

**Report to the 27<sup>th</sup> General Assembly  
FIG Working Week in Athens, 22-27 May 2004**

**President's Report**

The current Council took over the administration of FIG officially 1 January 2003, so that the past year has been the first full year that our Council has been responsible for the administration of the Federation.

The year started in “grand style” in Paris, where our French member associations Ordre des Géomètres-Experts (OGE) and Association Française de Topographie (AFT) organised the extremely successful FIG Working Week and the 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Federation. It was a great idea to return to Paris, the city where FIG was established in 1878, to celebrate the history of our Federation and surveying. The absolute highlight of the celebrations was the gala dinner at the Castle of Versailles. On behalf of us all I congratulate our French colleagues for organizing such a unforgettable event and in addition with such a short notice and preparation time, after our Israeli colleagues decided to postpone the already planned Working Week to the future. Not only the great social events but also the high-profile professional programme showed that FIG still after 125 years is focusing on issues that matter and is shaping the change. I was personally also very pleased with the President's meeting that was organized in Paris. This kind of meeting is one of the best ways for communication between the leaders of member associations and the Council. I am happy to confirm that this time here in Athens we have reserved more time for these personalized discussions.

The second highlight of the past year was the 2<sup>nd</sup> FIG Regional Conference that was organized in Marrakech by our Moroccan colleagues from ONIGT. It was only the second time FIG organized this kind of regional conference, but it is already clear that we have found a concept that can be copied to other parts of the world. At the same time it offers FIG an excellent way to reach its members in developing countries. The framework of a regional conference – to collect surveyors all over the world, not only from the region, for three full days professional conference extended with social events and a joint technical tour – gives a good forum for multi- and cross-disciplinary discussions between FIG commissions and with other professions. The FIG Council is further delighted that several of our UN partners are continuously supporting these regional events. It can already be called a tradition. The regional conference in Morocco was very special for many reasons – not only because of the Moroccan hospitality and social events – many of the participants described the conference as “best ever” FIG event in their evaluation reports – but also professionally. I would like to thank especially President Aziz Hilali for the great effort ONIGT had put in the public relations and media relations. Two hours press conference and several articles in the newspapers was a result of excellent pr-work. As a result of these activities our conference was even named as the event of the week in Morocco. Special thanks belong also to all FIG Commissions that engaged themselves to this new model and thus implemented the proposal of the Council to concentrate commission events in conjunction with the Working Weeks and Regional Conferences. I would like to mention two further meetings during the conference namely the Round Table on the surveying and geomatics education in Africa that is a real challenge for us all and the

meetings of the Arab Union of Surveyors. Finally the topic of the conference namely “*Urban-rural linkages for sustainable environment*” is a hot issue in international discussion. There are big expectations to the Marrakech Declaration on this topic, which will be launched at the 2<sup>nd</sup> World Urban Forum in September 2004.

During the past year there has also been good progress in co-operation between FIG and the United Nations. The co-operation was intensified with UN-Habitat, when I was able to attend the 19<sup>th</sup> Session of the Committee on Human Settlements in Nairobi in May 2003 and with UN ECOSOC at the Ministerial Round Table at the ECOSOC High Level Segment 2003 in Geneva in June. However, the most encouraging development was with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), which instead of normal bureaucratic MoU procedure wants to start more active co-operation with FIG at project level. The first result of this co-operation is in the field of risk and disaster management, where UNEP is seeking partnership from the latest FIG Working Group on this topic. I congratulate our Commission 8 for taking this important environmental topic on its agenda.

FIG has also been active in communicating with our traditional international partners like the International Association of Geodesy (IAG) and the International Cartographic Association (ICA), which both have got new Presidents and who are going through changes in their administrative structure. I am especially happy with the development in co-operation with IAG. The MoU that was signed some years ago is now resulting in co-operation in projects and events. I would like to mention as an example that Prof. Gerhard Beutler is one of the keynote speakers in this Working Week and IAG has also a major role in the next Regional Conference in Jakarta in October 2004. FIG is also co-operating with IAG and other international associations in UN on the field of GPS/GNSS. It further seems that the Joint Board of Spatial Information Societies, which was established after IUSM was disbanded some years ago, is finally finding its role as a focal point for UN co-operation in geoinformation.

The Council has been active also in communicating directly with member associations by visiting their annual meetings and other events. I was delighted to visit during the last year our biggest member association RICS in London and to discuss co-operation and joint projects. I was also happy to give lectures during my visit to Jamaica and bring international greetings to the Jamaica Land Surveyors Association on the occasion of their 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in October 2003. I further attended the Annual Conference of our host association DdL in Nyborg in January this year, where I learned a lot about the Danish concept, how to develop the profession to a network of professionals and friendship. As the President I am not able to accept all invitations that I receive, therefore I am happy to have a professional team in my Council that can represent FIG in all occasions. I would like to mention some of the visits during the last year made by my Vice Presidents. Dr. Andreas Drees visited the Young Surveyors Conference in Trebzon, Turkey in May 2003 and also the South-East Asian Survey Conference in Hong Kong, SAR together with Vice President TN Wong in November. Dr. Drees visited on the same trip also Mainland China. As support to the Commissions he further attended Commission 7 annual meeting in Krakow, Poland. Vice President TN Wong has visited several members in Asia and Vice President Bettina Petzold has visited the 1<sup>st</sup> Ibero-American Congress of Property Registration in Lima, Peru making good contacts to surveyors in this region. We have also attended some other international events like UN ECE WPLA meeting in Athens, which at the same time offered me good opportunity to discuss the arrangements of this Working Week. At the sister society level Vice President Ralf Schroth

has attended several ISPRS workshops. Further the FIG representatives have been attending the UN ECA CODI meeting in Addis Ababa and several meetings in South America including (Colombia, Costa Rica and Argentina). The Director attended the GSDI-7 meeting in Bangalore that resulted as the joint Working Week with GSDI next year in Cairo. It was also possible for me to follow the tradition to visit the venues of the next Working Weeks. So in addition to visiting Athens in conjunction to the WPLA meeting I visited in February 2004 Egypt to see the preparations of the FIG/GSDI Conference 2005. I can assure you that the Working Weeks in the Olympic City Athens this year and next year in May in Cairo are something that you don't want to miss.

The co-operation with our corporate members has developed both during the conferences and events and by grant programmes. During the past year I was able to attend and to speak to the ESRI Users' Conference in San Diego to "close the gap between GIS and surveyors" and Ralf Schroth was a keynote speaker at the Mensi conference in September 2003.

To conclude the visit programmes I would like to mention that there has been increased interest to visit our office in Copenhagen. Among several visits I would like to mention minister level visit from Kenya as well as bigger groups from China and Malaysia who have been visiting our headquarters.

One of the issues that have been on the FIG agenda for a longer time is the definition of surveyor. As you know the original definition was agreed after long preparation in 1991. Since then the technology has been developed and there has been some changes in the profession. The Council considered that now is the right time not to change but to revise the definition. When refreshing the definition we have also integrated the "basic" surveying so that all professionals in our practical and scientific branch can feel home in FIG. The result is now on the agenda for your approval.

The Council has also taken serious discussions at the last President's meeting about our information delivery. Thus under the leadership of Vice President Bettina Petzold we have now a new information policy that is very much focusing on modern technologies but takes also into account those members that do not have fast connection to internet.

The most expected issue on the agenda of this General Assembly is the election of two Vice Presidents and all Commission chairs for 2006-2010. In the transition period of FIG administration it is especially important to get the best people to the right positions, those who have the energy, interest and experience to develop FIG to face the new challenges of the future.

As many of you know, I am very much interested in the public role of surveyors and how to make surveyors better known to the big audience and also to policy makers. In this respect FIG has started co-operation with some publishers – all are corporate members – to publish information about FIG and also to give FIG a more personal touch. This has happened e.g. with columns and articles in journals like GIM and Geoinformatics. I would also once again like to congratulate our Commissions and active people on the contents of our website. I continuously get positive feedback about the quality and contents of the website. It is a real showcase for our profession. When in the near future we are able to launch the Surveying Reference Library – instead of the good practice database – FIG's web site will be a real source for all information within this profession.

The membership of FIG has increased during the past year. In Paris we got new members from Brazil, Slovak Republic and Costa Rica. This time we have member applications from Algeria, Cuba and Tunisia. In addition we have got a new affiliate from Saudi Arabia. There were totally 14 new academic members in 2003. Finally four new corporate members joined during 2003 (Intergraph, AED-SICAD, GeoExpert and Cartogràfic de Catalunya) and already two this year (Eimar Arabia and Geo:connexion). We are now in a situation where we have a very strong membership base that allows us to work for a better future.

The economic situation in FIG is very stable. Without going into details I would just like to thank our Danish host association DdL for their continuous support to the permanent office last year and also in the future. Because last year was the last one, when we got financial support from the Danish KMS, I would like to express the sincere thanks to KMS for this support. The financial result from last year was very good in spite of the losses that were caused by the weak US dollar. The permanent office managed to generate new income by being more involved in organizing FIG events. This year the office will be in charge of totally five events – the Working Week and the Regional Conference and 3 international workshops. To me it is totally clear that in the future FIG has to take care of all our events – of course in co-operation with the hosting member association. The positive development would not have been possible without the professional staff in the FIG office. I would like to express our thanks not only to the Director but to his two assistants Tine Svendstorp and Dorte Rechendorff, who joined FIG in February last year. Finally I would like to thank all Commission chairs and officers and especially my friends and colleagues in the Council, without their enthusiasm and work we could have not done what we managed to achieve.

As mentioned, I have been able to follow the preparations of the next FIG events here in Athens and in Cairo. To me it seems that we have many interesting challenges and events in the future. I am especially interested in seeing how the joint conference together with our new strategic partner GSDI will work in Cairo. Before this event, however, we will have our first regional conference for Asia and the Pacific in Jakarta in October, which, according to my Vice President TN Wong, will become a great success.

But first of all let's enjoy this working week here in the Olympic City of Athens.

Prof. Holger Magel  
President