

SAPPMA Pipes XI Conference focuses on sustainability and invention

The Southern African Plastic Pipe Manufacturers Association's (SAPPMA) Pipes XI Conference took place in Gauteng earlier this month, hosting more than 300 delegates over two days, covering issues relating to plastic piping, water infrastructure and engineering.



Sponsored by the Plastic Pipe Conference Association (PPCA), PPCA's Zoran Davidovski highlights that it has had six spin-off conferences around the world since the first one was hosted in Beijing in 2009.

“Just as connections are vital in the pipe industry, so too are the connections made between people and professionals in this field, and for this reason we are pleased to see the South African industry so well represented at this year’s conference,” he said. “Survival needs invention, and the best way to be inspired and to learn is by allowing yourself to be educated and your mind stretched by learning from your local and international peers.”

Economic and sociopolitical landscape

Highlights of the conference included a keynote address by guest speaker and well-known economist Dr Roelof Botha who looked into his proverbial crystal ball to predict whether or not state capture will force the South African economy into a recession. Botha offered a closer look at the socio-political landscape of the country and how this would impact the local economy and the plastic pipe industry specifically.

“The next 18 months will be turbulent, but this doesn’t mean there won’t be opportunities for growth. What we are currently experiencing in our country is a deepening of a democracy. It is important for us to invest in skills transfer, public-private partnerships and to restore the functionality of our leadership. With effective leadership, smart policies and team work, there can still be a bright future for South Africa,” Botha encouraged.

Other speakers who presented included Tony Radoszewski (PPI in the USA) who covered 'Manufacturing and infrastructure in the age of Trump', Bruce Hollands (PVC Pipe Association in the USA) presented on 'Life cycle assessment of PVC water and sewer pipe and a comparative sustainability analysis of pipe materials', and Dr Andreas Frank (Polymer Competence Centre in Austria) spoke on 'Lifetime prediction of PE100 pipes based on slow crack growth resistance'.

Growth of civilisation

SAPPMA CEO Jan Venter said the Pipes XI Conference once again highlighted the importance of pipes and pipelines in civilisation and infrastructure.

“Water distribution, waste disposal, irrigation and telecommunications all rely on pipelines to function. An extensive network of reliable water and sewage pipelines are essential for establishment and growth of civilisation. Although we find ourselves operating in a tough business climate and the economic recovery has not been what we hoped it would be, the importance of what we do remains undiminished. We take a long-term view on these things, and will continue to fight for maintaining the standards and integrity of the plastic pipes being manufactured and installed locally,” Venter said.

Davidovski concluded the conference by saying that it is clear that South Africa faces many challenges and resistance to change. However, it is encouraging to see that despite this, the technology employed in the manufacturing of plastic pipes is increasing both the quality and the quantity of drinking water to the country and its people.

“Much of the presentations delivered at this conference centred around sustainability and invention. It is important to remember that these are never cast in concrete... We look forward to seeing what will come out of SAPPMA’s Pipes XII Conference next year, and will continue to keep a watchful and expectant eye on the South African plastic pipe industry which has proved itself to be tenacious, committed to excellence and passionate about raising standards,” Davidovski said.

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