

# Interview with 2013 IEEE President-Elect Candidates - Distinguished IEEE ComSoc Members



[IEEE Communications Society](#) congratulates **J. Roberto Boisson de Marca** and **Tariq S. Durrani** on being nominated by the IEEE Board of Directors for 2013 President-Elect.

ComSoc staff interviewed both candidates with three questions. Here are their short bios and the Q&A:

**Roberto deMarca** was a Fulbright Scholar at the University of Southern California where he earned his PhD-EE. Since 1978 he has been on the faculty of the Catholic University, Rio de Janeiro, having held several leadership/administrative positions including Associate Academic Vice President. Dr. de Marca also held visiting appointments in universities and industrial laboratories in Europe, Asia and North America. Twice he served as Scientific Consultant with AT&T Bell Laboratories.

As National Research Council Scientific Director, he authorized the startup money for the national research network paving the way to the widespread Internet use in Brazil. Dr. de Marca was a delegate to several ITU meetings where the wireless 3G standards were developed. In 2008-2010 he served on Finep's (the largest Brazilian R&D/Innovation funding agency) presidential advisory board.

Roberto was the Brazilian Telecommunications Society founding President and is a member of the Brazilian National Academy of Sciences and the National Academy of Engineering.

**Tariq Durrani**'s distinguished career includes several positions with Strathclyde in the UK: - lecturer (1976), Professor (1982), Head of the Electronic & Electrical Engineering Department (1990-1994), and Deputy Principal (2000-2006) with university-wide responsibilities for large-scale strategic developments. His research interests cover communications, signal processing, technology management. He has authored over 350 publications; conducted collaborative work with industry; partnered in major European Union Programs; supervised 40 Ph.D.s; and currently holds visiting appointments at Princeton, University of Southern California, Stirling (Scotland), and Chengdu (China).

Tariq has held Directorships of eight organizations, including the Scottish Funding Council (U.S. NSF equivalent); U.K. National Commission for UNESCO. He served as Advisor to the Governments of UK, Portugal, Netherlands, UAE, US, and European Union. He is a Fellow of the: UK Royal Academy of Engineering, Royal Society of Edinburgh, IET, IEEE. In 2003, Queen Elizabeth conferred on him the Order of the British Empire "for services to electronics research and higher education."

## 1) How do you view the increased globalization of IEEE?



**DE MARCA:** IEEE has indeed made important strides toward becoming a truly global organization in recent years. However, there is more to be done. There has been a clear shift in demographics for technology innovation development, and IEEE must be able to engage in its activities technologists dispersed across the world. It is important to give them opportunities to rise within IEEE ranks to leadership positions. IEEE can only thrive in the future if it can embrace this diversified talent. However, to be truly global IEEE must offer a full range of services and benefits to all its members regardless where they live. IEEE must also continue to increase its physical presence in different regions of the world, being sensitive to cultural differences and language barriers, to be successful in a globalization agenda that is essential to its future success.

I must say that the [IEEE Communications Society](#) was one of the early leaders in globalization within [IEEE](#). It made concrete steps in this direction as early as 20 years ago. I am very proud to have played a role in these ComSoc early efforts first as Vice President of International Affairs, then as Vice President, Member Activities and later as Society President.



**DURRANI:** With over 400,000 members in over 160 countries, the IEEE is already a globalized organization. I view this as a very positive development, which brings a richness of diversity, and immense opportunity to "advance technology in the service of humanity" – the IEEE mission.

Establishing IEEE offices in different parts of the world is already paying off in terms of increased member satisfaction, improved support and services, and higher profile for the IEEE with greater engagement with government and industry. As an instance, as a global player IEEE is now working with United Nations Educational Cultural and Scientific Organisation (UNESCO) to support engineering capacity building in Africa, as a starting point. I am particularly pleased with this, as I orchestrated this relationship.

I would also advocate publication of multilingual journals, serving members worldwide and opening new markets for IEEE products.

Related to this is the globalization of IEEE conferences. The IEEE sponsors over 1100 conferences and meetings worldwide. In this context the ComSoc initiative of the First International Conference on Communications in China (ICCC) is an important new venture, firmly establishing ComSoc's global credentials, meeting the needs of engineers in Southeast Asia, and supporting growth and development of this emerging telecommunications market. For Instance, I write this blog while waiting for my flight from Beijing Airport, where I read that China Mobile now has over 672 million subscribers, making it the world's largest mobile phone operator.

In a similar vein, I see a strong role for the IEEE in developing global Standards, either directly or through strategic alliances. For example, IEEE standards for communications products are well recognized, and I see increasing growth in this activity to support development and adoption of standards across the globe, "in partnership with industry, governments and the public."

Further more, as a consequence of globalization I see a more balanced international representation of IEEE leadership in the future. A clear signal for this comes from the IEEE Board of Directors, which has nominated Roberto and me as 2013 IEEE President Elect candidates' -- Roberto from IEEE Region 9, and I from Region 8.

## 2) How do you view the changing role of IEEE Societies in the future?



**DURRANI:** IEEE Societies are the lifeblood of the IEEE. They bring knowledge, technological leadership, and vitality to the IEEE. Their publications and conferences ensure IEEE as the world's leading organization of technical professionals, meeting member needs and promoting the advancement of technology.

There are two issues that need to be addressed as we look into the future. How will societies evolve with the march of technologies, which are likely to be interdisciplinary in nature (e.g., life sciences)? IEEE Societies have traditionally grown as discipline oriented entities. Are they fit to meet emerging challenges? IEEE Councils have played the role of fostering topics that do not belong to specific Societies. Perhaps the way forward is to grow more Councils; however Councils do not have members, and are thus not in a position to establish or catalyze a community that is necessary to nurture a new area. Thus, a new model is needed — one that is multi/interdisciplinary and is home to IEEE members with cognate interests. One such model is that of a 'Professional Group which is distinct and, through its members, dedicated to interdisciplinary development supported by publications and conferences.

A further aspect of the evolution of Societies is the role of Divisions. While Regions have a key role in oversight and integration of the activities of Sections, it is a moot point whether Divisions have such a role. Fortunately, ComSoc is blessed with having a Division of its own and, as a consequence, its own Director on the IEEE Board.

Currently the IEEE has 38 Societies, of varying sizes and levels of activities; some are discipline-specific and technology-oriented, such as ComSoc, Power Engineering or the Computer Society; others are profession-oriented, such as the Professional Communications Society, Education Society, or the Society on Social Implications of Technology (SSIT). The latter are of general interest to all IEEE members. Some consideration needs to be given to whether all Societies should belong to same Board (Technical Activities Board), or whether there is another vehicle that would best serve the needs of the Societies and their members. A related issue is whether the Societies and their members could be better served by synergistic alliances across Societies, closer alignment, or, indeed, cohesion through mergers.

Having said this, I see ComSoc as flourishing in the future, with its close alignment to one of the most dynamic and universally rapidly growing industries. I mentioned its conferences earlier; its publications could go multilingual, and its certification programs are bound to expand rapidly world-wide as the demand for professional qualifications in communications grows that carry the imprimatur of ComSoc.



**DE MARCA:** For many decades the IEEE Societies have been providing exceptional value to the parent organization, to the worldwide technology and scientific community, and to mankind. They foster technical communities that have been able to produce best-in-class publications and conferences where several key concepts and results that allowed technology developments that made our lives better were first seen and heard. These same publications and conferences have been the financial mainstay of IEEE, allowing the organization to invest in other areas that are part of its overall mission such as humanitarian technologies and engineering education. However, IEEE Societies are facing major challenges to continue their path of success. Interestingly some of these challenges result from the technology advances their volunteers helped create. The first one is that several of the important technologies that need to and will be developed in the near future are multidisciplinary in nature. Examples of these future directions are Smart Living, Brain-Machine Interfaces, Green ICT, and Internet of Things. Therefore, IEEE Societies will have to learn how to develop partnerships with each other and possibly with other entities in different fields as well as industry in order to lead and have impact in the new areas. A second challenge comes from the new social networking tools that make community building and professional collaboration easier, dynamic, and without the need of a structured entity. The question then is, how will professional organizations like IEEE Societies continue to be the place of choice for technical communities in the new and evolving social networking world? They will have to devise new services that will offer significant value over what will be possible to obtain from open social networking environments. They will also have to be flexible in structure and nimble in adapting to changes in technology, society, and the evolving makeup of professional communities. As pointed out in ComSoc's 2020 report produced last year, Societies will also have to be nimble in addressing new hot topics that attract interest and also have the political will to sunset activities in old topics. IEEE and its Societies will have to learn how to make efficient use of existing platforms (such as Facebook today) to improve their reach to the community. On the other hand, professional collaboration tools will have to be developed and adopted to add value to their products using new technologies that are either being developed or envisioned. IEEE will do well if it leverages the creativity and expertise of its corps of volunteers in addressing these challenges.

Finally, the third challenge has to do with financial viability. In the old times Societies had control over revenues derived from the sale of publication subscriptions. In the model where most revenue comes from access to the centralized IEEE Xplore database, not only has the control decreased but the visibility of a particular Society as being the originator of a given article included in the database has eroded. An average user does not care much where the paper was originally "published"; the reader is only concerned with the quality of the article and whether it suits his/her needs. Therefore it is imperative for Societies to explore new revenue streams as well as initiate discussions within IEEE of new business models that are more appropriate to the centralized electronic disseminations and also consider potential threats such as open access and liberal policies for posting of paper final versions on authors' personal websites.

Therefore, Society leaderships have a big job ahead of them meeting these challenges and others. However, in my opinion, unless they are successful in facing the new and foreseen fast changing environments, IEEE will not be able to maintain its current worldwide prominence.

### 3) What was your key event or challenge that motivated you to run for IEEE President?



**DE MARCA:** There was no real key event. It is just a natural progression, the culmination of a long and very joyful volunteer career that started in the IEEE ComSoc ranks.

After serving as ComSoc President I moved to the corporate side of the organization serving first as an IEEE Division Director, representing Communications Technology. Throughout the following 10 years I have held leadership positions in every important facet of IEEE's operations. At the conclusion of my tenure as IEEE Vice President for Technical Activities I felt I had acquired a wealth of experience that uniquely qualified me to seek the top position. I believe I can effect change, as demonstrated recently in my work leading IEEE Future Directions, and provide leadership at a critical time when IEEE is facing challenges from outside (e.g., open access) as well as internal uncertainties due to changing business models. This drive to continue contributing to the success of IEEE, as I have for the past almost 30 years, is what motivates me to run for IEEE President.



**DURRANI:** I have had a wide-ranging and unique leadership experience within IEEE and outside, which has prepared me to take up the reins and responsibilities at the helm of IEEE. This experience has been gained through detailed working knowledge of most of the main IEEE Boards.

I've been the President of not one but two keynote IEEE Societies: the IEEE Signal Processing Society and the IEEE Engineering Management Society. The Signal Processing Society has given me technical depth, and the other, management breadth.

I've been Regional Director of the IEEE Communications Society for Europe Middle East and Africa (EMEA), and Vice Chair for Technical Activities for Region 8.

I have had the good fortune of serving on the IEEE Technical Activities Board for eight years, the IEEE Publication Services and Products Board for six years, and several years on the IEEE Awards Board and IEEE Medal committees; most recently, I was 2010 - 2011 Vice President of IEEE Educational Activities Board.

I have organized major conferences for the IEEE, including the highly successful ComSoc flagship conference, ICC 2007 in Glasgow, Scotland.

This detailed experience has motivated me to seek the Presidency of the IEEE to serve the IEEE members and the profession to the best of my ability; to make a difference and lead the IEEE to future growth and success.

-----  
Visit candidates websites:

Roberto de Marca: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Roberto-de-Marca/118209111648516>

Tariq S. Durrani: [www.tariqdurrani.org](http://www.tariqdurrani.org)

---

**Source URL:** <http://www.comsoc.org/blog/interview-2013-ieee-president-elect-candidates-distinguished-ieee-comsoc-members>