

Dr. Chryssy A. Potsiou

Chair of WG 3.1

Distinguished Delegates, Professors, Sponsors, Colleagues from private and public sector, exhibitors and students,

Welcome to the FIG Com3 Workshop and Annual Meeting in Athens, Greece.

Two years went so quickly since our meeting in Brighton, where W.G. 3.1. was given the privilege to organize the Workshop and the Annual Meeting of Com 3 for the year 2000, in Athens.

At that time, we immediately realized, that this meant a lot of work and discipline. Little did we realize how much satisfaction we would derive out of that, during these two years, from being in contact with so many colleagues and friends, not only within Greece, but world-wide! We can assure you, that we have enjoyed every single minute of that.

During that time, we met each other in many different places during seminars and workshops. And we have been in contact, all the time getting closer, both personally and professionally, thanks to the rapid development of information and communication technologies.

During the last two decades, we have all experienced at first hand, both in our profession but also in our everyday life, the benefits of the new information age and the technological achievements in that field. Spatial Information Management has indeed a crucial role to play in all kinds of development processes.

Through this period, Greece is making a big progress in applying recent developments in SIM, on various fields, like Education, Land Management, Urban and Rural Planning, Communication and Transportation, Utility Networks, Archeological Documentation, Natural Resources and Environmental Monitoring, etc.

As it is broadly known, recently, Greece is also making a big effort to establish of the Hellenic Cadastre, one of the most significant Spatial Data Infrastructure Projects under development worldwide. This attracts the national and international interest on the collection and management of SI and assures the right selection of the timing and the venue for this workshop.

The main purpose of our workshop was to enable all distinguished experts from Greece and abroad to exchange their experiences and ideas and to promote developments in the scientific-profession and applications of the field of SIM.

Partly due to the beginning of the new millennium, which obviously brings with it emotional feelings, great expectations and renewed ideas, partly because the workshop is held in Athens, the city well known for its ancient history - democracy was actually born here - we felt that this workshop could also have strong social purpose.

From that point of view, our efforts were also focused on attracting delegates from as many countries as possible by keeping the registration fee at a reasonable low level for all, in general.

In addition to that, we supported the accommodation of two distinguished African delegates: Mr. Alain Bagre from Burkina Faso and Mr. Humfrey Njuguna from Kenya and we wish them their presence here to promote their future activities within FIG Com 3. And, for the first time in history of FIG, as far as I can remember from my own experience, we managed to have free registration for our promising students from Greece and abroad.

This is really the time to express our gratitude to our sponsors, for their generous support; mainly to the Board of Directors of the Technical Chamber of Greece and its President, Mr. Liaskas, and to KTIMATOLOGIO SA (Hellenic Cadastre) and its Managing Director, Mr. Galidakis, who have enabled us to achieve these results.

Seventeen countries are represented in our workshop, with about 40 presentations on NSDI activities, technical aspects of SIM, research, SIM applications, LIS and Land Administration issues. Unfortunately, some more of our colleagues, despite their originally expressed will, finally were not able to participate due to personal and professional reasons. Among them

are some colleagues from Turkey, Belarus, some delegates from Armenia, Bulgaria, Hungary, Syria, Sweden, Czech Republic, Ghana ... They all wish us a fruitful and successful meeting.

Despite the fact that you will be very busy due to the tight program, we have tried to offer you the best among the beautiful riches that are in Athens. We hope that you will have some time to enjoy our sightseeing tours and social events, especially those of you who come to Greece for the first time.

If, after all, these four days here prove to be too short, just have in your mind our next forthcoming event: the FIG WW of the year 2004, we have all started working closely for that, and as Gerhard said you can, even by now, link virtually to that event!

During this opening session, we have the pleasure and the honor of the presence of very important speakers, among them:

- Mr. Markku Villikka, from Denmark, representative of the FIG Bureau, who is always there, day and night, seven days a week, willing to help all colleagues,
- Our very active Chair of the FIG Com 3, Mr. Jes Ryttersgaard, also from Denmark! - Denmark has a very strong delegation here,
- Mr. Gerasimos Apostolatos, member of our coordinating committee, representative of the Technical Chamber of Greece,
- Mr. Nikos Ionas, President of the Hellenic Association of Rural and Surveying Engineers,
- Unfortunately, our sponsor Mr. Nikos Galidakis, Managing Director of KTIMATOLOGIO SA (Hellenic Cadastre) has an unexpected appointment, so he will be represented by the General Manager of KTIMATOLOGIO SA, Mr. Xenofon Lourandos.
 - Professor Ms. E. Balodimou, President of the Department of Rural and Surveying Engineering of the NTUA, who is actually the first female President in the history of the National Technical University of Athens,
- Prof. John Badekas, well-known both from his activity in ISPRS and FIG, President of the Hellenic Mapping and Cadastre Organization and KTIMATOLOGIO SA, and
- The Commander of the Hellenic Army Geographic Service, Mr. Gramenos Costakis, also Rural and Surveying Engineer graduated from NTUA.

Before giving the floor to our very distinguished speakers, we would like to wish you to:

- Enjoy our meeting here, and
- Work efficiently to promote the developments in our profession, especially issues like "availability", "accessibility", "usefulness" and "affordability" of SI for the benefit of the society, always with respect to the human rights and to the human demands, as well.

You're welcome!

Would you please, Mr. Markku Villikka, take the floor, now?