

ISPRS Travel Grant Report

Grantee: Nesisa Analisa Nyathi **Grant:** ISPRS Travel Grant **Event:** ISPRS Congress 2026
Location: Toronto, Canada **Dates:** 4–11 July 2026

I attended the Congress as a presenter, delivering a talk on **particle swarm optimisation for vegetation indices in semi-arid ecosystems**. My accompanying conference paper has already been recommended for further consideration, which I am very pleased about.

Beyond my own presentation, I focused on sessions covering AI applications in Earth observation, which aligned closely with my current research direction. I also spent considerable time at the poster sessions, particularly those addressing advances in LiDAR for land use and land cover mapping, an area I am keen to incorporate into my own work going forward. The exhibition hall was a highlight in its own right. I enjoyed visiting the company and university booths, especially the South Korean booth, and came away with a strong interest in the products and research being showcased there. The most valuable outcome of this trip was the connections made. I met a colleagues with whom I have since begun co-writing a review paper on Earth observation techniques and case studies in Africa, collaboration that grew directly out of conversations at the Congress. I also formed what I expect to be a lasting friendship with a fellow researcher whose ideas challenged and sharpened my own thinking about our shared field. This trip carried particular personal significance. I first received an ISPRS travel grant to attend the Congress in Antalya, Turkey, in 2023, at which point I was still a PhD student. Attending this year's Congress in Toronto on the same grant, now as a postdoctoral researcher who has co-authored publications with ISPRS colleagues using techniques and products first encountered in Antalya, felt like a genuine full-circle moment. The support ISPRS has provided across these two career stages has made a tangible difference to my research trajectory, and I remain very grateful for it. I want to specifically commend the conference communications team. Their outreach began a full month before the Congress, and I kept saying “its amazing, I know exactly where I need to be, why, when and what I need to bring!! I don’t feel lost!”. It made the entire experience feel guided and well understood from start to finish well done to the comms team!

Alongside the academic programme, I had the opportunity to experience Toronto itself, a beautiful city, and to visit Niagara Falls. These moments added real value to the trip and are part of what makes attending Congress in person so worthwhile. Looking ahead, I hope to

attend the next ISPRS Congress, ideally in South Korea, given how much the booth caught my interest this year, and by then, I hope to be doing so as a Professor in environmental science!

I am deeply grateful to ISPRS for this travel grant and for the opportunities it has created across two very different stages of my career. This trip strengthened my research network, opened a new collaboration on Earth observation in Africa, and reaffirmed the value of the ISPRS community. Thank you.

p.s. I also finally met Dr. Senthil Kumar! What an absolute legend! Thank you.

