ITSoC Conference Statement & Ad-Hoc Committee on Diversity and Inclusion

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ITSoC BoG meeting
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What (what has happened)? Recognition of gender harassment
• Broad societal conversation: #MeToo, #WomensMarch, #GBV (gender-based-violence)
• Events at NIPS, Hollywood, U.S. politicians, Canadian politicians sacked/resigning
• Sibling societies have statements / codes-of-conduct: IEEE/APEC, ACM, NIPS’18

So What (why is this significant)? For individual and ITSoc success
• We need to demonstrate to members we are committed to setting the conditions for a safe, welcoming and equitable environment — visibly and promptly
• We need people of all groups (women, ethnicities, religions, gender identities, sexual orientations, et al.) to join and to stay in our community to ensure the relevance and vibrancy of ITSoc.

Now What (what can we do)? Ideas for next steps
• Act as individuals
  • Encourage membership to understand their roles as “allies”
• Act as the ITSoc Board of Governors and support IEEE processes
  • Today: Motion I: Approve anti-harassment statement for ITSoc event documentation.
  • Today: Motion II: Form an Ad-Hoc Committee on Diversity and Inclusion.
• Potential activities:
  • Article in Newsletter to inform and involve ITSoc membership
  • Generate ITSoc metrics on diversity and inclusion (data collection and reporting)
  • Implement best practices for both diversity / inclusion and prevention of harassment / discrimination
  • Partner with the IEEE TAB Committee on Diversity and Inclusion, to contribute to and implement their recommendations
(A) Motion I: Approve anti-harassment statement for ITSoc event documentation. (Draper, Erkip, Javidi, Weissman)

The IT Society BoG is committed to creating and ensuring an inclusive, welcoming, and safe environment for everyone in the field of information theory at all of our events and experiences. In particular, we require ITSoc sponsored conference/workshop organizers to commit to uphold this standard at ALL events held at or in conjunction with their main conference/workshop, even and particularly at those events broadly defined as conference social events and non-technical activities. We require that the following note be displayed prominently in the conference programs/hand-outs/websites:

“Social outings, events, and activities are integral components of many academic workshops, and conferences. Despite the inherent hierarchical nature of academia in terms of seniority, advancement, contributions, and recognitions, academics often strive to build communities of collaborators, and friends across seniorities, generations, and institutions. Various conference-related social events with their less formal environments provide a great resource to the attendees to network, advance their careers, learn about others’ works, make friends and meet potential mentors. On the other hand, exactly because of their less formal settings, these events can fall short of providing an inclusive, welcoming, and safe environment for all.

In this context, we respect and encourage those who have chosen to speak out, in effect demanding that the academic and professional communities pay more attention, take notes, and continued actions. We would also like to take their lead and remind each and every attendee to take it upon her/himself to ensure that these social events do not become fertile grounds for abuse of power, sexual harassment, and/or bullying. Furthermore, we recommend our attendees to use common sense, support each other, and create a safe space by speaking up against any form of harassment or bullying.

We will also like to remind our attendees to review the IEEE’s code of conduct and follow the suggestions and best practices for how to make the IT Society conferences and venues safe and inclusive. Please consult the IEEE website and online sources for resources on how to report and combat all forms of harassment.”

(B) Motion II: Form an Ad-Hoc Committee on Diversity and Inclusion. (Draper, Erkip, Javidi, Weissman)