

Report By Maleen Wijeratna Kidiwela

It was my pleasure to attend the 100th year celebration of the American Geophysical Union (AGU) in December 2018. AGU100 Fall Meeting was held in Washington, D.C. at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center. This Convention was marked as one of the world's largest scientific conferences to date with over 27,000 scientists from a variety of earth and space science fields such as Oceanography, Geology, Geophysics, Meteorology, Oil and Gas Exploration, Astronomy and Health. In the session on Hydrocarbon seepage at AGU100, I presented my research on Methane seepage in the North Atlantic Margin via a poster. The research entailed analyzing over 86,000 square-km of seafloor bathymetric backscatter data to quantify locations of methane seepage. Through my presentation, I was able to gain valuable feedback on my research while sharing my work with the scientific community. Within my short time in DC, I was also given the chance to meet with many professors from universities such as Rice, Stanford, University of Washington, MIT and Caltech. I believe that the connections I made during the meeting were crucial for my graduate application process. The AGU100 had also organized free night tours within the Smithsonian Museums in Washington DC. Many fossilized dinosaurs on display at the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History was one of the main exhibits that caught my attention. Now more than ever, it is essential for Earth and space scientists to come together across disciplines, discuss the big issues facing society, and identify scientific solutions. At Fall Meeting's public lectures and keynotes, I joined thousands of scientists in one room to hear from leading thinkers on environmental impact, human modification of natural systems, geological mapping, and earthquake early warning. Within the conference, there were three keynote speakers. They were Lisa Jackson - Vice President of Environment, Policy and Social Initiatives at Apple, James Balog - Founder and Director of Earth Vision Institute and Extreme Ice Survey and Dr. Jim Reilly - Director of United States Geological Survey. Not only their talks were inspirational, but they were also directly addressing the steps in policy, administration, and science to combat climate change. I was also able to feed my curiosity by browsing the poster hall neighborhoods or sessions to explore disciplines varying from climate modeling to seismology. AGU's Centennial was a perfect platform from which to address the challenges facing our community, including cultivating the next generation of Earth and space scientists to be more diverse, inclusive and representative of a wide swath of traditional and non-traditional scientific sectors. By making a commitment to creating ethical, inclusive and diverse work environments, AGU aspires to strengthen the global Earth and space science community and enlarge its impact on society. I believe that this new-found knowledge was beneficial for many researches that I will be conducting in the future.