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Committed to Africa?

What must happen to make the world recognize that the destiny of Africa is also the future of the whole world? "Our humanity will be decided by the fate of Africa" the German President Horst Köhler said when launching his "Initiative for Africa" in November 2005.

We have seen shocking TV reports about Africans climbing up the fences of the Spanish enclave in Morocco and pictures of stranded boats of African refugees. But what is happening besides nice and symbolic words and meetings?

It is said that since September 11, 2001 the world has finally given up looking at Africa. Additionally a lot of African rulers rectify this attitude of developed countries arguing that it is nearly hopeless to spend millions of dollars on Africa because the money does not reach the poor. Insiders from Africa and international development agencies argue that endogenous development is needed urgently, i.e. for empowering the Africans by sound education and capacity building thus finding their own "African way" for better living conditions.

Secure tenure and land administration based on modern GIS are major challenges in Africa. This is the challenge for professionals too.

It is acknowledged both by the international donators and African partners that the land issue is the major key point for prosperous development. As President Köhler says: "If we would have in Africa secured land and property rights, property assets and granted loans could arise. But before this Africa must find its own way to define property rights compatible to its own culture." Secure tenure and land administration based on modern GIS are major challenges in Africa. This is the challenge for professionals too.

Africa is still dependent on foreign help and consultancy. One way to help is to teach excellent young Africans on university

courses in developed countries. The best way for self-aid would be that the Sub-Saharan countries should strongly be encouraged to offer academic surveying education supported financially and technically by the international community.

FIG together with the United Nations and partners like the Joint Board of Geospatial Information Societies have started their own African initiative. On the occasion of the FIG 5th Regional Conference in Accra, Ghana in March 2006 a full-day seminar on "Surveyor Education in Africa" will be held. The goal is to present new initiatives for central and southern African countries on profession, professionals and education. FIG will be pleased if a large part of the international community in state, private and academic sectors could join this seminar. Everyone is encouraged to clearly demonstrate his/her commitment to Africa.