

IAMS Matters: August 2025

Message from the President

Dear IAMS Members and Friends,

Warm greetings from South Korea. This is Prof. Bokyoung Park, President of the International Association for Mission Studies (IAMS). As we pass through the height of summer here in Korea, I would like to share some updates with you regarding the upcoming General Assembly.

The **16th IAMS General Assembly** will take place **from July 17 to 21, 2026**, at the **University of South Africa (UNISA) in Pretoria, South Africa**. The theme for our Assembly is: **Walking Together in Mission: Facing Global Challenges for a Sustainable World**

In late June, several members of the IAMS Executive Committee and I conducted a site visit to Pretoria as part of our preparation for the Assembly. During this visit, we also participated in the Southern African Missiological Society (SAMS) Colloquium, where we experienced the vibrant engagement and strong commitment of Southern African missiologists. We were graciously hosted by Prof. Thinandavha Derrick Mashau, President of SAMS, Vice President of IAMS, and Professor at the University of South Africa. His leadership and hospitality deeply encouraged us and confirmed the significance of Southern Africa in shaping the future of global mission studies. The warm welcome from the UNISA community has heightened our expectations for a rich and meaningful gathering in 2026.

In June, our Secretary General and I also attended the Annual Meeting of the American Society of Missiology (ASM) in Chicago to promote the upcoming Assembly and strengthen global partnerships. One of the highlights was meeting Prof. Dana Robert, one of our keynote speakers. We were also encouraged by the interest shown by many North American scholars who had not previously attended IAMS, and we hope to welcome many new participants in 2026. This coming August, I will attend the Asian Theological Association (ATA) General Assembly, where I hope to continue building connections across Asia and invite more scholars to join us in Pretoria.

As the preparations for the assembly are well underway, here is another reminder of the following important **dates**:

- **Thematic Panel Proposals:** due by September 30, 2025
- **Individual Paper Proposals** (250 words): due by November 30, 2025
- **Notification of Acceptance:** January 2026
- **Full Draft Papers** (2,000 words): due by May 31, 2026

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We especially welcome Thematic Panel proposals, which allow collaborative exploration of urgent and emerging issues in mission studies. We encourage creative, interdisciplinary, and regionally grounded panel proposals.

In effort to make the 2026 Assembly more inclusive and accessible, we are also preparing to provide **simultaneous interpretation** for selected sessions as well as present the sessions in **hybrid format** to invite participants both in-person and online. While we will provide online access, we strongly encourage in-person participation for deeper engagement, community building, and embodied dialogue.

We are also working to provide **financial support** for scholars from the Global South and early-career researchers. Thanks to the generosity of churches and partner organizations, we will offer travel subsidies to selected paper presenters in need. The application process will be fair, transparent, and needs-based, and we hope this support will enable broader on-site participation. Those who wish to apply for financial assistance must submit an application when the conference registration site opens next year. Further details regarding the application process and eligibility criteria will be announced in due course.

The official Assembly poster is now available and includes a QR code linking directly to the [Call for Papers](#). Please feel free to circulate the poster and the link widely through your networks and social media channels.

In advance of the Assembly next year, I am also excited to share about the upcoming **Conference on Mission Studies and Decoloniality**, *Unsettling the Center: Reimagining Mission Studies and Decoloniality in the Global South*. This conference on **January 21–23, 2026, at De La Salle University in Manila, Philippines**, will gather voices from across Africa, Asia, and Latin America to engage questions of mission, power, and justice. With themes ranging from indigenous Christianities to ecological justice and digital colonialism, this gathering promises to be a vital space for reimagining mission in our time.

This issue of *IAMS Matters* also features an interview with **Rev. Dr. Xiaoli Yang**, a theologian, poet, and intercultural scholar whose work bridges mission, spirituality, and World Christianity. In her new role as **Regional Representative for Oceania** in the International Association for Mission Studies, Dr. Yang shares insights from her global scholarship and vision for our region. We are delighted to highlight this conversation, which connects her rich experience with the life of the Oceania community.



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On another news, I am also pleased to share that the new IAMS Member Portal is now live. The site includes up-to-date information about the Assembly, the Call for Papers, and an updated membership registration system. We kindly ask all members to re-register and explore the site. Your active participation will help build and sustain our global scholarly community.

I sincerely look forward to welcoming each of you in person at the 2026 General Assembly in South Africa, as we walk together in mission toward a more just, sustainable, and hope-filled world.

With warm regards,

Prof. Bokyoung Park

President, [International Association for Mission Studies \(IAMS\)](#)
Professor of Missiology, Presbyterian University and Theological Seminary, South Korea

Message from the General Secretary

From June 29 to July 4, I had the privilege of visiting the University of South Africa (UNISA) in Pretoria together with President Bokyoung Park, Treasurer Nigel Rooms, Asian Representative Fides del Castillo, and North American Representative Michele Sigg. Vice President Derrick Mashau and his Local Organizing Committee welcomed us with remarkable hospitality and generosity.

During our visit, we were able to tour the various facilities at UNISA that will be used for the 2026 General Assembly. Especially meaningful was our participation in the SAMS (Southern African Missiological Society) Conference, which was held during the same week. This offered us a valuable opportunity to witness firsthand how well the local organizing committee is equipped to host a large international gathering.

A major focus of my visit was to assess the technological and logistical capacities for hybrid participation. From what we observed—especially during the SAMS sessions—it is clear that the Department of Christian Spirituality, Church History, and Missiology (our official host department) has the experience and capacity to handle both in-person and online participants with competence and grace.

One of the most meaningful moments of the visit was our meeting with UNISA Vice-Chancellor Professor Puleng LenkaBula. She expressed deep commitment to ensuring the safety and well-being of all conference participants, even personally committing to overseeing accommodation arrangements. Her leadership, along with that of her managing committee and faculty, left us deeply encouraged.

Vice President Derrick Mashau also shared plans to offer excursions before and after the Assembly so that participants may enjoy and experience the beauty of South Africa.

I am also pleased to share that the IAMS website (<https://missionstudies.org>) has been fully redesigned after two years of dedicated work. We have successfully completed the database migration, ensuring a more stable and accessible platform for the 2026 General Assembly and beyond. For any questions related to site usage or access, please feel free to contact IAMS Web Manager, Rebekah Lee (hwajhin@gmail.com).

Overall, the site visit filled us with confidence that the 2026 General Assembly will be a fruitful, memorable, and well-supported gathering. We look forward to welcoming many of you to Pretoria next July, as we walk together in mission.

Bright Myeong Seok Lee

General Secretary, [International Association for Mission Studies \(IAMS\)](https://missionstudies.org)
Assistant Professor of Practical Theology & Chaplain of International Graduate School, [ACTS University](#), Korea

Message from the Treasurer

It was a joy recently to join other IAMS Executive members in visiting the site for our IAMS Assembly in 2026 in Pretoria and the University of South Africa (UNISA). With a year to go before we meet together again preparations are well under way from our side and that of the hosts. We even had a 'taster' of the quality of their hospitality both literally (plenteous and varied meats!) and at a meeting of the Southern African Missiological Society, where several of us gave papers. From the IAMS Treasury point of view we have spent a lot of time this year fundraising for the Conference to good effect so far. This is in large part, I must say thanks to the efforts of our President, Bokyoung Park who has made it her personal mission to ensure that there are plenty of funds available for sponsoring emerging and Majority World scholars in Mission Studies to attend the Assembly and share their research with us. There is still time for fundraising so if members know of any bodies or organisations who would be interested in sponsoring the Conference do please be in touch with me, treasurer@missionstudies.org.

And I hope you are preparing your paper abstracts for submission by the deadline and encouraging colleagues and others in your networks to do the same and planning to be together for an exciting five days in July 2026.

Rev Canon Dr Nigel Rooms

Treasurer, [International Association for Mission Studies \(IAMS\)](https://www.missionstudies.org/)

Message from the Representative for North America

Between June 29 to July 4, Bokyoung, Bright, Nigel, Fides, and I visited the University of South Africa or Unisa, the host of the 2026 IAMS conference. Located in Pretoria, Unisa caters to over 370,000 students from the African continent and the world. The vision of the Unisa is to “serve every country on the African continent regardless of language and cultural barriers” (B. Nzimande [excerpt](#), 2017) and to be “accessible to all including the poor, working-class, and geographically marginalised communities” (LenkaBula, [2023 welcoming address](#)). A global leader in distance education, the institution boasts over 150 years of history and, in 1959, it became the world’s first dedicated correspondence university. In 2021, Professor Puleng LenkaBula became the first black woman to assume the post of principal and vice-chancellor.

I felt humbled by the honor and hospitality shown to us during our visit to Unisa—at the luncheon we shared with Vice-chancellor LenkaBula and her board of vice-chancellors, and at the dinner at the Carnivore restaurant with professors and staff from the department of Christian spirituality, Church history, and Missiology, which is officially hosting the conference. Whatever struggles there may have been in the university’s history—and there always are—the collegiality, irenic exchanges, and humility which colored our discussions of the conference’s logistics bore testimony to a spirit of ecumenical collaboration that promises to bear good fruit for the upcoming event. I look forward to the partnerships and exchanges that will, no doubt, emerge from friendships born out of next year’s conference.

Dr. Michele Sigg

Regional Representative for North America, [International Association for Mission Studies \(IAMS\)](#)

Interview with Rev. Dr. Xiaoli Yang, the New Regional Representative for Oceania

For this issue of IAMS Matters, we're delighted to introduce Dr. Xiaoli Yang, who has recently joined the IAMS leadership team as our new Representative for Oceania. In a short email exchange, Dr. Yang kindly shared a bit about her journey, her vision for the region, and what she looks forward to in serving the IAMS community.

1. Could you share a brief introduction about yourself (your current role and background)?

I grew up in Asia and became a Christian during my second year at university here in Australia. After working for a time as a professional accountant, I was gradually drawn into ministry—and for the past 25 years, I've been involved in pastoral leadership, theological education, and spiritual direction, both locally and internationally. Having lived and worked in both profit and non-profit organisations in Australia for decades, I am very much a person of hybridity, embracing both my Asian heritage and Australian culture.

I've had the opportunity to travel, teach, and speak in both academic and church settings around the world. A big part of my passion is writing and publishing in ways that bring forward the often less-heard voices from the Global South and the migrant communities, creating space for dialogue and mutual enrichment across cultures. I'm also an ordained minister, a spiritual director, and a bilingual poet. My poetry has been published and used in spiritual direction and retreat settings—a space where art, faith, and soulfulness come together.

I currently teach World Christianity and Spirituality at the University of Divinity and I'm a Research Fellow at Charles Sturt University in Australia. In recent years, I've also been enriched by visiting appointments at Fuller Theological Seminary, Princeton Theological Seminary, and Boston University in the U.S.A., with opportunities to engage in diverse cultural settings. I also serve on the boards of a few national and international organisations. One close to my heart is the Australian Association for Mission Studies, where I was President in 2022–23 and Vice President the year before.

When I'm not working, I love spending time in nature and art galleries. I'm continually inspired by the beauty and creativity found in different cultures and places.



2. What inspired you to take on this role as Regional Representative for Oceania?

It came as a total surprise. I was approached by the Chair of the Executive Committee of IAMS, following the recommendation of the previous Regional Representative for

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Oceania, Dr Evelyn Hibbert. At first, I doubted if I was the right person to take on the role, as many others—qualified Anglo-Australians, might be better representatives for the majority of Australian churches and society. Then Dr Hibbert reminded me of the significant contribution of ethnic churches in Australia, and that it is appropriate for an Australian Chinese to take on the role, given the significant role of growing Chinese migrant communities play in Australian churches and society.

It is true that the rapid growth of the Chinese Christian population is often seen as one of the most significant developments in global Christianity. Chinese immigrants have established vibrant church networks across the world—including right here in Oceania. As I reflected on this, I was reminded that World Christianity, at its heart, resists Eurocentrism and seeks to amplify the often-overlooked voices of fast-growing Christian communities in the Global South and among migrants around the world. Chinese Missiology, with its inherently transnational character, is constantly evolving and reshaping the landscape of World Christianity—and its influence on Christianity in Oceania is no exception.

Even though my ministry now has a global reach, it's really been my involvement in World Christianity and Missiology here in this region—especially through various board roles, including with the Australian Association for Mission Studies since 2015—that has helped me build a strong network of missiologists across the region. My recent project on World Christianity in Oceania also helped me to deepen my understanding and broaden networks in this region.

IAMS feels like a scholarly family to me. It's not just a space for international and ecumenical academic exchange—we also connect as friends and colleagues who share a deep passion for the study of World Christianity and Missiology. I joined IAMS in 2015 and have been serving as the Chinese translator for the *Mission Studies* journal ever since. Over the years, I've also had the opportunity to publish my Ph.D. monograph and an edited volume in the IAMS (TMWC) book series, as well as guest-edit a special issue on Chinese Missiology in *Mission Studies*.

Given the connections I've built both locally and globally in this field, I took time to pray about the invitation and, with a deep sense of humility and honour, decided to accept the Executive Committee's invitation.

3. What are your hopes or key priorities for the Oceania region in the coming years?

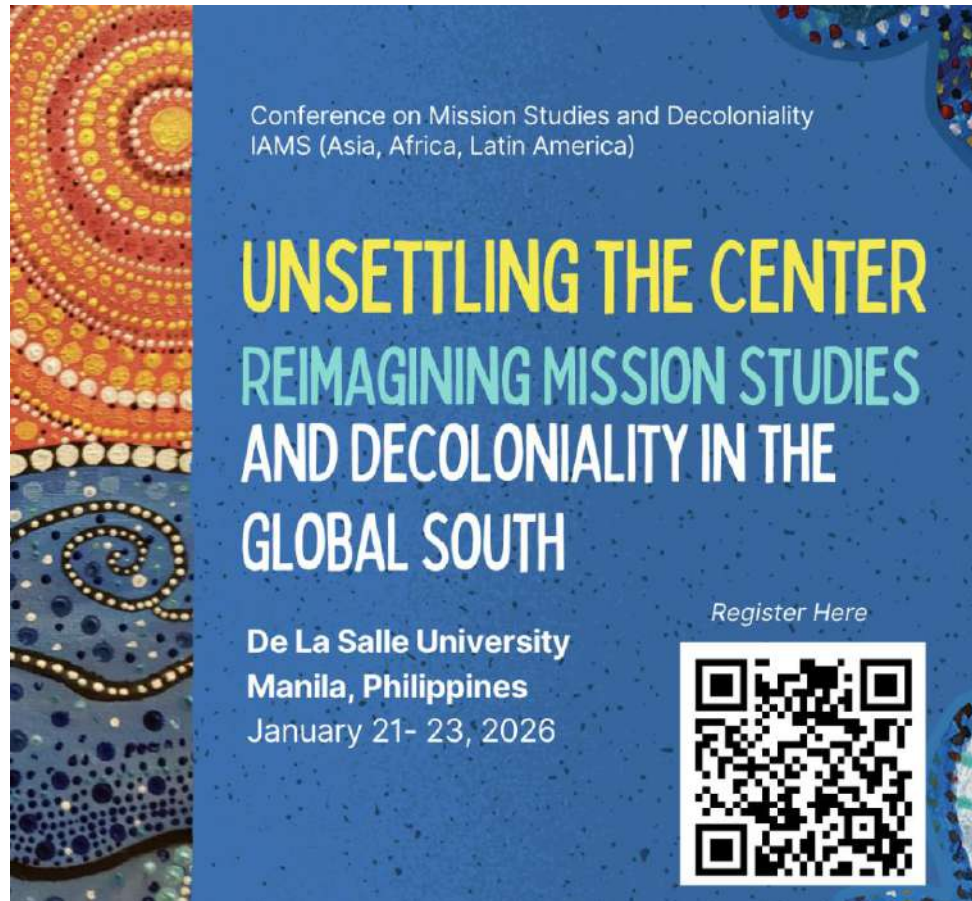
My first priority is to promote the IAMS Assembly 2026 in Pretoria, South Africa, especially with the paper submission deadline coming up soon. With strong networks across Oceania, I'll begin advocating for the Assembly through different platforms—social media, mission and theology networks, and Christian universities.

Through my various board roles, I also plan to promote it at the leadership level, encouraging scholars to join IAMS and take part in the Assembly. In addition, I will support fundraising efforts to help provide subsidies for those who may not have the means to attend.

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I will be working with the rest of the Executive Committee to prepare for a successful gathering in South Africa. I hope that anyone who takes up my role after the Assembly will continue the legacy of promoting scholarship of Christian witness, especially those less-heard voices of migrants and the Pacific islands in this region. I look forward to representing the diverse and dynamic region of Oceania and working alongside a range of cultures and people groups as we move forward in faith.

**Call for Papers:
Mission Studies and Decoloniality in the Global South**



**Unsettling the Center: Reimagining Mission Studies
and Decoloniality in the Global South**

De La Salle University

Manila, Philippines
January 21–23, 2026

Introduction

The 21st century has witnessed a significant shift in the landscape of global Christianity. Regions such as Africa, Asia, and Latin America—once viewed as the "receiving" ends of mission—have emerged as vibrant epicenters of theological innovation, ecclesial growth, and prophetic witness. Despite these developments,

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mission theology and practice often remain confined to Eurocentric frameworks that marginalize indigenous voices and perpetuate epistemic injustice.

This international conference seeks to bring together scholars, faith leaders, and activists to critically engage with the intersections of Mission Studies and Decoloniality in the context of the Global South. The conference aims to dismantle colonial legacies in Christian mission and affirm life-giving alternatives rooted in local wisdom, embodied spirituality, and justice-oriented theologies.

Background

Historically, Mission Studies emerged from Western ecclesiastical and academic traditions, frequently reinforcing colonial ideologies and systems of power. Missions were often framed as civilizing projects intertwined with imperial expansion and cultural domination.

In recent decades, however, theologians and missiologists from the Global South have challenged these paradigms through decolonial critiques and constructive models rooted in their histories, cultures, and struggles.

Examples include:

- **Africa:** Emphasis on inculturation and the recovery of African Indigenous Knowledge Systems within theology.
- **Asia:** Liberationist and interreligious approaches that highlight dialogical mission, resistance to empire, and grassroots empowerment.
- **Latin America:** Liberation theology's focus on social justice, solidarity with the poor, and the preferential option for the marginalized.

While contextually diverse, these regions share common concerns:

- Critiquing mission as a colonial tool.
- Reclaiming local epistemologies and indigenous spiritualities.
- Resisting economic, political, and cultural neo-colonialism.
- Shaping mission as mutual, relational, and transformative.
- Addressing inequalities in economic, authority, gender/sexuality, and knowledge structures.

This conference envisions decolonial mission not merely as a critique but as a creative task—imagining new pathways of Gospel witness that are just, inclusive, deeply contextual, and responsive to the challenges of the Global South.

Objectives

1. To create a critical and creative space for decolonial engagement in Mission Studies.
2. To amplify and connect theologies emerging from Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

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3. To foster interregional solidarity among scholars and communities in the Global South.
4. To contribute to a renewed vision of mission rooted in justice, reciprocity, and contextual faithfulness.
5. To reimagine the teaching methodologies and practices of Mission Studies in the Global South.

Proposed Topics for Lectures and Panel Discussions

Topics include, but are not limited to:

- **Historical and Theological Foundations:** Mission and empire, decolonial hermeneutics, indigenous Christianity.
- **Contextual Theologies and Praxis:** African theologies of inculturation and liberation; Asian interreligious mission in pluralistic contexts; Latin American liberation and postcolonial mission discourses.
- **Ecclesial and Missional Innovations:** Community-based missiology, ecclesial mission practices, rethinking evangelization in a postcolonial world.
- **Decolonizing Theological Education and Missiological Research.**
- **Contemporary Struggles and Emerging Frontiers:**
 - Mission and ecological justice in the Global South.
 - Gender, race, and the politics of belonging in mission spaces.
 - Digital colonialism and mission in the age of technology.
- **Intercontinental Conversations:** Africa-Asia-Latin America dialogues on mission futures and towards a Global South missiological framework.

Important Dates

- Abstract Submission Deadline: October 15, 2025
- Notification of Acceptance: October 20, 2025
- Full Paper Submission Deadline: December 15, 2025

Submission Guidelines

Abstracts (300–500 words) should include:

- Title of the paper.
- Name, affiliation, and contact details of the author(s).
- A brief outline of the topic, methodology, and relevance to the conference theme.

Participation Fee: \$100

Please submit abstracts to: <https://forms.gle/UPsZ76D3m7zfxqPc9>

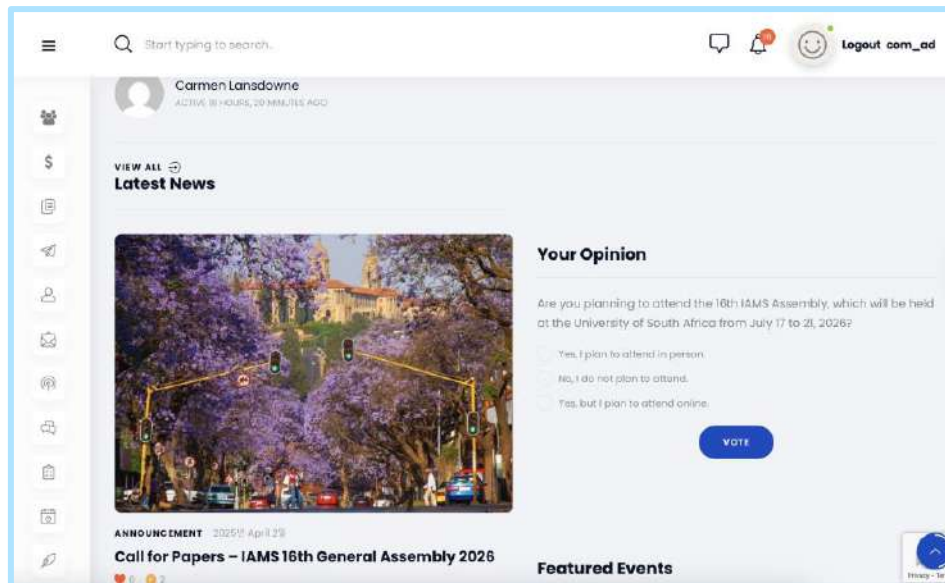
Convenors from IAMS (International Association for Mission Studies)

- **Prof. Thinandavha Derrick Mashau** (Africa) mashatd@unisa.ac.za
- **Prof. Fides del Castillo** (Asia) fides.delcastillo@dlsu.edu.ph

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- **Prof. Joaquim Andrade** (Latin America) joachimandrade@terra.com.br

News & Notes



IAMS Member Portal: A New Online Space for IAMS Members

We are pleased to announce the launch of the new **IAMS Member Portal**—an online space designed exclusively for our paid members. The portal serves as a central hub where you can connect with other members, manage your membership, and access key resources all in one place.

Much like familiar social media platforms, the portal gives you your own profile page and timeline, making it easy to share updates, post news, and engage with colleagues. Members can also:

- Check their membership and payment status
- Access the *Mission Studies* journal online
- Update their profile information
- Send private or public messages
- Form groups for your regions, study groups, and other interests
- Share documents, pictures, and announcements with ease

This is just the beginning, and we are excited to continue developing the portal in response to member needs. We warmly invite you to **log in, explore, and let us know what you think**. Your feedback will help us improve and shape this space into a vibrant online community for all.

If you are already registered as a IAMS member, [click here](#).

For a step-by-step guide to register, [click here](#).

From DABOH to DAIBOH: Expanding our research initiative for the digital era

The IAMS Executive Committee voted to change the name of the DABOH study group to DAIBOH, which is the acronym for: Documentation, Digital Initiatives, Archives, Bibliography, and Oral History. The reason for the intentional naming of “digital initiatives” in the title signals that digital projects are not just repositories of information but also a *focus* of research and catalysts of emerging pedagogical approaches. AI is one example of an area that needs much reflection. This visibility invites engagement with issues surrounding new digital projects and pedagogies.

CEEAMS Annual Conference 13-16 February 2026

The CEEAMS Conference will take place between **13–16 February 2026** in **Osijek, Croatia**, at the Evangelical Theological Seminary, under the theme “*Called into Creativity: Mission in Imaginative and Inspiring Living.*” The event will be held in a **hybrid format**, allowing both in-person and online participation. You can find all the details here: <https://ceeams.org/upcoming-conferences/ceeams-annual-conference-2026/>.