

**FIG Handover Ceremony
Münster, Germany, 2 December 2006**

Laudatio Speech

Prof. Peter Dale, Honorary President of FIG

Ladies and Gentlemen

When Holger Magel invited me to give a 'laudatio' it took me back to my youth as in order to get into Cambridge University I had to pass an examination in Latin. That was a long time ago so I hope that I have translated the word correctly. Fortunately, the task is not difficult since the German administration of FIG has been such a great success, culminating only a few weeks ago in the excellent Congress in Munich.

Holger and his team have steered FIG through a difficult period of transition from an old model to the new. They have not only done this successfully but have also presided over a significant growth in the membership and activities of FIG. I note that we now have 101 member associations from 85 countries, 19 affiliates, 34 corporate members, 83 academic members from 52 countries and 14 corresponding members. Overall, more than 110 countries are represented in FIG. The main blanks on the map remain in parts of Africa and central Asia but even they are showing signs of interest in FIG.

I like to describe myself as Hogel Magel's grandfather since I was President of FIG two generations ago – which of course makes Bob Foster his father. Although as Holger has pointed out the foundations for the future may have been laid by others, including my predecessors, the growth in the Federation owes much to the drive and energy of Holger and his team and to the support that they have received from the FIG Office. Here I must pay special tribute to Markku Villikka and his team for all the help that they have given to the Council. They too have done a great job.

One of the questions that I was often asked during my period in office was why anyone should be interested in FIG. After all what matters to most surveyors is what goes on within 20 kilometres of home. In what way is FIG value for money? So I would talk about globalisation, about networking, about learning from others all of whom are struggling with similar difficult problems, about friendships and about how the more that you put in the more that you will get out. I would also talk about a vision for the future in a world that is changing quickly. All these things remain true. And all these things have been delivered by the German Council. The outreach of the organization has been extended with successful meetings across the globe, from Regional Conferences in Morocco, Jakarta and Ghana to working weeks in France, Greece and Egypt, through many individual commission events, to meetings such as that of the group of experts that was held in Nairobi, Kenya.

The declarations such as that in Marrakech deserve special mention. They have raised the profile of FIG to higher levels. Our relation with UN agencies has never been better and this is significant not only for FIG as an organization but also for the many individual surveyors that it represents – but more especially for our clients. There is no other international organization that addresses land issues in the manner and with the breadth that FIG achieves. Land (and here I include areas covered by water such as the oceans) is the basis for our survival, a basis for the creation of wealth, and an item that ultimately mankind can either

sustain or destroy. In addressing land management issues Holger has personally made a major contribution to the sometimes forgotten Agenda 21 that the UN brought out originally in 1992 but which is as valid today as then. But he and his team have also ensured that the expertise of surveyors from around the world has been made available to address the many complex issues.

During the German period in office we have seen, in addition to some domestic issues, publications such as the Nairobi Statement on Spatial Information for Sustainable Development; Land Information Management for Sustainable Development of Cities; The Marrakech Declaration on Urban-Rural Interrelationship for Sustainable Development; the Aguascalientes Statement on Development of Land Information Policies in the Americas; a publication on Administering Marine Spaces; and a Guide on the Development of a Vertical Reference Surface for Hydrography. The continued implementation of the recommendations within all these documents will be a major challenge for the next Council. It is one that I know they will address.

In his speech just now, Holger listed ten things that the German administration wanted to achieve. I had a chance to read his speech before he presented it and I can honestly say that he has delivered on every one of them. That is a remarkable achievement.

I have also noted that in his keynote speech at the FIG Congress in Munich, Holger expressed the wish for surveyors to be seen less as “homo technicus” and much more as “homo politicus”. I totally agree. Holger has demonstrated by his own personal example what can be achieved, as is demonstrated by the many activities that have been undertaken in partnership with United Nations agencies. In his Congress speech he also referred to “The FIG – a forward looking model for the world”. Since the most recent publication from the FIG stable is called “The Contribution of the Surveying Profession to Disaster Risk Management” I hope this will not prove to be the model that he had in mind! But few can doubt that FIG not only has a great history but also has an understanding of the present and a vision of the future.

I have to admit that I have not entirely got used to the idea of calling what for me was the FIG Bureau the FIG Council. But I shall do so as the old idea of a Bureau is dead. The end of the German administration is the end of an era that began way back in 1878. That era has ended not with a whimper but with a bang. Holger rightly paid tribute to what he called his fellow warriors - Andreas Drees, Ralf Schroth, Thomas Gollwitzer, TN Wong, Stig Enemark, Ken Allred, Matt Higgins and Gerhard Muggenhuber – each of whom made a major contribution to the success of the last four years. A special thank-you needs to be said to them.

Three of these warriors will of course be carrying the flag forward in the new administration. I wish them and the other incoming members of the FIG Council well. I have every confidence that they will be every bit as successful as the German team have been. Stig, you will have a lot to live up to but at least you start with a very healthy organization, thanks to Holger and his warriors and the support that they have received from DVW and others. Well done the German Council. You can be proud of what you have achieved.