEEE Communications Society (2014-2016), the Chair of the Satellite and Space Communications Technical Committee (2010-2012) and Ad Hoc & Sensor Networks Technical Committee (2014-2015) of ComSoc. He is a Distinguished Lecturer of ComSoc and a Fellow of IEEE.

**Bregni:** Nei, this is the second time you are serving as VP MGA. You served in 2018-19 and you were elected again in 2019 for the term 2020-21. Congratulations! You really like the MGA area.



Stefano Bregni



Nei Kato

**Kato:** I am very grateful for the chance to work as VP-MGA for ComSoc. It is an honor and big responsibility. I would like to thank all the volunteers and ComSoc staff members who have been involved in the development of membership and global activities.

**Bregni:** Do you have any recent news you wish to share with the readers of the GCN?

**Kato:** It is my great pleasure to share a figure with you in this article. The good news is that, as you can see from the accompanying figure, in 2017 and 2018 we witnessed a relatively stable membership situation in comparison with the previous years. More encouraging information is that, as of the end of May of 2020, we have 25,253 members, which is an increase of 6.67% compared to the same month in 2019. This is particularly impressive when compared to other IEEE societies, almost all of which are seeing a decrease in their membership numbers this year while ComSoc is improving in this regard.

**Bregni:** Would you like to mention any special initiative that you started in the previous term?

**Kato:** One helpful and powerful new initiative we launched in 2019 was offering travel awards for our flagship conference, GLOBECOM 2019, to students from select ComSoc chapters. To be eligible, chapters must have recorded an increase in student membership by 20 members before November 29 in 2019. The chapters that managed to do this could apply for the award by indicating one of their members as long as such member was either a student member or a graduate school member and was able to secure a visa to the U.S. The sponsorship from ComSoc was to support this person to attend GLOBECOM 2019 on Big Island, Hawaii, USA.

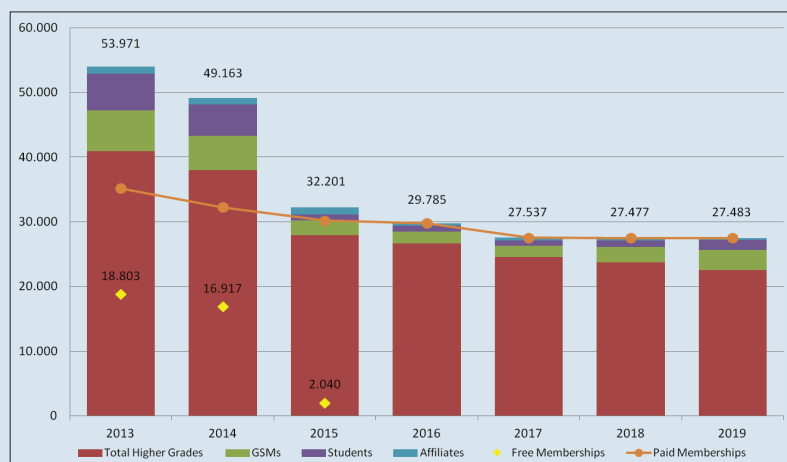
**Bregni:** I am very happy to hear that, because students are the future. We have invested significant resources to attract students. In the previous term 2018-19, Past President Khaled Letaief and you as VP MGA paid special attention to this goal.

**Kato:** We managed to recruit many student members through this instrumental initiative and, as a result, contributed to a significant increase in the number of student members. Unfortunately, this year we are unable to use the same approach to motivate and recruit student members, but I truly believe that as the situation surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic is gradually getting better in the world, we can consider a similar idea again next year, if circumstances allow.

**Bregni:** What are you preparing in 2020? Any special initiative you wish to highlight?

**Kato:** The membership development plan which is ongoing identifies key touchpoints for members and non-members, while also noting areas for customized touchpoints for select cohorts. ComSoc's membership staff is actively developing communications for each of these areas in an effort to recruit, retain, recover, and reinstate members. Notably, a

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ComSoc memberships 2013 – 2019 (as of December month-end).

## 4th IEEE Comsoc Summer School 2019 on Autonomous Systems

By Kashif Bashir, Chair IEEE ComSoc Lahore Chapter

In Pakistan, the IEEE ComSoc summer school has been organized continuously from 2016. The first edition of the summer school was organized on 26-29 July 2016; the second edition of the summer school was organized on 11-14 July 2017; the third edition of the summer school was organized on 7-10 August 2018, and the theme of the summer school was Intelligent Communication Networks.

In the 2019 IEEE ComSoc Lahore Chapter organized the fourth edition of the IEEE ComSoc summer school at Islamia University Bahawalpur on 9-12 October 2019 with the joint collaboration of the IEEE UCET-IUB student branch and KICS-UET Lahore. The theme of the summer school was Autonomous Systems. It featured 14 speakers including two international speakers and 12 national speakers from various fields. The international speakers were from King Fahad University of Petroleum and Minerals, Saudi Arabia and Dhahran Techno Valley KSA, while the national speakers were from Comsats, NUST, MUET, MAJU Karachi, UET-KICS, CASE, Capital University of Science & Technology, L'Oréal Pakistan, and PTCL Pakistan. The main idea was to spread awareness of Autonomous Systems among students and faculty members.

The opening speech was delivered by the chairperson of the IEEE Bahawalpur Sub-Section, Dr. Muhammad Ali Qureshi. Dr. Muhammad Amjad, who is the Dean of the Faculty of Engineering, gave the welcome speech and he formally welcomed all the guests and speakers to the IEEE ComSoc summer school and the Islamia University of Bahawalpur. The speakers and their talk topics during the four days of summer school are as follow: Prof. Dr. Waqar Mahmood (Keynote speech); Dr. Abdul Aziz (New generation antennas for 5G communication systems); Abdul Wahab Cheema (IEEE YP STEP: Career is as we want to define it); Dr. Hussain Ali (Target parameter estimation in MIMO radars); Dr. Saeed Buzdar (IEEE HAC: E-Care through latest technologies); Dr. Abi Waqas (Advancement in

photonics/optics and its applications); Prof. Dr. Junaid Mughal (Electromagnetics as we know it); Prof. Dr. Aamir Iqbal Bhatti (Development of Pakistan's first-ever indigenous phased array radar); Mr. Saqlain Sher (IEEE STEP YP: The importance of professional networking); Dr. Waqas Afzal (Sensor-based communication-aware path planning using harmonic potential fields); Engr. Farid Zamir (IEEE R10 SAC leadership training); Prof. Dr. Shoab A. Khan (Autonomous systems and their alignment to initiatives of PM task force on knowledge-economy) and Dr. Kashif Ishaque.

A visit to Noor Mahal (a historic place built in 1872) was also arranged on third day of the summer school, where light and sound shows were arranged for the participants and guests of the summer school. During this show, the complete history of Bahawalpur city was shared through the light and sound effects on the Noor Mahal building. All of the participants and guests enjoyed the visit.

An idea competition was held after the virtual tour on the theme of 'Autonomous Systems'. Students were given 20 minutes to think of an idea and afterward, 10 more minutes were given to write down their ideas. The positions were announced in the closing ceremony and the cash prize was awarded to the winning participants.

The closing ceremony began with a message from Stefano Bregni, Vice President of Conferences for the IEEE Communication Society. He encouraged all students to become IEEE ComSoc members and he also shared the membership benefits of the IEEE Communication Society. He also appreciated the effort of the IEEE ComSoc Lahore Chapter for organizing the fourth summer school. At the end, Mr. Kashif Bashir, Chair of the IEEE ComSoc Lahore Chapter, expressed his gratitude to all participants for attending the fourth edition of the summer school. He further shared his experience during the last four days, as well as passing on his regards and congratulations to the summer school team for arranging such a successful event. The main organizing team consisted of Dr. Muhammad Amjad, Dr. Muhammad Ali Qureshi, Dr. Asjad Amin, Muhammad Farid Zamir, Muhammad Usman Zafar and Maria Ali. Shields were distributed to the invited speakers and organizers at the end.



First day: Dr. Muhammad Amjad (Dean, Faculty of Engineering IUB), Dr. Waqar Mahmood (Director, KICS-UET), Dr. Muhammad Ali Qureshi (Chair, IEEE Bahawalpur Subsection), Dr. Asjad Amin (Branch Counselor, IEEE UCET IUB), and Kashif Bashir (Chair, IEEE Comsoc Lahore Chapter) with distinguished speakers, participants, and organizers of summer school.



Fourth Day: Dr. Shoab A. Khan (Dean, Faculty of Engineering NUST), Dr. Muhammad Ali Qureshi (Chair IEEE Bahawalpur Subsection), Dr. Asjad Amin (Branch Counselor IEEE UCET IUB), and Kashif Bashir (Chair IEEE Comsoc Lahore Chapter) with delegates of summer school.



## Brazilian Researchers and Company Develop Optical Network Planning Tool

By Joaquim F. Martins Filho, IEEE Northeast Brazil Section Chair, Federal University of Pernambuco, Brazil

Researchers from the Optical Networks Group of the Department of Electronics and Systems at UFPE (Federal University of Pernambuco) in Recife, Brazil, started in August 2020 the execution of a new phase of an innovation project on the development of a computational tool for optical fiber communication networks planning. The initiative, coordinated by Professor Joaquim F. Martins Filho, from UFPE, is a partnership with Padtec, a leading manufacturer of optical transport systems, and includes the participation of teaching researchers from the Department of Electronics and Systems (DES), doctoral and master students in Electrical Engineering (PPGEE) at UFPE, undergraduate students and collaborating researchers from the University of Pernambuco (UPE) and Federal Rural University of Pernambuco (UFRPE), both in Recife, Federal University of Alagoas (UFAL) in Maceio, and from the Instituto Atlantico, in Fortaleza, all within the IEEE Northeast Brazil Section.

In the initiative, software and methodology will be developed to facilitate the design of fiber optic communication networks that serve as infrastructure for the Internet, improving performance and reducing network deployment costs. "It will have an impact on the development in Brazil of innovative technology for a Brazilian company that operates globally, which will represent a competitive differential for the company in relation to foreign competitors and in the generation of jobs and highly specialized human resources in the country," stated the professor.

For Roberto Nakamura, Padtec's CTO, the use of a planning tool brings numerous benefits to the company by enabling the development of even more efficient and competitive network



Group meeting at UFPE. From left to right: Joaquim Martins Filho, Danilo Araujo, Carmelo Bastos Filho, Andre Xavier and Raul Almeida Jr.

projects. "This initiative reinforces Padtec's role as a national high-tech company which invests in Brazilian research and development and contributes to the formation of an ecosystem in the area of optical systems in Brazilian universities," said the executive.

Headquartered in Campinas, in São Paulo state, Padtec is a manufacturer of equipment for systems and high-capacity communication networks using optical fibers, and the project aims to implement algorithms in software for network optimization, to meet a certain level of network performance at the lowest possible cost. "This collaboration with Padtec has already been taking place at UFPE for years and this project is the sixth phase. Now we are going to implement new algorithms to include computational intelligence techniques and new functionalities to the tool under development, and validate them in optical fiber test systems in the company," said the project coordinator from the UFPE side.

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IEEE Communications Society

[www.comsoc.org/gcn](http://www.comsoc.org/gcn)  
ISSN 2374-1082

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new campaign is underway to engage non-members who have attended ComSoc conferences and events. Other campaigns under development include a student retention program and volunteer training materials.

To support these efforts, the marketing committee is working with staff to refresh the ComSoc brand. The first signs of this refresh will be seen in the coming months as the Marketing and ITC committees work with staff and other committees on a website enhancement plan. The plan will ultimately improve the website experience for members and non-members alike, while also identifying where website users are interacting the most or engaging with other members of our community. The membership team can then use this information to create new engagement campaigns to convert users to membership or identify opportunities for current members to continue their ComSoc journey.

Besides the above-mentioned actions, exciting new initiatives will take place during the MGA council in 2020, such as the Virtual DLT/DSP program and other activities to keep our members updated. For more information, please look forward to the other interviews involving MGA Directors and committee chairs in the coming GCN issues.