While writing this “President’s Message” at the beginning of the new year, I would like to recap the status of the IEEE Geoscience and Remote Sensing Society (GRSS) and assess its rate of accomplishment in regard to its main objectives undertaken one year ago. Overall, I think that the GRSS is doing well, e.g., membership is growing slightly; our publications are improving in terms of number of published papers and impact factors; and our conferences are successful in terms of attendance, quality, and economic aspects. Financially, the GRSS closed 2017 in the black, which will allow us to use 50% of our surplus and 3% of our overall reserves for new initiatives to benefit our members.

However, I think that we really need to take a critical look at our Society to recognize its weaknesses and be prepared for a changing environment. While it is true that GRSS membership grew by roughly 90 members by the end of 2017, most of this growth has occurred in Region 10 (notably, in China), where the number of GRSS members increased by 173 between 2015 and 2017; at the same time, in Region 8 (Europe, Africa, and the Middle East), our membership has decreased by 72 members. It is hard to believe that this is due to a decrease in remote-sensing activities in Europe, especially now that the Copernicus program and most of its services are operational. One should consider whether the economic crisis and budgetary restrictions have impacted our membership. Potential members have had to be more selective about how they spend their limited resources, perhaps, in part, because the value-added proposition of membership in our Society was not attractive enough.

Another clear weakness is that our membership is not properly balanced. We are still mostly in academia and government, so the GRSS needs more members in industry to participate in our technical committees, international conferences, and other activities. That would be a win-win situation, but, again, for some reason, our Society has not been able to attract many of our colleagues in industry.

I think this brings to the table the topic of the GRSS value proposition: Why is the GRSS attractive, or, alternatively, why are other professional Societies attractive? This question does not have an easy answer. Membership growth will be the focus of a dedicated strategic planning meeting in November 2018. In November 2017, we dedicated our strategic planning day to two important topics that—to a very large extent—sustain the GRSS and are its visible face: publications and conferences. We have also already begun to implement a few changes to improve GRSS performance that you will start to recognize in the next few months.

UPCOMING CHANGES FOR THE GRSS
The first of these changes is the division of the Directorate of Corporate Relations into two parts: one more focused on industry relations and the other more focused on space agencies relations. To lead the first part, I have appointed Dr. Fabio Pacifici of Digital Globe, and, to direct the second part, I have appointed George Komar, who recently retired from NASA.

The second change is that the GRSS has been approved to become a sponsor of standards development under the IEEE Standards Association through the formation of the GRSS Standards Committee for Sensors and Earth Observations; for this, I must thank the hard work and leadership of Dr. Siri Jodha Khalsa. The plan is that this technical committee will become a forum in which industry and academia collaborate to improve the production and utilization of Earth observation data through standardization. We can also use the standards development process to increase the participation of the private sector in the GRSS. During 2017, the working group made progress on defining synthetic aperture radar formats. The definition of

Greetings from Barcelona!
formats for infrared and Global Navigation Satellite System—Reflection sensors is also in the pipeline.

The third change is the consolidation, under the leadership of Dr. Josée Lévesque, of education and continuing training activities for both students and professionals. In particular, we plan to organize more than one summer school so that the schools can be located closer to potential attendees. We will also continue to support the development of massive open online courses (i.e., MOOCs) in collaboration with some experienced universities, and we will consolidate the online webinars, thereby attempting to achieve a regular rate of one per month and provide certificates, if required. The GRSS Resource Center (http://resource.center.grss.ieee.org/) was officially launched at the beginning of 2018 as the focal point of our educational activities. Of course, all of these activities require volunteers, and, if you would like to help and contribute, you do not have to be an Administrative Committee (AdCom) member. So please feel free to contact us, and we will guide and support you.

The fourth change is a more coordinated use of our publications at large. This includes fostering the use of the GRSS Remote Sensing Code Library (http://rscl-grss.org/) to store codes and executable functions (see the inside back cover of this issue) and of the IEEE GRSS DataPort to upload data sets supporting the papers published in our journals. This also includes the publication of a new journal: *IEEE Journal on Miniaturization for Air and Space Systems* (JMASS). JMASS was approved for phase two during the November 2017 IEEE Board series meeting held in Phoenix, Arizona. This new journal will be sponsored by the IEEE Systems Council, the GRSS, the IEEE Sensors Council, the IEEE Instrumentation and Measurement Society, and the IEEE Aerospace and Electronic Systems Society. The journal will focus on the analysis, design, and optimization of miniaturized technologies for small platforms, emphasizing both reduction in mass/volume and high reliability operation in extreme environments. We expect to bring in experts representing all fields, from drones to CubeSats, and we expect to see the first issue published by the end of 2018 or the beginning of 2019.

The fifth change is related to conferences. The GRSS is working to expand its owned and cosponsored conference portfolio beyond the IEEE International Geoscience and Remote Sensing Symposium (IGARSS), MicroRad, and the Atmospheric Transmission Models meeting. Contacts have been established with several selected conferences to consider opportunities for combining our efforts with their teams. Also, the GRSS’s presence at other conferences is going to be more visible than a portable booth. It is obvious that conferences can be an important meeting point for academia and industry; for this reason, the successful Technology, Industry, and Education forum initiated during IGARSS 2017 in Fort Worth, Texas, will continue this year in Valencia, Spain.

**TOPICAL CONFERENCES AND EVENTS FOR YOUNG PROFESSIONALS**

Focusing on topical conferences for young professionals (YPs), the GRSS is proud to have cosponsored the first edition of the YPs in Space (YPinSpace) Conference held in Bangalore, India, last November. For this first edition, the conference gathered roughly 170 enthusiastic YPs who enjoyed the training sessions, the lectures, and building their own CanSat! This hands-on experience was much appreciated by the attendees. This year, we are going to organize a second edition at the Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya, my home university in Barcelona, during the week before IGARSS 2018 to facilitate the travel of attendees to both YPinSpace and IGARSS.

In addition, to target students and YPs, the GRSS is going to start the GRSS Student Grand Challenge this year. This initiative is a project designed to foster the participation of students and YPs from at least two Chapters in different countries to engage in solving a complex engineering problem within the scope of the GRSS and other sister Societies. Student Chapters do not need to exist at the time of the submission of the proposal, but they must be formed by the end of 2018.

**THE GRSS STUDENT GRAND CHALLENGE**

The GRSS Student Grand Challenge consists of the design and implementation of an end-to-end observing system based on drones or remotely piloted aircraft systems to address a problem linked to the observation of the polar regions. This system should include the definition of the problem to be addressed, the technique(s) to be used, the instrument concept that will be implemented, the data storage/transmission system, and a smartphone app to interactively display the results. At least one of the teams must have demonstrated experience in the field, and that team will act as the coordinator. Participation by university or industry mentors and/or sponsors is welcome. The schedule will be as follows: a) by 1 April 2018, the teams willing to participate must provide a brief description of their mission concept, including a detailed budget (fewer than ten pages); b) by 31 April 2018, a number of proposing teams will be selected; and c) in July, members from the selected teams attending IGARSS 2018 will be encouraged to interact with the selection committee to get feedback on their mission and progress.

Selected teams will receive through their local IEEE Chapter up to US$6,000 for traveling to their working meetings and building their system. More expensive missions are also possible based on external sponsorship, but this does not preclude having the chance of being selected by the GRSS at the end of the competition. Those selected teams will be required to participate in IGARSS 2019 and present their results in a dedicated session. Each team will be also required to submit to IGARSS, by January 2019, a paper of between two and four pages describing its project.

So, please, seriously consider forming your team, filling out an application, and starting your application to form a GRSS Student Branch Chapter.

**WRAPPING UP 2017**

Wrapping up this recount of 2017, I would like to congratulate Prof. Saibun Tjuatja and Dr. David Kunkee and their
team for the successful organization of IGARSS 2017 in Fort Worth, Texas! I would also like to congratulate our newly elected AdCom members. Welcome aboard, Dr. Mariko Bürgin! Welcome back Prof. Lorenzo Bruzzone, Prof. Antonio Plaza, and Prof. Steven C. Reising, as well as Dr. Fabio Pacifici and Dr. Marwan Younis!

I would also like to warmly thank the three AdCom members who stepped down as of 31 December 2017—Prof. Linda Hayden, Prof. Akira Hirose, and Prof. Wooli Moon—for their hard work and continued dedication and support to the GRSS. Furthermore, I would like to give a special thanks to Prof. Melba Crawford, 2013–2014 GRSS president, who has served the GRSS in several different positions for more than 20 years. We are looking forward to continued collaboration with you. There is plenty of work to do, and we need all volunteers.

MEMBERS ELEVATED TO THE IEEE FELLOW GRADE

Last, but not least, let me congratulate the GRSS members elevated as of January 2018 to the grade of IEEE Fellow:

- Fauzia Ahmad for contributions to through-the-wall radar imaging
- Gustavo Camps-Valls for contributions to machine learning in remote sensing
- Ni-Bin Chang for contributions to computational techniques for the analysis of environmental sustainability
- Qian Du for contributions to hyperspectral data processing
- Jiao Li-Cheng for contributions to artificial neural networks and evolutionary computation
- Hairong Qi for contributions to collaborative signal processing in sensor networks
- Qihao Weng for contributions to urban remote sensing
- Jean-Pierre Wigneron for contributions to surface modeling in passive microwave remote sensing
- Stefan Winkler for contributions to perceptual video-quality measurement.

I am looking forward to a great 2018 for the GRSS, and I hope to see you again at IGARSS 2018 in Valencia, Spain, where we will have the chance to recognize the newly elevated IEEE Fellows during the plenary session.

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**BGDDS 2018:**

2018 International Workshop on Big Geospatial Data and Data Science

September 22-23, 2018

Wuhan University – Wuhan (China)

Wuhan University

IEEE Geoscience and Remote Sensing Society

Earth Science Informatics Technical Committee (GRSS ESI TC)

Open Geospatial Consortium (OGC) China Forum

**Abstract submission:**

Before March 31, 2018

Extensive abstract

Email: bigdataconf2018@163.com copy pyue@whu.edu.cn

**Registration fees:**

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**Web Address:**

http://geos.whu.edu.cn/bigdataconf/

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**CISS 2018:**

China International SAR Symposium

Oct.10-12, 2018

Haiyatt Hotel, Shanghai–China

CISS2018 Chair:

Prof. Dr. Hui Wang, Shanghai Institute of Satellite Engineering-China

**Deadline for abstract and title of article submission:**

Before December 30, 2017

**Deadline for draft paper submission:**

Before May 30, 2018

**Notification of paper acceptance:**

Before July 20, 2018

**Deadline for final paper submission and authors conference registration:**

Before August 31, 2018

**CISS 2018**

October 10-12, 2018

**Web Address:**

http://ciss2018.csp.esscience.cn/dct/page/65541

**Contact Email:**

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