

The surveyors' contribution to society - Opening Speech

By FIG President, Professor Stig Enemark, Denmark.

President Cavero - my good friend, distinguished guests, dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen.

It is a great honour for me to address such a distinguished audience on behalf on FIG, The International Federation of Surveyors, and its more than 100 member associations throughout the world representing around 300,000 surveyors or land professionals world wide. Please accept my warm greetings to you all.

The whole set up around this conference is very impressive with a range of papers addressing both the organisational and technical areas in land administration and surveying and mapping. FIG is proud to support this event that includes an international conference, a national annual conference, and also a parallel FIG Commission 3 workshop. The organisers should be congratulated for putting together such a wide ranging and interesting program – we are all looking forward to some very exciting days.

The agenda of this conference is very wide - technical, managerial and also political. Lack of proper information and insecure property rights hinder good governance and the emergence of engaged civil society. It is as simple as that. Without good and up to data information and without effective access to land and property, economies are unable to progress and the goal of sustainable development cannot be achieved.

However, the creation of modern information systems and the implementation of sound land administration systems are not as simple as that. This is the major challenge of the broad based profession of surveyors or land professionals.

These issues become still more acute. As most of you will know 2007 was the year where the globe became urban. More people are now living in the cities than in rural areas – while in 1950 it was less than 30%. Today it is more than 50% that is more than 3.3 billion people and one third of them are living as slum dwellers. Also in 1950 there was only one mega city (New York) with more than 10 million inhabitants. Today the number of megacities is about 20 and some them with more than 20 million inhabitants. And over this century we will see cities of more than 50 million people. How can we deal with the challenge of management of such Mega Cities?

Mr. President, dear colleagues – let me emphasise that these issues of land administration and also management of mega cities are in the heart of the global agenda in terms of the Eight Millennium Development Goals. And we as the professionals in the areas of land surveying and mapping, land administration, and land information management have a responsibility to respond to this global agenda and to contribute to improving the living conditions in our societies.

One answer is of course education. There is a need to change the focus of surveying education from being seen very much as a purely technical engineering discipline. There is a need for a more managerial and interdisciplinary focus. The strength of our profession lies in its multidisciplinary approach but still based on sound engineering philosophy. Another answer is about building the capacity both at the local, national, and global level. FIG is committed to capacity building. Eventually land administration is about people and their well being. This event will add to that perspective.

Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen - FIG and the international surveying community strongly support this event and I wish you all the best for some exciting and also enjoyable days. - Thank you very much.