

The Mega City Challenge – Building the Capacity

Opening Speech

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1. WELCOME

Honourable Donald Tsang, Chief Executive of Hong Kong SAR, Vice-Minister Lu Xin She, President Raymond Chan, Honourable FIG Presidents, Colleagues and Friends, Ladies and Gentlemen.

On behalf of FIG, I am happy to welcome you all to our annual Working Week here in the fascinating and spectacular Mega City of Hong Kong, China. A special thanks to our host – the Hong Kong Institute of Surveyors – for all their efforts of organising this event. I am convinced that we will have an excellent conference and also be able to enjoy the famous Asian hospitality.

Hong Kong has a long history of colonialism under the British Empire and is now – since 1997 – enjoying their status as an independent part of the People’s Republic of China under the policy of “one country – two systems”. In this capacity Hong Kong will celebrate its 10th anniversary by 1 July this year. On behalf of FIG I congratulate Hong Kong on this event and wish you all the best for future.

With its unique geographical position Hong Kong is continuing to develop as a mega city and as a gateway to Mainland China and the whole of South-East Asia. Hong Kong is a bridging city, that integrates both cultures, trade, and services. And the surveying profession – with its very broad profile – has contributed significantly to the development of the city into this new era.

2. THE FIRST WORKING WEEK OF THE NEW COUNCIL

This is the first working week for the new FIG so called “global” council that came into office by 1 January this year. It has been busy times to get everything in place for this conference and we have been determined to make it a big success in close cooperation with our Hong Kong hosts. Preparations were of course started under the previous council and continuity has been provided very smoothly by the FIG Director and the FIG Office.

This FIG Working Week is essential for the development of the Federation. At the General Assembly yesterday we decided on the FIG policies for the next four years that included the Council work plan and also work plans for each of the ten Commissions. I am happy to say that these plans will further strengthen FIG’s role as a key global player on issues related to

modern technologies, land administration and environmental issues. FIG will become a major partner in promoting sustainable development and achieving Millennium Development Goals as adopted by the UN and agreed by all the world leaders. FIG and the global surveying community have already made significant contributions in this regard, but we still have a lot to offer. We should be really proud of our profession.

Ladies and gentlemen, some of you will recall that during the election at the FIG Congress in Munich I used the phrase that we should “*fly high but also keep our feet on ground*”. I am convinced that FIG must continue and strengthen the interaction with the key global players such as the UN Agencies and the World Bank, and with our sister organisations. FIG should be able to interact with politicians at national level to improve and promote the basic conditions for our services and our role in society. We should of course interact in a dialogue with the more than 100 individual member associations and also the individual surveyors to make FIG even a more relevant and a proud icon for our profession. Indeed, we can fly high and still keep our feet to ground. In fact, many surveyors could fly a little higher in my opinion. Therefore, FIG should strengthen the links between the global agenda and the individual surveyors as a driver for developing the organisation.

3. PROFILE OF THE CONFERENCE

The theme of the working week “*Strategic Integration of Surveying Services*” is linked to the role of FIG in building bridges between surveyors from different cultures and between different surveying disciplines. This theme integrates also the top issue of the new Council: Building capacity and enhancing institutional development. Other issues to be highlighted at the conference are disaster risk management and management of metropolitan areas also in relation to real estate management and valuation. These are issues of particular relevance to many parts of Asia. The immense change in the economy and construction in China and Hong Kong will offer an additional flavour to the conference.

The concept of mega cities has to some extent overtaken the concept of the national states. Especially in the Asian region such mega cities seem to set the agenda of development. This includes all kind of challenges in terms of managing the potential chaos that may result from accommodating so many people, businesses and interests within just one urban structure.

To deal with these challenges the surveying profession offers a variety of competences ranging from the technical surveying and mapping area, the management of geospatial information, cadastral management and land administration functions, land-use management and spatial planning, property economics and real estate management, and project management in its broadest sense. FIG is truly the home for all branches of surveying. And the surveying profession is truly a key player in dealing with complex issues relation to management of mega cities.

This has, however, not always been recognised especially in South East Asia, where FIG is often seen as the home for only land surveyors. This conference will hopefully prove that FIG has a much broader scope of a multidisciplinary organisation for the **Land Professionals**.

4. “BUILDING THE CAPACITY”

The new council has chosen “*Building the Capacity*” as the overall theme. It should be noticed Capacity Building is a concept with many dimensions. It relates to individuals, institutions, and to the society as a whole. In many countries, and especially developing countries and countries in transition, the national capacity to manage land rights, restrictions and responsibilities is not well developed in terms of mature institutions and the necessary human resources and skills, including managerial and technical skills. In this regard, the capacity building concept offers guidance for analysing and assessing the capacity needs and for identifying an adequate response to these needs at societal, organisational and individual levels. Measures such as education and training become a means to an end while the end itself is the capacity to achieve the identified development objectives over time – such as to establish and maintain national land administration infrastructures for sustainable development.

5. MDGs

The eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) form a blueprint agreed to by all the world’s countries and the entire world’s leading development institutions. The United Nations Millennium Summit, September 2000, established a time bound (2015) and measurable goals and targets for combating poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, environmental degradation and discrimination of women. These goals are now placed at the heart of the global agenda. The Summit’s Millennium Declaration also outlined a wide range of commitments in human rights, good governance, and democracy.

It is obvious that the MDGs address some of the most fundamental issues of our times. It is also obvious that only a few of these issues relate directly to the work and the world of the surveying community. But in any case, as stated by Kofi Annan (UN, 2005) “*We will not enjoy development without security, we will not enjoy security without development, and we will not enjoy either without respect for human rights. Unless all these causes are advanced, none will succeed.*” And the surveyors are very much into the area of development.

6. Final Remarks

Ladies and gentlemen, let me conclude by saying that FIG has a long history. FIG is – maybe because of that – a very vital, mature, and dynamic organisation which is recognised world wide. We as surveyors are needed to respond to many of the future challenges. Many of those challenges are land related. As I already stated, we are the world wide organisation of Land Professionals. In relation to the theme of this conference our task is to build the capacity to deal with the mega challenges of the mega cities – and, at the same time understand and promote the urban-rural interrelations.

Dear colleagues and friends, together - as a profession - we can achieve a lot in this world
Let’s go for it.

Thank you very much.