

**Report to the 25<sup>th</sup> General Assembly  
FIG Congress in Washington, 19-26 April 2002**

**PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

**General**

One of the most important steps in the FIG history was taken last year in Korea when the General Assembly ratified the new statutes and internal rules for the Federation. This allows FIG to fulfil its commitment to develop as a fully democratic international professional organisation. This development will continue at this General Assembly when the first elected Vice President in the history of FIG will be appointed. At the same time we will confirm the election model for the selection of Commission officers.

This will also be the last year for the Federation under the US Council. By the time the United States is privileged to have another representative on the FIG Council it will be a true international body. Even though the term of office of this Council will be shorter than normal, due to the transition period, the Council has managed to meet its goals to a great extent. The final evaluation of our work will be made next year when a follow-up report of the implementation of the work plan 1999-2002 will be made. I am happy to report that the main goals that we set for the Council have been completed. These include the democratization process of the Federation, expanding our activities to different continents including regional conferences, and membership expansion especially in Latin America and Africa.

From our days as a shadow bureau this Council has been determined to create a permanent reserve fund for the Federation. It has become an important line item in our budget, the General Assembly has supported the effort and today we can report a reserve fund, for the first time in the history of FIG, of Swiss francs almost 200,000 (US\$120,000). No longer must an in-coming Council begin its term without funds for operations. This development is consistent with our having established FIG as a permanent institution with a permanent office in Denmark.

The highlights of the past year have been the successful working week in Seoul, Korea including the largest ever technical program linked to a working week. A new activity in the FIG work program was the first regional conference organized by FIG together with UN-HABITAT and several other United Nations agencies, and the Institution of Surveyors of Kenya in Nairobi in October 2001. I would like to express my congratulations to Commission 3 which had the leading role in organizing this major event and to ISK and our other Commissions for their contributions to this event. I am happy to say that the Council is committed to continue the concept of a regional event every year in addition to the Annual Working Weeks. These events should rotate on a regional basis. Plans have already been made for meetings in Asia (the Mekong region), the Mediterranean Region, the Arab countries and in Latin America. In addition the commissions of FIG support seminars and activities in regions on invitation from member associations.

The Council met in Washington in the US in December, 2001, the only face-to-face meeting of the Council since the Seoul Working Week. Travel costs and conflicting schedules have made such meetings difficult and expensive considering the distance separating the members of this Council, a condition that will prevail into the future as the Council is composed of members from even greater geographic separation under the new governance system. However, communications technology has made distance meetings an effective and reliable means of conducting the affairs of the Federation. For instance, the December agenda was reviewed and finalized by teleconference between the President, two Vice Presidents and the Director of the FIG Office, Markku Villikka. A full Council meeting was held in February by email in which a formal agenda of 22 items of business were dealt with. Unlike the December meeting in which three Council members were unable to attend, all members were able to participate in the email meeting. In addition the President and Director Villikka normally conference by telephone monthly while all Council members are able to communicate daily, as needed. It is a method of administration communication that will become the normal mode of operations in the future.

### **United Nations relations**

Our relationship with the United Nations and its agencies have developed positively during the past year. Together with other partners of the Habitat Professionals Forum, FIG participated in a session of the UN General Assembly on the overall review of the Habitat Agenda, Istanbul + 5, in New York last summer. We also had productive meetings with the United Nations Human Settlements Programme UN-HABITAT in Nairobi in October with the result that Dr. Anna K. Tibaijuka, Executive Director of UN-HABITAT, will be the keynote speaker at the opening of this Congress. I can also report that we are prepared to sign a new memorandum of understanding with the Food and Agriculture Organization of United Nations (FAO) this year.

FIG has for several years had close co-operation with the United Nations and several of its agencies, especially UN-HABITAT, FAO and United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA). FIG has been invited to the Advisory Board of the first Urban Forum to take place in Nairobi immediately after this Congress. FIG will also have a major role at the Johannesburg Summit (The World Summit on Sustainable Development) in South Africa in August-September 2002. This important environmental congress will be the main UN event this year and our role in promoting sustainable development through land administration, security of tenure and spatial information will benefit the goals of this global summit. In addition FIG, with the World Bank and the UN, is organizing a special seminar on capacity-building toward the development of appropriate land administration systems and associated spatial data infrastructures, to be held in Aguascalientes, Mexico in October, 2002.

### **Sister organisations**

I am happy to report that a new Memorandum of Understanding has been agreed between FIG and the International Cartographic Association (ICA), signed in September last year; MOUs with both the International Federation of Housing and Planning (IFHP) and the International Society of Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing (ISPRS) will be signed during the Congress in Washington. Furthermore negotiations with the International Valuation Standards Committee (IVSC) will begin during the Congress. It is gratifying to see that so many sister

organisations will attend this Congress and participate on the different roundtable discussions, especially those on standards.

### **Commissions and task forces**

The work of the Federation is dependant upon the ten technical commissions and their activities. Most of the Commissions are active not only by organising meetings but also by providing reports and collecting information on good and best practices. I would once again like to encourage member associations to nominate delegates to all commissions and to actively support their participation in that work. Delegates should be supported in attending seminars and meetings; if unable to attend, delegates should be encouraged to participate by correspondence, taking advantage of the many possibilities of modern communications technology.

A Congress is the main event for commission work because delegates that are not able to attend all annual meetings will normally gather at these quadrennial Congresses. This is also the time to agree on the work plans for the following four years. The draft commission work plans have been prepared in advance and coordinated with the incoming Council work plan. After this week we will have an FIG work plan for the next four years. There is still much that delegates can contribute and I invite all to participate actively in the Commission meetings during the next few days.

Each Commission performs its own work according to its Plan of Work but the commissions have been involved in an increasing number of joint events. The best example of the joint events last year was the Commission 3-lead conference and annual meeting in which Commissions 1, 2, 5, 7, 8 and 10 participated. I would like to congratulate all the commissions for their good work during this past year. I make special recognition here of the Commission chairs who will conclude their four-year term of office at the end of this Congress.

I will also recognize the good work of the task forces. The Council will close all current task forces at this Congress leaving the new Council an opportunity to establish task forces as needed. However, we realize that permanent tasks like mutual recognition and under-represented groups in surveying need permanent attention. Therefore these will be proposed to continue as working groups in Commissions 1 and 2. Further, the importance of standards has been recognised and this work will be continued by a network and as a working group under the lead of Commission 1.

I am happy to say that FIG has launched four new reports that will be endorsed by this General Assembly: Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications, FIG Guide on Standardisation, Business Matters for Professionals and, jointly with the UN, The Nairobi Statement on Spatial Information for Sustainable Development. In addition two additional reports are under review and will be published within some weeks.

### **Membership**

The membership of FIG continues to grow. After accepting six new member associations last year we have this year an additional four new member applications: from Uruguay, Burkina Faso, Cameroon (returns to membership) and Hong Kong, China.

I am also happy to report that the number of academic members has increased to almost 50 from 29 nations. We have also welcomed new affiliate members from Brunei Darussalam, Namibia and Rwanda and a new correspondent from Tunisia.

Our corporate membership continues to grow as well. During the past year SECO Manufacturing Co. Inc., Cameroon Engineering, MENSI S.A. and IGN France International have joined FIG as corporate members for a total number of 20 Corporate members. The support of the corporate members is important to FIG, and in return we offer certain advantages to corporate members.

### **Information delivery**

The FIG information delivery system is now available to more people than ever. I often hear positive comments on the FIG web site that we attempt to keep up to date and that includes relevant information for surveyors. I encourage everyone to use it more actively and promote it to members of the member associations. Through the web site we can reach people that we may never otherwise contact through traditional communication methods. For example, the proceedings of this congress were published on our web site when the Congress was opened. Our publications are also available in electronic format on the web site.

### **Visits**

The Council intended to visit as many member associations as possible during its term of office. I regret we will be unable to visit all countries due to a shortened term of office while we convert to the new governance structure. Following the Seoul Working Week and prior to the Washington Congress the Council members or FIG representatives will have visited members and potential members in Austria, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Denmark, Ethiopia, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Kenya, Japan, Lebanon, Mexico, Papua New Guinea, Sweden, Thailand, Turkey and USA.

### **Permanent office**

The FIG office will continue at its Copenhagen address into the foreseeable future. A new contract signed last year will assure the continuation of the excellent service provided out of the DdL offices on the best of terms between FIG and DdL. I extend my warm thanks here to DdL and the Danish surveyors for their superb support of FIG.

### **The Foundation**

The FIG Foundation has moved to a new level of vigorous planning and fund raising following its initial years of formation, as you will learn from the report of the Foundation President. I also encourage you to attend the first fundraising dinner of the Foundation on Monday evening.

### **FIG Congress 2002**

I look forward to a highly successful Congress in Washington. I take great pride in the stature and accomplishments of the Federation and am proud to bring FIG to America; I am also

proud, as an American surveying professional, to welcome the international surveying community to the US. The professional program will be larger than ever for an FIG Congress and the organizers have prepared an event that will be remembered for many years. The city itself has innumerable attractions including, if we are so blessed, cherry blossoms in full bloom.

Robert W. Foster  
President