

Closing Panel: Jim Riddell, UNFAO

One of the difficulties of being the middle speaker on a panel of five is that the first speakers get to say all the good things, but you have not had enough time to think of the profound things left to the last speakers. However that may be, looking back on the intense days of work I cannot help but reflect on the interesting set of issues on which we found agreement and on the equally interesting cleavages in the approaches proposed for applying better land administration to ensure sustainability. Let us look at a couple of the agreements first.

We are here because of large processes that are recognised by each of us. These are that the dynamics of population have given new challenges to the land administration specialist. Nowhere is this more evident than in the rapid rise of cities. We are the first generation to have lived in a world that is majority urban. This brings us to the second agreement. The urbanised world is making new demands on an already finite natural resource base. We all agree that another of our great challenges in the land administration fields will be to manage in a democratic fashion the intensifying competition over water and other natural resources. The challenge to meet the demands of growing urban dwellers to adequate food and water come up against the fact that we have not yet been able to satisfy the needs of the world's rural populations. We agree then that the challenges ahead for the land administration experts will be great ones indeed.

The division in our concerns of how to proceed in the new millennium are just as interesting. Some papers have strongly argued that cadastres and land registries have as a fundamental aim the development and guarantee of land rights in natural resources. Other papers have taken the position that the functional specificity of a focus on individual rights distorts the possible benefits of a "socially available" LIS. The position of this group, if I understand them correctly, is that our emerging spatial data infrastructures allow a new participatory approach to the management of scarce resources and protection of general human rights that are lost in the traditional approach to cadastre and property registers. This is especially true, they seem to be arguing, because more and more of our resources like pure water, clean air, vigorous forests, thriving fishstocks and so forth, are becoming increasingly seen as containing common property interests. In this fashion, one might argue, we are coming to think a little more like some of those indigenous populations for whom we are trying to build private property systems.

One thing all participants agree upon is the need for continued development in spatial data infrastructure design and implementation. It provides much needed tools to support the growing number of government decentralisation programmes and democratisation taking place in all members of the United Nations. It is in short, a powerful tool for good governance, especially in the debate over the moving boundary between public interests in natural resources and private rights over those same resources.

The Conference has brought us together to identify ways for us to work together to address the relationship between good land tenure/land administration and sustainable development. The problem that faces us is that we do not have universally applicable models, hence the importance of the participation of UN agencies to keep a culturally

and socially relevant perspective. However, the Conference has been invaluable in giving us more tools for moving from noble intentions to practical solutions. Over the past days we have made significant progress on defining sustainability in its global complexity and where to divide it into its component (and solvable ) parts. We have a new agreement also to accept a division of labour that breaks with the past. This is important, because all of our fields were established and staked out their "territory" a century or more ago when nature was inexhaustible. But our new awareness of just how small and fragile is the planet on which we live has caused us to realise the need for new alliances within our specialities. This has set the ground rules for an emerging new co-operation between development agencies like mine, with the private sector and with a concerned and well informed civil society. Sustainability has taken on a new dimension that is compatible with good business practices on the one hand while establishing a *raison d'etre* for good governance and participatory democracy on the other. We are all on the same small planet. >