

# FIG MEETS THE ARAB WORLD OF SURVEYORS

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Your excellencies Ministers of the Republic of Lebanon and members of Parliament, honourable President Dr. Fadous, distinguished delegates of the Arab and Union of Surveyors and the Order of Lebanese Surveyors, ladies and gentleman,

I am very happy to be here with you and to extend to all of you my warmest greetings and compliments on behalf of FIG both of me personally, the FIG Council and FIG office and of the whole community. FIG as global mother of all surveying and all surveyors is very proud being co-sponsor again of this important 2<sup>nd</sup> International Scientific Conference thus demonstrating its vital interest to show its flag and high commitment to a region with extremely high political, social and economic challenges but also with unique wonderful countries and people.

FIG is no political body, it is an NGO, but FIG consists of politically thinking members and it is representing a profession with strong links to politics and society.

## I.

FIG therefore has to play its social-political role in a three fold manner as I have described it in my opening speech in Marrakech last December. I am very satisfied that the member associations of FIG have confirmed these three fold roles which I would like to point out again in the presence of the political class of Lebanon. With great respect to the long lasting democratic history and the enormous cultural diversities of Lebanon, I am quite sure that FIG's self understanding will meet open doors and open hearts:

1. FIG and its member associations like our host organisation can be enablers, that is they can act as community developers, organisers or consultants alongside Community Based Organisations
2. they can be mediators between people and the authorities that control access to resources, goods and services
3. they can or – better – they must be **critical** advisers to state institutions on policy changes to increase local access to resources (like land, water, etc.) and to greater freedom to use them in locally- determined, and – hopefully – sustainable ways! And because I am the President of the Bavarian Academy for Rural Areas, too I would like to point out very clearly: This three fold role should be extended to both urban and rural areas, should be focussed on the hot issue and headline topic of UN Habitat Day in October 2004: on urban-rural linkages! I think that it is a very actual topic in Lebanon – as I could experience it in the last days – and in a lot of Arab countries too! Therefore we have just published the Marrakech Declaration as an important outcome of our common efforts in cooperation with UN! Equilibrium of town and country is an essence of Good Governance!

## II.

As a scientific-technical federation FIG stands also for its role as an indispensable engine of incentives and innovations:

- innovations in technological, legal, educational and methodical procedures in the fields of SDI, GIS, cadastral standards and frameworks, survey engineering, laws and land administration, disaster prevention and risk management, e-government, education data base, location based services etc. We want to support our members in achieving the best appropriate results and approaches.
- innovations also in providing appropriate “institutional landscapes”, i.e. in establishing for example balanced relationships between private and state sectors against an emerging world of civil society with a more and more merely activating and facilitating but no more fully providing state (see the Daily Star Beirut of September 20th: The Lebanese Makhzoumi Foundation helps evolve civil society !).
- Innovations finally in establishing professional standards and qualifications and mutual recognition frameworks in a globalizing world.

## III.

A lot of Arab countries have recently or within the last couple of years joined FIG. We are very happy about this. The Arab members share from our common main ideas and principles as they are:

1. We do not interfere in internal affairs, but we feel an obligation to say what we think to the best of our knowledge and belief.
2. Although we are a community with a rich and inspiring variety of different cultures, histories, skills and other sociopolitical contexts we do believe in the same principle professional ethics and values and especially we feel committed to "building a better world". Against this background we, as the global leader in the world of surveying, mapping and land management, have become a strong and very reliable partner of UN authorities like UN Habitat, UN FAO, UNEP, UNECE etc.
3. A new highlight in the success story of FIG is that last week I took over the Chair of the UN Habitat Professionals Forums Steering Committee and FIG office took over the management of this Forum, which consists of the international and Arab federations/unions of the surveyors, architects, landscape architects, urban planners etc. Why do I mention this? Because this Forum can better help not only to support UN but also can help FIG to strengthen its international influence in its role as a globally acting NGO and as part and partner of civil society, its interdisciplinary approach to work together with the disciplines and the professions, can strengthen finally, what is an additional goal of my presidency.
4. The broadening of surveyors range of activities towards the "trias of property, land and construction management". We are not only surveying and mapping people any more, not only "notaries public of the earth", but we are experts in the whole field of the management of land and land rights, of related planning and property like buildings, infrastructures, real estates and a lot of other resources.
5. By this we can deliver a lot of contributions to a more sustainable development either in the social, economic or ecological dimensions of Agenda 21 and the UN Millennium Declaration or in urban and rural areas (see Marrakech declaration). Congratulations to the award of UN Habitat about the reconstruction and renovation of Beirut!! I'm deeply

impressed by the fabulous results of the rebuilding of the "pearl of Middle East"!! It's like a dream of 1001 night.

6. To reach these ambitious targets we must improve our "public- (especially in media) and political standing" and influence – like it is obviously the best here in Lebanon. And we must steadily improve and – according to the changing demands of global and local society and the challenges of new technologies – adapt perpetually our education and CPD. But we must take care not to become only pure technicians, my and our aim is to educate in the sense of getting 'well grounded specialized generalists'!! Only then we are able to follow our slogan "from survey to serve the society". We must not lose our key surveyors profile, we must furthermore face the technological challenges and must solve the problems, but we must improve and broaden our profile.
7. Let me come to the end with another specific goal of FIG: In my inaugural speech in Paris as the new president I have pointed it out very clearly and let me quote it word for word: "It is a matter of gratification that our FIG, as a non-governmental organisation active on a world wide basis, is a notable model for the emerging civil society. We want to play our part in ensuring that its presence will be felt to the greatest possible extent in all regions of the world. In it a small member association has the same choice and the same voice as a big association; the principle of subsidiarity, cultural diversity, free discussion and the idea of a high public spirited dedication belong in the association just as much as it demand and encourages the acceptance of responsibility for more justice, sustainability and professionalism".

I have just said: "... in all regions of the world! I'm very happy that FIG has now got very active and not only passive member especially in the Arab region. After a remarkable Regional Conference 2003 in Marrakech I am attending this 2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference in Beirut due to the very active Lebanese FIG member association, the Ordre des Géomètres-Topographes du Liban, due to a very strong and influential President Dr. Sarkis Fadous, who is also President of the well respected Arab Union of Surveyors. We in FIG have welcomed the foundation of the Arab Union of Surveyors as a strong voice of the Arab world under the umbrella of FIG. This Conference was also possible due to a lot of very engaged colleagues! One of them is Yaacoub Saade. He is going in the future to play a very important role within and on behalf of FIG as the incoming chair of commission 1. He will be the first Arab surveyor in such a high position. He is a pioneer. This shows very clearly – besides of the skills and knowledge of our friend Jack – that the FIG community respects on the one hand the high reputation of Arab experts but expects also on the other hand a high commitment of the Arab region to the common goals of our federation.

Against this background we are very happy to invite more Arab countries and colleagues of the academic and technical fields to join FIG. In general: Beirut 2004 could be and will be a very ideal starting place for a deepened dialogue and hopefully integration of this wonderful Arab region from Beirut to Marrakech into our FIG. We, the President, FIG Director Markku Villikka and the whole FIG community, welcome you with wide opened hearts!

We are looking forward to experiencing unforgettable and very successful days in Beirut! Thanks again for your kind invitation!