

Towards a Sustainable Future – Building the Capacity

Opening Speech FIG Working Week, 14-19 June, Stockholm, Sweden

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1. WELCOME

Minister Andreas Carlgren, UN Under-Secretary-General, Executive Director Anna Tibajuka, President Svante Astermo, Honourable FIG Presidents, Colleagues and Friends, Ladies and Gentlemen.

On behalf of FIG, I am happy to welcome you all to our annual Working Week here in the beautiful Stockholm City – the capital of Sweden with this magnificent waterfront location. Being from Denmark it gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the Nordic Countries and especially this time of the year where the daylight almost stay on through the night.

A special thanks to our host - the Swedish Association of Chartered Surveyors (SLF) - for all their efforts of organising this event jointly with FIG. I am convinced that we will have an excellent conference and also be able to enjoy the famous Swedish hospitality. This also relates to the celebration of the 100 year Anniversary of the Swedish Association – President Astermo, the FIG community congratulates SLF with all your achievements and wish you all the best for the future.

Another special Swedish feature is the focus on involving the students and young surveyors – that is reflected in the conference theme Integrating Generations. We are happy to notice that more than 100 students are attending this conference and a range of activities are in place at this conference to facilitate this integration. FIG strongly supports this concept of integration and we are happy to see the vitality of the working group of Young Surveyors. You represent the future and we are all behind you.

2. THE MID TERM WORKING WEEK OF THE CURRENT COUNCIL (2007-2010)

This is the mid term working week for the current council. Therefore we have taken the opportunity to evaluate the rather ambitious work plan and asses the progress. This took place at the General Assembly yesterday and proved that we are very well on the way to fulfil our aims. We have also tried to give the organisation a new look as you will see from brochure on The FIG Profile.

This working week is also a so called major event to be hold mid term between the four year congresses. These major working weeks will be organised together with a partner organisation. This time we are happy to have UN-HABITAT as the partner. Together we are organising a seminar on Improving Slum Conditions through Innovative Financing. This is an

issue placed very high at the global agenda in support of the Millennium Development Goals. This seminar will be a fully integrated part of the technical programme that covers all aspects of surveying activities as represented through the ten FIG technical commissions. We are happy this way to continue the long-term co-operation between FIG and UN-HABITAT, and especially here in Stockholm as Sweden has a long tradition in supporting the UN-HABITAT agenda.

3. THE GLOBAL AGENDA

Ladies and Gentlemen, FIG is becoming a major partner in promoting sustainable development and achieving Millennium Development Goals as adopted by the UN and agreed by all the world's leaders. FIG and the global surveying community have already made significant contributions in this regard, but we still have a lot to offer. We should be really proud of our profession.

Contributing to the Global agenda is about “flying high” as I use to say. But the idea is also to better understand the very key role that the surveying profession play in underpinning sustainable development at national and local level. This is about the daily work of meeting the needs of the clients – it is about “keeping the feet on the ground”. More generally, the work of the surveyors or land professionals forms a kind of “backbone” in society that supports social justice, economic growth, and environmental sustainability. These aspects are all key components in attaining the MDGs.

FIG will partner with the UN agencies such as UN-HABITAT, FAO and the World Bank in contributing to this global agenda. I will explain more about that in my presentation at the plenary session later this morning.

4. PROPERTY RIGHTS

The global agenda is about eradication of poverty in all its forms. And it relates very much to the building of sustainable institutions in developing countries. One of these institutions is the concept of property. In the Western cultures – such as here in Sweden and in the Nordic Countries - it would be hard to imagine a society without having property rights as a basic driver for development and economic growth. Property is not only an economic asset. Secure property rights provide a sense of identity and belonging that goes far beyond and underpins the values of democracy and human freedom.

These property systems are normally managed well in modern economies. But such formalized western land registration systems do not adequately address the more informal and indigenous rights to land that is found especially in developing countries. UN-HABITAT has just launched a new publication entitled “Secure Land Rights for All”. One of the key messages is that “Land rights are political, but too often they do not take into account the interests of the poor and vulnerable”. The land professional have a key role play in advocating and developing such pro poor systems.

Property rights are also one of the four pillars identified by the Commission for Legal Empowerment of the Poor. In their report that was launched early the month entitled “Making the Law Work for Everyone” the commission developed a comprehensive agenda that includes four crucial pillars: Access to Justice and the Rule of Law; Property Rights; Labour Rights; and Business Rights. These four pillars reinforce and relate to each other towards achieving legal empowerment of the poor. Dr. Ashraf Ghani has been a member of the Commission and we are all looking forward to his presentation in the plenary later this morning.

5. LAND GOVERNANCE

Honourable Guest, Ladies and Gentlemen – let me introduce a new term “Land Governance” that simply means the spatial dimension of governance that relates to land, property and natural resources. Land governance is the governmental side of Land Management. The control and management of physical space is the basis for the distribution of power, wealth, opportunities and human well being.

The key challenges of the new millennium are clearly listed already. They relate to climate change; food shortage; energy scarcity; urban growth; environmental degradation; and natural disasters. These issues all relate to governance and management of land. Land governance is a cross cutting activity that will confront all traditional “silo-organised” land administration systems.

Let’s look at just one issue such as **Urban Growth**. 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 in slums. Also in 1950 there was only one mega city (New York) with more than 10 million inhabitants. Today the number of mega cities is about 20 some of them with more than 20 million inhabitants such as Mexico City, Sao Paulo, Lagos, Mumbai and Tokyo. And over this century we will see cities of more than 50 million people. How can we deal with the social, economic and environment consequences of this development – such as the resulting climate change, insecurity, energy scarcity, environmental pollution, infrastructure chaos, and extreme poverty? How can we deal with the challenge of managing such mega cities?

Land governance and management is going to be the core area for surveyors – the land professionals. This area requires high level geodesy to create the models that can predict future changes; modern surveying and mapping tools that can control implementation of new physical infrastructure and also provide the basis for the building of National spatial data infrastructures; and finally sustainable land administration systems that can manage the core functions of land tenure, land value, land use, and land development.

6. FINAL REMARKS

Ladies and gentlemen, let me conclude by saying that FIG has a long history. FIG is – maybe because of that – a very vital, mature, and dynamic organisation which is recognised world wide. We as surveyors are needed to meet many of the future challenges. Many of those challenges are land related. We are the world wide organisation of Land Professionals. Our

task is to build the capacity to deal with these mega challenges – and this conference is an important means in that regard.

Dear colleagues and friends, I wish you all an enjoyable conference with a high professional level and also a lot of fun.

Thank you very much.