

Shaping the Change 2002 – 2006 The German Period of FIG

FIG President's address at the Opening Ceremony of the XXIII FIG Congress in
Munich on 10 October 2006

FIG President Professor Dr.-Ing. Holger MAGEL

1. FIG – THE MOTHER OF SURVEYING AND SURVEYORS

Herr Ministerpräsident Dr Stoiber, Herr Landtagspräsident Glück, Herr Prof. Töpfer, Herr Graeff, Herr Staatsminister Miller, Honorary Presidents of the FIG, Distinguished Guests, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen!

It is a happy coincidence that, just at the time of this, the biggest ever meeting of surveyors on German soil, the bestseller by the Munich born Daniel Kehlmann on “Measuring of the World” has been a triumphal success. Its skilful description of the exploration and surveying of the world and homeland in the early nineteenth century has now been published in almost 30 languages. The FIG as the **“mother of surveying and surveyors”** has, since its foundation in Paris in 1878, been committed to the “surveying of the world and home country”. The spectrum of its aims and activities has however broadened considerably in response to the interests and great variety of its over hundred member associations in comparison with the geodetic achievements of the two geniuses and protagonists in the book, Alexander von Humboldt and Carl Friedrich Gauß. One constant has however remained: like Humboldt and Gauß, our non-governmental organisation, active on both the international and local levels, the “International Federation of Surveyors” (“FIG”), has always been and remains dedicated to the service of creation and society. Creation and society, as we all know, are in a state of continual and now accelerated change. The FIG brings together experts for surveying land, water and outer space, geomatics, geoinformation, urban and rural development, cadastre and land management, valuation and real estate markets. Whether employed in public state and local authorities, in industries and private service companies, at universities or in research, these experts all make their contribution, and it is an important contribution, to this process of change. This has been reflected over the last four years in the motto of the German presidency **“Shaping the Change”**. In order to meet the demands we have set ourselves as well as the high expectations of our partners and members in UN authorities, World Bank, international sister organisations, in industry, commercial undertakings, national governments and national associations, we have during the German presidency continued and brought to a conclusion the improvements in the administrative organisation within the FIG which were commenced under British and American leadership. These improvements can also be described as an internal structural reform. It is no exaggeration to say today that the FIG in the year 2006 presents itself as a highly competent and highly professional union of thousands of “volunteers” from ministries, public authorities, private companies, universities etc which has for example been recognised and involved by UN Habitat as “NGO Premium Partner”, when

as for example – as happened recently at the World Urban Forum III in Vancouver – it is a matter of reducing poverty in fulfilment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG).

Of reducing poverty, Ladies and Gentlemen, by giving “landless people”, and above all women who are particularly disadvantaged, unbureaucratic and at the same time secure access to, and proof of, land usage rights. In expert terminology this is known as “access to land” and “secure tenure” and, in the context of assistance for women and other disadvantaged groups, “gender land tools”.

2. IT IS NOT (ONLY) A MATTER OF TECHNIQUE AND SURVEYING

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

You need have no concern that what follows is going to become too technical. The place for this is the Congress with its fascinating plenary sessions concerned with current problems and the many other sessions with almost 600 papers from all conceivable branches which reflect the enormous spectrum covered by our profession. A particular feature of central European, German and Bavarian surveying education, is **the spectrum from the individual plot of land and its responsible management to the exploration and surveying of the planet Mars**. You also need have no concern that a balance of the last four years under a German FIG presidency is to follow. This also is for a later occasion.

Against the background of a much bewailed and personally identified lack of awareness of surveyors in politics and society, I should like to acquaint you with some current and (socio-)politically relevant themes of the FIG and thus of “Surveyors around the World”. I should like to invite you at the same time to compare these focal points with your own political and professional concerns and challenges. A better reciprocal awareness has been and remains a particular concern of mine. One of my first speeches as FIG president was thus devoted to the subject of better communication between politics, society and the surveyors’ profession. Our ideal is that surveyors do not just sit in a professional ivory tower in love with pure technology and figures, but follow and also understand the political, social, economic and ecological developments and injustices of our world. They feel committed to a more just, to a more peaceful and to a more sustainable world.

But perhaps you now ask how that is to be brought about?

The answer is provided in the list of our professional focal points which can be extracted from the many conferences and visits around the world and from the popular FIG publications – of which there were eight new ones in the last four years alone. They cover, in addition to the previously mentioned “poverty reduction” and “gender equality”, such politically and socially “hot” matters as “tenure security and land administration” as a basis for investment and granting of e.g. bank loans, “access to land, water and resources“, “disaster preparedness and risk management”. They cover such matters as “geoinformation”, “sustainability”, Agenda 21, “rural-urban-interrelationship”, “land conflict resolution”, “valuation” and “land

markets” as a basis for economic development generally, “new public management and new institutional economics” and “public private partnership”. As a general background to all this we are concerned with “good governance”, “subsidiarity” and “civil society” and hope in this way to work against corruption.

Perhaps many of our guests of honour today will recognise the particular relevance of these matters in their own fields. “Good governance in Bavaria“ is for example a matter particularly close to your heart, Herr Ministerpräsident Dr Stoiber. The development of an active civil society in Bavaria and in Germany is particularly connected with your name, Herr Landtagspräsident Alois Glück, and the theme “sustainability and poverty reduction” is associated worldwide with your name, Herr Professor Töpfer. You have made millions of people around the world aware that the reduction of poverty and the maintenance of a healthy environment are indissolubly linked.

Ladies and Gentlemen, it is relatively easy for developed countries to enter into partnership with equally highly developed countries and to count on a “win win” effect. For the future of our planet, partnership with developing countries is at least equally important – as it is shown by the Africa initiatives of the Federal German President Professor Horst Köhler and of last year’s G8 Summit in Scotland. From the FIG we welcome and strongly support both initiatives and many others such as that of our sister organisation ISPRS and of the Netherlands ITC or of the originally German-Austrian initiative of the Global Marshall Plan.

Those for whom pure ethics and humanitarianism (for which you, Herr Professor Töpfer are to receive the highly regarded Romano Guardini Price this evening) are insufficient, should take another look at the pictures of refugee boats off Sicily, Malta and the coasts of the Canaries or of desperate persons who climb over the boundary fences of Melilla or Ceuta. These pictures can recur at any time. Such persons should also think about the consequences for their own continent and their own country. The FIG together with its commissions, member organisations and the FIG Foundation want to help at a local level, e.g. by concrete assistance in education and training (programmes) and by the provision of technical equipment, by the inclusion of many experts in the active exchange of experiences and of information, by study visits and consultants, and above all by conferences in the countries concerned to emphasise the need for countrywide “land administration” programmes (such as LAP in Ghana), for national (geo) spatial data systems (NSDI), or the need for land management and the development of transparent real estate markets which should render corruption impossible, and so on.

3. IN THE SERVICE OF SOCIETY...

We consider it our task to promote the broad and internationally recognised education and training and activity of our colleagues as well as their activities as “**well-grounded specialised generalists**”. We also regard ourselves as efficient and essential players in the service of the State, the economic sector, society and our environment.

We see ourselves as

1. **Stabilisers** of public order and our work as a precondition of a flourishing economy
2. **Guardians** of rights of property and user as well as a safe system of record in land administration systems
3. **Producers, administrators and distributors** of local, national and global spatial data infrastructures
4. **Managers** of land, water and other natural resources
5. **Enablers, mediators and advisors** for urban and rural planning and development, including conflict resolution
6. **Hinges (interfaces) in global, national and local early warning systems** for disaster prevention and risk management
7. **Active partners** in the development and use of e.g. “Global Navigation Satellite Systems (GNSS)” or of high resolution imaging systems for observation of the earth and for navigation systems for drivers, wanderers etc.

Ladies and Gentlemen, these tasks are naturally in the first instance primarily tasks of the State, of the economic sector and corresponding institutions, but we are convinced that all States on this planet require more and more the competence and world wide resources of NGOs and should also make better use of them. Even in the absolutist governed Sultanate Brunei Darussalam the monarch encourages the establishment of NGOs! But even NGOs – like State organisations and undertakings – are forced to cooperate more and more so that they are better able to meet the increasingly global challenges. During the German period now coming to an end it was fortunately possible to intensify such professional cooperation and for example to bring together in the Joint Board of Geoinformation Societies (JBGIS) the large number of associations operating world wide which are concerned with geoinformation. We hope from this new loose alliance, at present under the leadership of the FIG, to have a greater impact in the area of an economical use of the growth market of “Geodata-Management” which is at the same time compatible in social terms and in relation to creation. In plain language – we want to help! The same is true for the UN Habitat Professionals Forum brought into being by Professor Töpfer himself. This is a loose alliance of all international institutions concerned with urban and rural housing, planning and development, such as architects, urban developers, landscape planners and the geodata, land (administration) and land development specialists from the FIG. I personally see a special role for the Habitat Professionals Forum against the background of the need to involve citizens in the world wide dissemination of modern participative planning and decision making methods and processes.

4. GEODESISTS ARE “ON SITE SPECIALISTS”

Ladies and Gentlemen, the UN General Assembly concerned itself last year with the progress of the Millennium Development Goals – five years after their adoption in the year 2000. The correspondent of the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, Arne Perras devoted a critical article to this and urged that it was not enough simply to issue flowery summit declarations, it was necessary to come down from the summit and not fight shy of the “toil of the plain”. In response to this we

Opening Ceremony

Holger Magel, FIG President

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can confidently say on behalf of the FIG and our partners: we do not fight shy of this toil. On the contrary, we as on site specialists well know the problems of people and the places where they live, - the problems on the spot and the difficulties of attempts to find a short term solution. Perhaps that is why many countries want to the FIG to come to them. They naturally hope that in this way public and political attention will be drawn to the urgent problems in their countries and to the measures and their successful implementation which they already know from Good Practice examples within the FIG. Of even greater help in the future will be the “surveyors’ reference library” which has been established in the last four years, in other words a new information data base with a great number of relevant examples.

5. THE FIG – A FORWARD LOOKING MODEL FOR THE WORLD

Ladies and Gentlemen, in the address which follows by our principal speaker, Professor Töpfer, we will hear much more about the judgement that we all live on this one confined planet and would therefore be well advised to concern ourselves with its peaceful and sustainable development, whether in this part of the world with nations which have flourishing economies and/or growing populations or in those parts of the world with countries which have weak economies and/or aging or declining populations. The German Federal Centre for Political Education has recently published a focal point booklet on the subject “Security Policy in the 21st Century”. Surprisingly or – as an expert one has to say – with every justification, a contribution is to be found in it – “Poverty and Wealth in the World” – which makes one sit up. The author, Professor Dirk Messner from the German Development Institute in Bonn, concludes his contribution with the statement: “A new balance between the global market economy, international forms of social equalisation and national stability must be found.” According to Juan Somaria, Secretary General of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), 47% of all workers in the apparently booming region of East Asia live under the poverty level of two US\$ a day. “Globalisation is thus dependent on social innovation if it is not to fall into a crisis of legitimacy” (Messner).

This challenge is described by Dieter Härthe, Honorary Consul of the Republic of Senegal and a high ranking representative of the German Business Association as follows: **“The future of the north lies more and more in the development of the south and of the east. In an open world society the solution lies in an efficient development of the two thirds world. This for many reasons must also be a highly eco-efficient development, which consequently must be so constituted as to be compatible with sustainability.”**

We will all have to work on this – including and particularly the FIG. The FIG is in my view a forward looking model for global **communication, cooperation** and **coordination**, and is thus particularly qualified to work positively on the further change of our world. This is because:

1. FIG is open to all nations, cultures and religions and today already unites north, south, east and west
2. FIG is professionally broadly based and pre-eminently fitted for sustainable, i.e. social, ecological and economic solutions. The presence of so many senior representatives from partner organisations and from the United Nations shows me that the FIG is clearly recognised as possessing this competence.
3. The values underlying the commitment and dedication to global justness, equality and peace make the FIG a forward looking model for the peaceful meeting of our cultures and for an exchange of knowledge and experience as partners as the basis for a development which benefits all sides.

Who is still surprised when against this background I wish surveyors to be seen less as “homo technicus” and much more as “homo politicus”!

Ladies and Gentlemen, this ethically based self-perception and mission, translated into practice on a daily basis by many of our members in many places in the world, is in my view an inspiring challenge for our young surveyors, geomaticians and geodesists to follow our aspirations with all their hearts.

With all my heart I also as President of this world association of surveyors thank you the participants of this opening ceremony and of the congress for your interest and for coming in such large numbers. I thank above all the entire FIG community, particularly my council colleagues and here especially Dr. Andreas Drees, Prof. Ralf Schroth and Thomas Gollwitzer, the FIG Director and office members and all commissions, member associations and local organising committees (LOC) for their varied and committed voluntary work and for their commitment to a better world. And last but not least I extend my heartfelt thanks to all in the DVW and my university community. Finally, endless thanks go to my wonderful wife Ansi for strong support!

In view of this wonderful engagement I continue to count myself among the optimists. The FIG is for me living proof of the truth of the statement of Alois Glück which everywhere, as well as in Germany, Bavaria and Munich, is the subject of vigorous political discussion:

“A humane future can only be shaped by a living responsibility culture” (Alois Glück, 2006).

I thank you for your attention! The XXIII FIG Congress is herewith opened!

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