

Address to the
II International Symposium,
Association of Engineers and Land Surveyors of Puerto Rico
Mayaguez, Puerto Rico
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Robert W. Foster, President
International Federation of Surveyors

Rector Velez Arocho,
President Israel Otero,
Colleagues, ladies and gentlemen:

I bring greetings from the FIG Council to this International Symposium in Puerto Rico. You have very wisely placed an emphasis on education in surveying covering topics from the role of mathematics and computing in surveying education to the experiential learning process. I look forward to observing and hearing these presentations from the impressive group of speakers you have invited to this symposium.

On a personal note I would like to express to you the pleasure and satisfaction I received at Seoul, Korea last year when the Colegio de Ingenieros y Agrimensores de Puerto Rico became a member association of FIG. It was especially gratifying to me to see my cousins from the Caribbean bring their enthusiastic participation to the Federation.

You have chosen to be a part of the world community of surveyors and I think it is relevant, therefore, to consider the importance of international cooperation among our professional institutions. Why do we spend the effort and resources to organize on such a broad scale that brings together professional surveying societies from almost 100 nations of the world? The answer is that we do it for all the same reasons we form our national surveying associations, and for the same reasons we in the US form our state surveyor associations.

We do it to support and advance surveying education.

We do it to standardize our techniques and practices.

We do it to define and promote ethical practice of surveying.

We organize in order to promote professionalism among our individual members, and to promote the profession itself to the public.

We organize in order to develop mechanisms for mutual recognition of professional qualifications between and among political jurisdictions.

Every one of those interests is the legitimate interest of professional surveying associations at the local level, the national level and the international level.

In all of this, much of what we do is to improve conditions for surveyors. They are what I call “inward looking activities”. In supporting education and defining standards; in employment networking and mutual recognition efforts; in public relations and even in the adoption of ethical standards we are

attempting to improve the lot of the surveyor. Of course we do all that in order to better serve the public. We must remember that it is because of our responsibility to the public that we are recognized as professionals and it is because of our responsibility to the public that our cadastral surveyors are licensed to practice. But let's be honest with each other: we expect our professional societies to advance the role of surveying on behalf of the surveyor.

None-the-less, much of what we do is "outward looking" or altruistic. We would, in fact, attend to the world's needs, not just our own interests. We do it by raising the standards of practice of our members - sometimes in spite of the tendency of some of our members to ignore personal development efforts. But at the international level we have grander aspirations in our altruistic activities. An example is our work with the United Nations.

Fig has a formal Memorandum of Understanding with the UN Commission on Human Settlements, HABITAT. In this relationship FIG brings to the table its expertise on security of tenure and land administration.

FIG has cooperated with the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) for several years. I was in Rome a week ago in order to sign a new Memorandum of Cooperation with FAO. It is the global development objective of FAO to "provide for access to land and security of tenure for all classes" and to "improve global, regional and local capacity in land tenure related issues, such as land reform, land administration and management, land valuation and land use". These are areas of expertise within the disciplines of the FIG membership and by this MOC we agree to support the mission of UN/FAO.

FIG has participated in activities of the Permanent Committee on GIS Infrastructure for Asia and the Pacific in 1994 and 2000, and we support the formation of a Permanent Committee on GIS Infrastructure for the Americas.

FIG Commission 7 has written, and FIG has published, the document "Women's Access to Land: Principles for Equitable Gender Inclusion in Land Administration" which is an extension of initial work done by UNCHS and UN FAO. As you know, there are many places in the world where women have no access to land ownership or security of title to land. This is an important issue at the UN.

The 'Nairobi Statement on Spatial Information Management' is an FIG Commission 3 product and the "Bathurst Declaration on Land Administration for Sustainable Development" is the product of a cooperative effort of FIG with several agencies of the UN and the World Bank in 1999.

These are just a few examples of the accomplishments of FIG in cooperation with agencies of the United Nations. My successor, Professor Holger Magel and his new Council of FIG will carry on and advance this important relationship between FIG and the UN, the World Bank and other international bodies.

We are not materially compensated for these activities; they are pro bono or volunteer-only activities. It must be said, however, that even as we invest ourselves in these "outward looking" activities we gain prominent stature and recognition in the eyes of several UN agencies, and by extension, in the eyes of

the public. Our members would do well to take advantage of the opportunity to publicize the accomplishments of their profession on the world stage.

We are also mindful of our relationships with other international professional societies in related fields. For several years FIG participated in the International Union for Surveys and Mapping, IUSM. But the organization was seen as merely one more bureaucratic layer creating more cost and effort in order for its members to communicate with each other. We in FIG favored direct bilateral agreements with each of the other IUSM members and we proposed disbanding the organization, which we did in 1999. We had already entered into memoranda of understanding with the International Association for Geodesy (IAG) and the International Society for Mine Surveying (ISM). We have subsequently formed MoUs with the International Cartographic Association (ICA), the International Society for Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing (ISPRS) and the International Federation of Housing and Planning (IFHP). These MoUs enable us all to keep track of each other's activities, avoid duplication of effort, and provide for cooperative efforts where our interests coincide.

The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) has published over 12,000 standards. International standardization is becoming increasingly important in this era of Globalization and many surveyors have come across ISO 9000 and other international standards. We understand that standards provide for uniformity and excellence. We also understand that poorly drawn standards, or standards that are overly rigorous can be a burden on the individual professional. FIG is one of the few bodies through which surveyors can be formally represented in international standardization activities. In doing so FIG is supporting its objective to collaborate with relevant agencies in its objectives to develop the skills of surveyors and encouraging the proper use of technologies.

Finally I would say a few words about the FIG support of education. The FIG Education Foundation was formed in 1998. In 2001 the Foundation was relocated from its original home in Australia to the FIG office in Copenhagen. The Foundation statutes state that the purpose of the Foundation is the funding of educational and capacity-building projects and scholarships. The Foundation is still young but its accounts are building and the first modest grants will be made by the end of this year. But exciting things are happening through the Foundation. Jack Dangermond, president and founder of the Environmental Systems Research Institute, Inc. (ESRI) has accepted the position of Honorary Chair of the Foundation Fundraising Committee and has offered to donate software licenses and training grants at a value of \$7,000,000 to 25 academic institutions. To date 15 of those grants have already been made to qualifying institutions who have made application. In addition Dangermond offered a \$25,000 matching grant during the recent FIG Congress in Washington. The matching \$25,000 was achieved before the Congress week was over, I am happy to say.

This support of education through the Foundation, funded generously by ESRI, is an example of the possibilities that come with organizing our profession on an international scale. ESRI is a Corporate Member of FIG. A qualification of the academic institutions who would receive an ESRI grant is that they be Academic Members of FIG, of which there are currently 50 from 31 nations. The Universidad de Puerto Rico is an Academic Member of FIG, I am proud and happy to report.

I have tried to make the point that the organization of our profession on an international scale *is*

important and worth all the cost and effort required. The benefits to the profession are great and none greater than in the opportunity to support and encourage the advancement of surveying education everywhere in the world. It all starts with education. A highly educated cadre of surveyors is the backbone of the profession, and a highly educated profession is the greatest contribution we can make to society. In fact we serve society and ourselves by improving our educational opportunities. We also serve society in our joint activities with organizations like the United Nations and in so doing we raise the stature of the surveying profession internationally.

The Federation *is* important and I am glad that the Colegio de Ingenieros y Agrimensores de Puerto Rico is a member. I thank you and I congratulate you and wish you well in this important meeting here in Mayaguez.