
FIG Christchurch Declaration:
Responding to Climate Change and Tenure Insecurity in Small Island Developing States: The Role of Land Professionals

We the participants of the FIG Small Island Developing States workshop held in Christchurch from April 30 to May 4, acknowledge the inherent diversity between SIDS countries in governance, rate of urbanisation, population density, geomorphology, exposure to natural hazards, and land tenure arrangements. We are also cognizant that SIDS share many common characteristics of small population, their dispersed nature and physical isolation from markets, high levels of exposure to the impacts of climate change and natural hazards, and severe limitations in capacity. We recall the SAMOA Pathway declared SIDS remains a special case for sustainable development in view of their unique and particular vulnerabilities.

We reaffirm the significance of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the associated goals, targets and indicators in efforts to reduce poverty, protect human rights, promote gender equality, and protect natural resources.

We recall the 2010 FIG Sydney Agenda for Action, the 2013 FIG Suva Statement on Spatially Responsible Governance that, together with the 2015 United Nations Resolution on Global Geodetic Reference Frame, established a clear framework for developing capacity in land governance within Small Island Developing States (SIDS), and the roles and responsibilities for land professionals and practitioners.

We acknowledge the unprecedented global momentum to improve security of land and natural resources tenure and reaffirm the importance of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests (VGGTs), the Continuum of Land Rights and the Global Land Tool Network's suite of pro-poor and gender-responsive land tools.

We, hereby issue this FIG Christchurch Declaration on Responding to Climate Change and Tenure Insecurity in Small Island Developing States: The Role of Land Professionals, and resolve to:

Address climate change, natural disaster and urbanisation challenges and vulnerabilities through:

- Advocating for the adoption in national policy and legal frameworks relevant international instruments, including the *Sendai Framework*, the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP), the *Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women* (CEDAW).
- Advocating for land policy and legal frameworks informed by the VGGTs that recognise, respect and safeguard all legal and legitimate tenure rights, provide access to justice to resolve land disputes, are pro-poor and gender-responsive, and provide for effective and full participation by all. This should assist land governance to address the key vulnerabilities of climate change, natural disasters and urbanisation.
- Emphasising the importance of robust and resilient geodetic networks, and the contribution to be made by spatial data, including earth observations and geospatial information.
- Mainstreaming disaster risk and vulnerability assessment into all aspects of land and marine administration.

Address the challenges in land governance and administration through:

- Promoting the adoption by land professionals of the fit-for-purpose approach to land administration in building spatial, legal, and institutional frameworks to reduce capacity demands on land agencies and other institutions, and allow for protecting of all legal and legitimate tenure rights at scale.
- Promoting the principles of participation and inclusiveness in land use planning and ensuring that all legal and legitimate tenure rights are respected in the land use planning process.
- Promoting the importance in legal and policy frameworks of the development of valuation systems that allow for fair and timely valuation of all types of tenure rights to support taxation, the operation of markets, transactions in tenure rights, and compensation for expropriation.

Build capacity in land governance and administration to address these challenges through:

- Encourage the establishment of a Regional Capacity Development Network (RCDN) of experts in each SIDS region to improve partnerships and provide technical, administrative, and professional support and advice to engage in related initiatives. This should also include formal partnerships between SIDS and nearby countries. Foremost to establish within FIG a RCDN of experts for the Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs) and to enable the Pacific Geospatial and Surveying Council (PGSC) and, as a first stage, to lead and engage with the PICTs geospatial and surveying community on related activities.
- Advocating for the international bilateral and multilateral organisations and professional bodies to provide a coordinated approach to supporting education and training in the areas of surveying, land administration, land management and land governance. Mechanisms should include funding for scholarships, providing flexibility in entry requirements for students from SIDS, training of staff, exchange opportunities, and the dissemination of international guidelines and conventions. Other support should include providing e-learning and training materials to relevant academic and training institutions. This includes the full suite of e-learning and thematic technical guides for VGGTs, and the extensive online material supporting the GLTN land tools.
- Emphasise the importance of capacity development to support improved geodetic and spatial data infrastructures, as well as current, complete and effective geospatial information to support land governance and land administration.

Enhance professional and organisational collaboration to address these challenges through:

- Encouraging strong, genuine and durable partnerships at the subnational, national, subregional, regional, and international levels to support transparent and participatory approaches, to revising legal and policy frameworks based on principles of responsible governance.
- Building on the opportunity afforded by the smaller population in SIDS, encourage the international land sector to consider coordination and harmonisation to provide multi-stakeholder, multi-actor and multi-sectorial solutions at regional or national level in SIDS.
- Encouraging and supporting the development of regional political, policy and technical coordination mechanisms in the land sector that provides a strong point of entry for engagement of multilateral and bilateral organisations and international professional bodies to facilitate and coordinate approaches to knowledge sharing and training between countries, collecting and sharing geospatial information, and in supporting capacity development at country level.