

The 2nd FIG Regional Conference in Marrakech, Morocco December 2-5, 2003

First FIG Regional Conference in the Arabic countries puts high standards for the future conferences

The 2nd FIG Regional Conference was arranged in Marrakech, Morocco December 2-5, 2003 under the high patronage of His Majesty the King **Mohammed VI**. It was organised by the International Federation of Surveyors, FIG and the Ordre National des Ingénieurs Géomètres-Topographes ONIGT, which is the FIG member association of Morocco. Like the 1st FIG Regional Conference, which was held in Nairobi, Kenya in 2001 this 2nd conference was co-sponsored by several United Nations' agencies including FAO, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UN ECA). Further co-sponsors included the Arab Union of Surveyors (AUS), which also had its Executive Committee meeting during the conference, as well as the Arab Urban Development Institute.

The total number of participants exceeded 420 representing more than 40 countries. Even though the focus of the conference was in the Arabic countries and Francophone Africa the participation covered the whole world. Totally 14 countries from the region were present at the conference even though sometimes it is easier to travel via Europe. FIG Council and Commission officers meetings and annual meeting of Commission 3 (Spatial Information Management) and open meetings of Commission 5 (Measurement and Positioning) attracted national delegates from Europe, Asia, America and Australia.

The conference was organised under the theme of "Urban-rural interrelationship for sustainable environment", which is one of the hot topics in the international discussion at the moment. Therefore it was encouraging that the UN agencies that are mostly involved in this topic participated. The contributions at the plenary sessions were given by **Don Okpala** from UN-Habitat, **David Palmer** from FAO and **Svein Tveitdal** from UNEP, who is also the new UNEP focal point for FIG. During the conference future co-operation between UNEP and FIG was discussed. It was agreed that the joint activities will include projects on environmental risk and disaster management and capacity building on environmental issues. FIG has further established a new joint commission working group on "risk management – preventing environmental catastrophes by spatial planning and land management. It can be mentioned that UNEP also supported attendance of some African delegates.

As a result from the conference the Marrakech Declaration on the Urban-Rural Interrelationship for Sustainable Environment will be prepared. The Declaration is prepared

- to enhance awareness within the professions and decision makers about the growing urban - rural divide
- to provide adequate tools to improve urban – rural linkages
- to develop pragmatic solutions for today's complex problems
- to promote the role of surveyors in these fields as enablers, mediators and advisors
- to focus on better education conditions especially in sub-Saharan Africa

The drafting group includes representatives from all main partners. The aim is to get the declaration published before the 2nd World Urban Forum to be held in Barcelona in September 2003.

Three ministers from the Government of Morocco attended the opening ceremony, which indicates the importance of land management, surveying and geoinformation in Morocco and further the respect that ONIGT enjoys from the national government. The conference also got broad coverage in the media, more than 30 journalists attended the conference and it was reviewed also on the national television. It was further selected to the event of the week in Morocco.

The sub-themes of the conference included: urban-rural relationship in land management; spatial planning in promoting good urban and rural environment; cadastre and land management in Arab countries and in Western Africa; security of tenure and access to land; geographic information for environment; geographic information – organisations challenges; risk management; coastal management; e-governance in surveying services; professional organizations and capacity building; education and curricula for surveyors; regional horizontal and vertical reference frame; positioning and measurement technologies and practices; engineering surveys for construction works and industry; and housing financing.

During the conference a special round table was organized on the surveying and geomatics education in Africa. Chaired by Prof. **Holger Magel**, President of FIG and with introduction and background paper from Prof. **Heinz Rütger** from South Africa this round table attracted almost 40 participants from Africa, Arab states and overseas. Contributions to the discussion included remarks from Prof. **Charles Merry**, representative of the International Association of Geodesy and Mr. **Robert Wayumba**, a student from University of Nairobi, in addition to national reports and comments. It was agreed to prepare a specific declaration on the education issues to international organizations and national governments in Africa.

In addition to the opening ceremony and three plenary sessions the technical programme included 24 technical sessions in which almost 90 papers were presented. The conference proceedings are available at www.fig.net/figtree/pub/morocco. They include totally almost 130 papers from 37 countries and the representatives of the United Nations. All technical sessions were very well attended maximum attendance to parallel sessions exceeded 120. Each day was concluded with a round table discussion on the topics of the day.

At the closing ceremony President Magel summarised the results of the conference to more than 300 participants as follows: *“The political challenge for the policymakers and professionals is to move from pro- or contra-urban view to well balanced politics for both urban and rural development and urban-rural cooperation. We have to cope with political challenges as they are formulated in the UN Millennium Declaration and global campaigns encouraged actions on crucial challenges of mankind: good governance; poverty alleviation in urban **and** rural areas, access to land, secure tenure in urban **and** rural areas; and sustainable development in urban **and** rural areas. The social and technical responsibility of professionals including FIG as a global NGO is to address and contribute to these challenges. FIG is ready to respond in an excellent way with a broad range of competences and contributions.”* He further continued that *“we can not talk only about data, procedures and technical issues like many surveyors do prefer, but it is **about making good policies and decisions**. It is our duty to inform, motivate and influence (policy) decision makers and the public. It is more about interdisciplinary and cross-sector cooperation which demands knowledge sharing between professional disciplines and about awareness and building capacity in the professions, government agencies and educational institutions.”* As a conclusion President Magel pointed out that *“the challenges of a changing world call for increased international cooperation. FIG – but not only FIG, but also our Moroccan host association ONIGT – is prepared for it.”*

During the conference the FIG Council and the Commission officers (ACCO) had their official meetings. In the Council meeting the long list of topics was discussed including the preparations for the next Working Week and General Assembly in Athens, May 22-27, 2004. The issues to be presented to the General Assembly include the revised definition of surveyors and the FIG information policy document. The General Assembly will also decide on two new Vice Presidents for years 2005-2008 and elect Commission chairs for 2006-2010. Time for nomination of the Commission chairs was extended to 20 January 2004. To increase discussion during the General Assembly a new concept to introduce the Commission reports will be introduced. Other issues included continuous co-operation with

the United Nations and sister organizations and preparations for next FIG events. An agreement on the 3rd FIG Regional Conference to be organized in Jakarta, Indonesia, October 3-7, 2004 was signed between FIG, Ikatan Surveyor Indonesia and BAKOSURTANAL.

The Council approved Saudi Arabia (Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs) as an affiliate member of FIG and also adopted membership applications from Algeria (Ordre des Géomètres-Experts Fonciers) and Tunisia (Association Nationale des Ingenieurs Géomètres-Experts Tunisiens ANIGET) to become member associations. These decisions will be confirmed by the General Assembly in Athens. Further the Council has approved two new corporate members to the Federation, these are Geo:connexion from UK and Dimen Associates (Pvt.) Ltd, Pakistan. The Council had also discussion about membership in the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Oman and Libya.

In the ACCO meeting most of the time was used for discussing the concept of the FIG Surveying Reference Database. This database or good practice report as it has also been called will be a database including qualified papers from FIG conferences (first entries to be picked up from Marrakech and SEASC conference that was held in Hong Kong, China in November 2003). In addition papers can be offered directly to be included in this database. First version of the database will be launched in Athens in May 2004.

The success of the conference was relying on substantial support from the local surveyors and companies. This included the enthusiastic work of President **Aziz Hilali** and his colleagues in the ONIGT and especially the contributions of the local organizing committee chaired by Mr. **Ahmed Boukri**, Congress Director and assisted by five sub-committees (Scientific Committee chaired by **Mohammed Hmam**, Hospitality Committee chaired by **El-Mekki Abouelala**, Communication Committee chaired by **Khalid Yousfi**, Registration Committee chaired by **El Mostafa El Battane** and Finance Committee chaired by **Said Sif**) and their members. Without the local sponsors to the conference and exhibition this event could never had taken place. The professional exhibition was not as large as one could expect but gave a good overview about the professional activities in Morocco. International sponsors included Hansa Luftbild, Intergraph and BlomInfo.

The Moroccan hospitality was best shown during the social events which included the welcome reception at the Sheraton Marrakech, the conference venue introducing Arabic and African music. For international visitors the highlight of the conference was the Moroccan evening in a local restaurant, Palais Gharnata, in the medina of Marrakech. Moroccan food together with traditional music and dance that welcomed the participants already on the streets outside the restaurant introduced the audience to the wonders of thousand and one nights. More than 160 guests were taken to the gala dinner by horse carriages followed with a show out side the L'Anbar Restaurant. Entertainment during the dinner included both Moroccan and international music.

The last day of the conference was reserved for a joint technical tour during which the participants visited Guemmassa Mining Centre and the beautiful Ourika Valley with wonderful view to the Atlas mountains.

The 3rd FIG Regional Conference, once again sponsored by the United Nations and its agencies and FIG sister organizations, will be this time organized for the Asia and the Pacific in Jakarta, Indonesia October 3-7, 2004. All FIG members will be invited especially when several commissions will have their annual or public meetings during the conference. But already in May 2004 all FIG members will gather to Athens for the Working Week under the Olympic spirit.

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