

Keynote Address to the XXII Congress of the International Federation of Surveyors (FIG), Washington, D.C., U.S.A., 22nd April 2002

Dr. Anna Kajumulo TIBAIJUKA, Executive Director, United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT)

Mr. Robert Foster, President of F.I.G.
Prof. Holger Magel, President Elect of F.I.G.
Mr. Mel Martinez, U.S. Secretary for Housing and Urban Development
Ms. Mary Clawson, Congress Director
Members of Congress of the United States of America
Excellencies, Ambassadors and Members of the Diplomatic Corps.
Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is indeed with immense pleasure and great sense of responsibility that I accept this opportunity of addressing this XXII Annual Congress of the International Federation of Surveyors. I recall that barely six months ago, I addressed FIG (albeit by proxy) on the occasion of our joint (FIG-ISK-UN-HABITAT sponsored) “International Conference on Spatial Information for Sustainable Development,” held in Nairobi, Kenya from 2-5 October 2001, a Conference that was graciously opened by H.E., President Daniel arap Moi of Kenya.

In that address, I briefly recalled the longstanding professional and programmatic cooperation and collaboration between FIG and UN-HABITAT over the years. The relationship between FIG and UN-HABITAT is by no means an accident but rather a long-standing and enduring one, that is based on mutual interest on sustainable development – particularly sustainable management of urban human settlements.

In this context, I wish to recall that my predecessor in office, Dr. Arcot Ramachandran, did what I am doing today, that is, giving a keynote address to your XIXth Annual International Congress in Helsinki, Finland on 13 June 1990 on the theme: The Urban Challenge: Human Settlements and Sustainable Development.

In ending that address to the XIXth International FIG Congress, Dr. Ramachandran noted that among other things, “the benefits of urbanization are overwhelming and nobody will do without them, but we must manage our resources so that *everybody* benefits. *This* is the urban challenge we should take up.”

Looking back over the past decade, I think I can safely say today that both FIG and UN-HABITAT, and indeed the entire international community have successfully taken this challenge and acquitted ourselves quite creditably, considering the length our two organizations and the

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International Community have traveled together in promoting and advocating the more productive and sustainable development and management of urbanization and the progress that have been made in this regard since then, beginning with the Habitat II Conference in Istanbul through the Istanbul + 5 Review and Appraisal Session of the General Assembly, last June in New York.

I am pleased to inform this Congress that in recognition of present realities – that urbanization processes are inevitable, irreversible and occurring too fast leading to urban poverty and a host of associated ills, ranging from ill-health, to insecurity, violence, crime and terrorism – and therefore a threat to our sustainable existence, the General Assembly decided to upgrade the former UNCHS to a fully fledged United Nations Programme on Human Settlements. This new enhanced status should further strengthen the cooperation that FIG and UN-HABITAT have enjoyed over the years implementing several joint workshops, seminars and conferences on sustainable human settlements issues.

I am pleased that progress in this Programme of our mutual interest is further reflected and highlighted in the programmes of this Annual Congress by its major themes of discussion, which I have noted, include:

1. Sustainable Development and Property Management;
2. The implementation of local, national and regional compatible Spatial Data Infrastructure and its contribution to a Global Spatial Data Infrastructure; and
3. Housing Policy in the New Millennium

I am pleased to note that this topic on the Development of Housing and Housing Finance in developing countries is to be addressed by Secretary Mel Martinez, Secretary of the Housing and Urban Development (HUD). I am encouraged to inform this Congress that since Istanbul + 5, Secretary Martinez has continued to follow up the implementation of the Habitat Agenda personally. At our meeting last Wednesday, he assured me of his continued efforts to work towards more effective modalities to mobilize U.S. support to our activities and our partners.

These three themes of the Congress, among others contribute directly to and support current UN-HABITAT programmes.

President Foster,
Secretary Martinez,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We at UN-HABITAT are persuaded that FIG, with its network of National Associations is not only fully aware, but is working cooperatively in supporting and strengthening the twin Global Campaigns.

- The Global Campaign for Secure Tenure
- The Global Campaign on Good Urban Governance

This has been evident in the activities of FIG members in their various organized regional and national level activities and particularly during the Istanbul + 5 process last June under the umbrella of the Habitat Professional Forum as well as the International Spatial Conference in Nairobi, Kenya to which I referred earlier.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge, applaud and gratefully appreciate the work, contributions and cooperation of FIG in the entire process of formulating, developing and implementing the Habitat Agenda. I urge you to continue the support.

FIG and its membership, and in its various technical commissions, has the knowledge, skills and experience to promote and enhance sustainable development and management of urban human settlements. The ability of cities and other human settlements to manage their growth is very much dependent on availability of and access to adequate spatial or land information – which is the specialty of the land surveyors. Without such spatial/land information, it is difficult to adequately plan, subdivide and develop land for shelter; infrastructure and associated utilities and services, to assign appropriate land and property title and ensure tenure security or even to protect the environment.

Evidence abounds that demonstrates that the granting of secure tenure is one of the most important catalysts in the individual's improvement of housing and associated investments in towns and cities. But property rights and tenurial rights pre-suppose appropriate identification, planning and demarcation of property boundaries and the existence of legal and institutional frameworks that define and protect those rights.

Therefore, to realize and confer secure tenure – presently a major plank of UN-HABITAT – land information (location, characteristics, measurement, ownership, occupancy, etc.) is prerequisite. Such information is also vital for physical planning, project implementation, including slum upgrading, land transactions and access to credit. Granting or regularizing land/property rights and tenure is hardly tenable without adequate land information that is usually generated from

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proper land survey and mapping. Ensuring adequate availability of these essential information on land are challenges to FIG and its member national associations.

Excellencies

Distinguished Participants

Ladies and Gentlemen,

You may be aware, UN-HABITAT is currently involved in a strategic partnership with the World Bank in a Joint Programme of the Cities Alliance, in the upgrading of Urban Slums and the promotion and strengthening of residential security of tenure. This Programme is in implementation of the United Nations General Assembly injunction in the Millennium Declaration and in the Declaration on Cities and other Human Settlements in the New Millennium, to improve the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by the year 2020. Though the effort is led by the joint UN-HABITAT-World Bank Cities Alliance, this goal is envisaged to be achieved through collaboration with a wide range of partners in the human settlements field, including such professional organizations as yours.

Indeed, by endorsing the “Cities Without Slums Initiative” the world leaders have placed once again, physical planning at the center of planning for sustainable development. Clearly, if cities are to be without slums, we need to have strategic, comprehensive plans that are realizable, implementable, and based on consultative approaches to decision making. And that are based on integrated city development strategies that seek to balance and mobilize rural and urban linkages.

I take the opportunity therefore to call on FIG to bring its professional skills and experiences to bear on this initiative of Cities Without Slums and on the specific programme of Urban Slum Upgrading which is important for the realization of the Habitat Agenda goals of poverty eradication through Adequate Shelter for All, and Sustainable Human Settlements Development in an Urbanizing World.

In this context, I urge surveyors to recognize that conventional survey methods have not been able to cope with the rapid demographic shifts taking place in many countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. They are simply too slow, too little, and too late. Master Plans have been overtaken by events with the proliferation of unplanned spontaneous settlements in the favelas, shanties and slums found everywhere and constituting as much as 70% of the city population.

I challenge FIG professionals to come up with simpler, more cost-effective and accessible survey and land information technologies and processes that could facilitate:

- Faster surveys and the identification of plots and parcels of land;
- Faster identification of the location of vacant and occupied lands and their sizes;
- Faster and more reliable access to records of owners; and

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- Speedier valuation, assessment and collection of property tax revenues, which are necessary to finance urban infrastructure and services.

I challenge surveyors, or “geomaticians,” as I understand you now prefer to call yourselves, to identify and suggest more cost effective ways to improve the availability and accessibility of tools of land information as aid to more effective planning, development, and management of towns and cities.

I recognize, of course, that at least theoretically, the various advances in technology in recent years have made land survey and mapping information more readily available – with recent developments in aerial photography, satellite imagery, including the Global Positioning System (GPS) and vast revolutions in computer technology.

We are nevertheless, realistic enough to appreciate and acknowledge that these technologies are not yet widely and easily available and accessible to all regions and countries of the World. FIG must demonstrate innovation, adaptation and resourcefulness in simplifying these tools to fit local situation as necessary.

It is appreciated that surveyors are gradually broadening the scope and content of their professional preoccupations and involvements from the traditional narrow confines of technical measurements in surveying and mapping into trying out elements of analysis and inference. This trend is to be commended. May I take the liberty of also suggesting that more economic and financial analysis inputs be brought to bear on surveying to reflect everyday life realities. This would make the surveying profession increasingly relevant to societal and global challenges of the contemporary world as well as keep it abreast of evolving international development agenda.

In this context, I would like to inform FIG that UN-HABITAT is currently investing efforts in strengthening Shelter and Infrastructure Finance Systems and Institutions for human settlements development and improvement in various countries. In this regard, an initiative is in progress to revitalize and strengthen the Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation as a global source of seed capital for public sector investment in housing and infrastructure development. It is envisaged that the Foundation, when appropriately revitalized and strengthened, would offer a range of products, including loans, equity guarantees and grants and would also seek to leverage sub-national and city-based financial resources for development and improvement of a range of human settlements conditions.

I invite the insight, ideas and suggestions of FIG on how this programme goal could be achieved and to work with us towards realizing it.

President Foster
Excellencies
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

As I did recall at the beginning, the cooperative relationship between FIG and UN-HABITAT is long-standing and continuing one within the framework of the implementation of various aspects of the Habitat Agenda. I am happy that this cooperation will continue as we started the day very fruitfully by signing the extension of our Memorandum of Understanding.

May I, in this context, take the opportunity to remind you that a week from today 29 April – 3 May, UN-HABITAT will be hosting the first World Urban Forum in Nairobi, Kenya. FIG has been formally invited through the normal channels and in the spirit of our long-standing relationship, FIG has been appointed to the Advisory Panel of this Event.

We therefore look forward to active FIG representation and contribution to the Forum, which is itself being held as a pre-conference event for the World Summit for Social Development (WSSD), to be held later this year in Johannesburg. In this regard, I have also distributed to the Congress a UN-HABITAT Road Map to WSSD.

President Foster
Excellencies
Ladies and Gentlemen,

May I wish you a most successful Congress.

I thank you for your attention.