

# CONTRIBUTING TO THE GLOBAL AGENDA

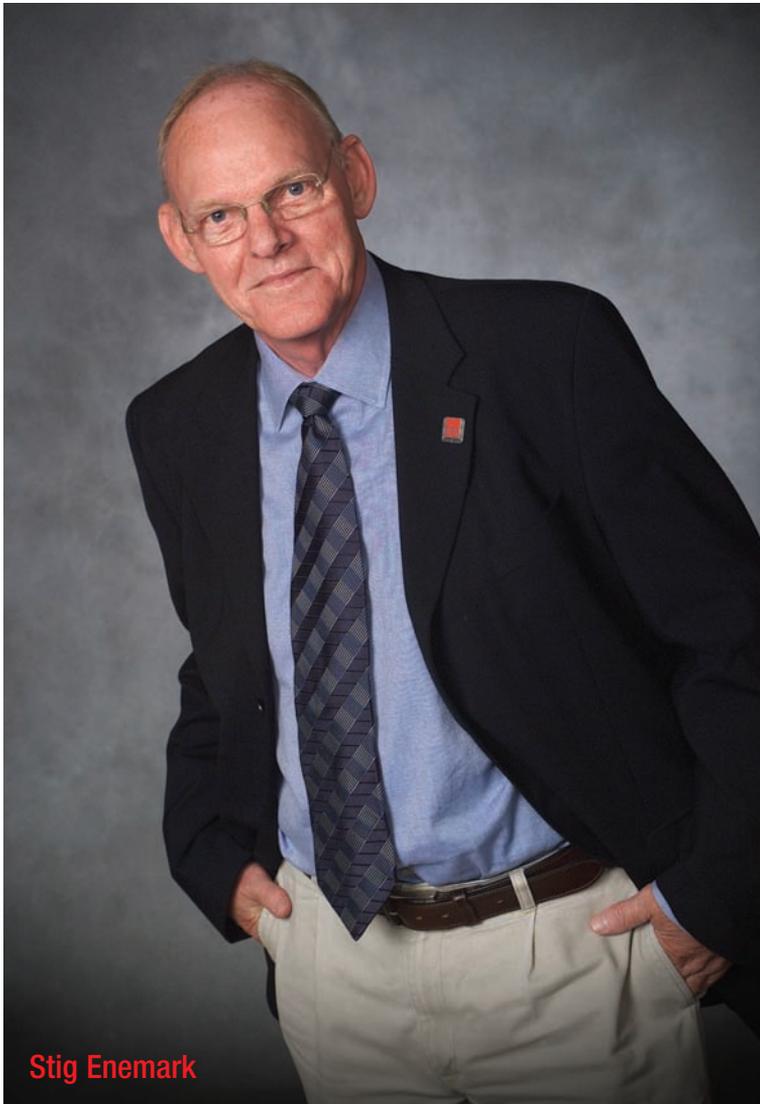
**Stig Enemark**, President of the International Federation of Surveyors, explains the organisation's role in the areas of geospatial information and land management.

**T**he International Federation of Surveyors (FIG) is a global non-governmental organisation representing professional surveying associations and institutions from more than 110 countries. The profile of FIG has changed during the last decade from being merely a conference organiser and an internal professional network to a key international player in the areas of geospatial information and land management. My goal as the FIG President 2007-2010 is to strengthen the role of surveyors at the global level by what I call 'flying high'. By this I mean that we need to have a big vision and contribute to solving the global challenges of land issues and poverty reduction, and thereby respond to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as endorsed by the United Nations.

The MDGs represent a wider concept or a vision for the future, where the contribution of the surveying community is central and vital. In this regard, I want to develop FIG further as the leading international NGO on land issues. This is our core global responsibility. At the same time, we need to keep our feet on the ground – this means that we must serve the needs of our member associations and the individual surveyors and make sure that they get benefits from our global activities and from the work of our 10 technical commissions.

Like any professional organisation, FIG needs to provide value for money and contribute to improving the daily business and duties of the members. We can promote this through providing an international forum for professional development and innovation in all aspects of surveying; in





**Stig Enemark**

terms of capacity building through conferences and publications; and by preparing standards and guidelines. We must be able to strengthen the links between the global agenda and the surveying grass roots.

## Key issues

We continue to focus our work on land-related issues as we have been doing over recent years. Our partners include the United Nations and its agencies such as UN-Habitat, FAO and the World Bank, as well as other professional organisations that are dealing with geospatial sciences. The main topics on our agenda will be responding to the global agenda in terms of the MDGs, through development of pro-poor land tools and tools for achieving environmental sustainability such as for coastal areas and in relation to disaster risk management. To achieve these goals, we will focus on building capacity at a regional level, especially in Africa and in Latin America. 'Building the Capacity' has also been adopted as our motto for the current term of office. Other key issues are related to modern technologies like GNSS for positioning and mapping and the use of modern GIS technology for monitoring and planning of urban and rural environments.

FIG should be able to interact with politicians at national level to improve and promote the basic conditions for our services and our role in society. This relates to the areas of providing the relevant geographic

## What is FIG?

FIG was founded in 1878 in Paris. It is a federation of national associations and is the only international body that represents all surveying disciplines. It is a UN-recognised non-government organisation and its aim is to ensure that the disciplines of surveying and all who practise them meet the needs of the markets and communities that they serve. It realises its aim by promoting the practice of the profession and encouraging the development of professional standards.



information in terms of mapping and databases of the built and natural environment; providing secure tenure systems; and systems for land valuation, land use management and land development. The work of the surveyors forms a kind of backbone in society that supports social justice, economic growth and environmental sustainability. FIG interacts in a dialogue with more than a hundred individual member associations and individual surveyors, to promote that role in society and to make FIG even more relevant and a proud icon for our profession.

The third big issue for FIG – as it is to all professions – is how to attract students. For organisations like FIG there is also a big demand for integrating women, young surveyors and other under-represented groups in our work. International participation requires both funding and long-time commitment, which is often difficult to provide for students and young surveyors. We are currently considering opportunities to better integrate young

people in FIG work, not only at the conferences but also through other means – for example, by encouraging international student exchange and mentor activities. In fact, our upcoming major conference in Stockholm in June this year has adopted the theme 'integrating generations'. Some of our member associations have already learnt that supporting students and young surveyors in these areas will also benefit their membership.

## Management challenges

We always need to keep in mind that the work of FIG is based on volunteers. Even though we have achieved a lot and will do even more in the future, there are limitations to what volunteers can do at the same time as having a full-time job. So we need to get our priorities right. It is also important to create ambitious yet realistic work plans that are of interest to our members when developing their professional career.

The increasing problem that we face is that there are always more innovative ideas and important requests for support than can possibly be handled by a voluntary organisation. This just emphasises the need for building a solid bridge between the organisation and individual surveyors at the national level.

FIG established a permanent office in 1999, with three full-time employees who undertake the day-to-day management of the organisation.

This way FIG is able to provide a professional service to our members and at the same time implement the overall work plan including preparation of conferences. A permanent address and contact point is also very beneficial when interacting with the global scene and communicating with the UN-agencies.

## Sustainable societies

Our ideology is based on the idea that sustainability in our profession is very much related to good governance, comprehensive land policies and sound land-administration institutions. These are essential components for addressing the problems relating to land management and land-information infrastructures. Both an efficient land market and an effective means of land-use control must be developed as basic tools for achieving a sustainable approach. Many technical issues, such as reference frameworks, applications of global navigation satellite systems (GNSS), information and communication technologies and low-cost/high-tech surveying methods play a key role here.

In many countries, and especially in developing countries and countries in transition, the national capacity to manage land rights, restrictions and responsibilities is not well developed in terms of mature institutions and the necessary human resources and skills, including managerial and technical skills. In this regard, the capacity-building concept that FIG has introduced offers guidance for analysing and assessing capacity needs and for identifying an adequate response to these at societal, organisational and individual level.

The importance of capacity development in surveying and land administration at the organisational level has been usefully quantified in Great Britain (1999) by research that found that approximately UK£100 billion of Great Britain's GDP (12.5 percent of total national GDP, and 1000 times the turnover of OSGB) relied on the activity of the Ordnance Survey of Great Britain. Less exhaustive studies in other European countries have pointed to similar figures. The importance of geographic information continues to grow, with a range of SDI initiatives at local, national, regional and global level, so there is reason to believe that the figures would be increased rather than reduced if the GB study were to be repeated today. With these very significant numbers, as well as the central importance of sound land management, the importance of solid, sustainable organisations in the field of surveying and land administration is clear.

## Technology

Technology development is the major driving force in changing the face of the spatial information world. The GPS technologies for measur-

ing have revolutionised the traditional surveying discipline and the high-resolution satellite imagery tends to revolutionise the mapping discipline. The database technologies for storage of large data sets and the GIS technologies for data management, analysis and manipulation have arguably had the greatest impact on the spatial information environment. And in the future, communication technologies such as the internet will become the focus of attention for viewing and using spatial data.

The growth of GNSS and increasing requirement for accuracy means that future users of the Geospatial Reference System (GRS) will be much more diverse than the traditional users in surveying and mapping applications. The use of GNSS in asset management applications is also growing. These new classes of users will require new and innovative approaches to the delivery of the GRS. These future directions are highly relevant since GRS underpins all geospatial data including fundamental geospatial data sets for the cadastre, topography, geophysics, environment, natural resources, transport, utilities and emergency management.

In general, surveyors can be proud of the progress that has happened in the land administration field and also in introducing geo-

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## “The future looks interesting, promising and challenging”

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graphic information systems. In many countries, surveyors were pioneers in introducing GIS. In the technical field (geodesy and photogrammetry) development has been so fast that it has been a challenge to respond to the new working environment. It is obvious that the number of highly educated surveyors in the field of measurement science has declined and will decline even further in the future. This is why we have to strengthen our skills in management and broaden our expertise to cover the full definition of surveyor as described and adopted by FIG.

## Future

The future looks interesting, promising and challenging. We will certainly both fly high and be keeping our feet on the ground. In the coming years we will focus on implementing our ambitious work plan that includes a key emphasis on contributing to the MDGs. This also means that we will put special efforts on building the capacity at the regional level, especially in Africa and Latin America. FIG will also play a major role in co-operation with UN-Habitat at the upcoming World Urban Forum in Nanjing, China in November 2008, and will also organise a high-level conference in co-operation with the World Bank in Washington in February 2009 showing how FIG and the World Bank work in parallel in the area of Land Administration in Support of the MDGs. ■

### Millennium development goals

From a global perspective the areas of surveying and land administration are basically about people, politics and places. It is about people in terms of human rights, engagement and dignity; it is about policies in terms of land policies and good government; and about places in term of shelter, land and natural resources. By taking this approach FIG, as the overall organisation of land professionals, pursues sustainable development in both an economic, social, governmental and environmental sense. The areas of surveying and mapping, spatial information management, cadastre and land management provide a basic platform for poverty eradication and development. This is why FIG is deeply committed to achieving the MDGs.