On behalf of the organizing committee of the 5th International Symposium on Deformation Characteristics of Geomaterials (IS-Seoul 2011), I deeply appreciate the Japanese Geotechnical Society (JGS) and the editorial board of the Soils and Foundations journal for their cooperation in publishing this special issue for IS-Seoul 2011.

IS-Seoul 2011 is held under the auspices of the Korean Geotechnical Society (KGS) and the International Society for Soil Mechanics and Geotechnical Engineering (ISSMGE)—Committee TC101 to advance geotechnical knowledge on the complex deformation characteristics of geomaterials. We expect it to continue in the vein of the successful IS symposiums already held—IS-Hokkaido 1994; IS-Torino 1999; IS-Lyon 2003; IS-Atlanta 2008—and to make new contributions in the field. The focus of IS-Seoul 2011 is understanding the deformation properties of geomaterials before failure, and special attention will be given to the small strain shear modulus as a fundamental characteristic of geomaterials. It will be held at the Sheraton Walkerhill hotel in Seoul from August 31st to September 3rd, 2011.

The main themes of IS-Seoul include:
1. Experimental investigations from very small strains to beyond failure
2. The behavior, characterization and modeling of various geomaterials
3. Practical predictions and the interpretation of ground response: field observations and case histories

Among the 414 submitted abstracts, 187 of them were considered candidates for the Soils and Foundations journal. The local organizing committee (LOC) of IS-Seoul 2011 selected 60 abstracts, and announced that all 60 accepted authors should submit their full paper to the Soils and Foundations journal editorial board. After a careful peer review process, 17 papers were finally selected for publication in this special issue of the Soils and Foundations (Vol. 51, No. 4).

The papers published in this special issue contribute to advancing the geotechnical knowledge on the deformation and shear behavior of geomaterials over various strain ranges. The strength and strain behavior of non-treated soil is the topic of 3 papers, while 5 papers discuss the mechanical behavior of cement or fiber treated soil. Advanced numerical and physical modeling methods are introduced in 3 papers, and 2 papers are related to seismic wave based laboratory testing. Finally, 4 papers are dedicated to case studies where the results were obtained from experiments performed in-situ. I believe that all papers included in this special issue will provide invaluable understanding to every reader in the geotechnical engineering field.

I express my thanks to the LOC members of IS-Seoul and the editorial board of the Soils and Foundations. Special thanks are extended to Professor Satoru Shibuya (Kobe University) for his supervision, Professor Junichi Koseki and Dr. Reiko Kuwano (University of Tokyo), and Professor Hirofumi Toyota (Nagaoka University of Technology) for their dedication as executive board members in charge of the peer-review. Finally, the great support from TC101, headed by Professor Herve Di Benedetto (ENTPE, France), is indelible. Most of all, I appreciate all the authors who contributed to this special issue and all the participants of the IS-Seoul 2011.

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