

Institutional support imperative for Nigeria's economic reforms agenda, says Enemark

Professor Stig Enemark is the President of Denmark -based International Federation of Surveyors (FIG), a professional organisation founded since 1878 in Paris as "Federation Internationale des Geometre" (FIG), and represented in over 100 countries worldwide.

The organisation's primary role is to support international collaboration for the advancement of Surveying in all fields and applications for the benefit of humanity and surveyors as professionals. Enemark visited Nigeria recently as the Guest speaker at the Nigerian Institute of Surveyor's (NIS) 27th yearly Olumide Memorial Lecture, where he delivered a paper on "Land Governance: Supporting the global agenda". Before his departure, he had an interview with Babatola Adeyemi and spoke on professionalism, land governance and economic development, among others. Excerpts.

Tell us about the International Federation of Surveyors (FIG)

First of all, it's the worldwide organization of Surveyors. So, our members belong to associations, institutions in our member countries. We have representatives from over 85 countries throughout the World and over 100 associations in total. It's truly worldwide. The only countries that I will say are missing are some less developed countries in Central Asia and Central Africa, which haven't yet reached the level of establishing a surveying professional association, because of their general level of development, especially the francophone countries in Africa which haven't got a full programme in surveying yet.

But, we are trying to help these countries to establish the profession. The United Nations Economic officially recognizes FIG and Social Council (ECOSOC) and we have international cooperation with some United Nations organisations and the World Bank, among others. We are largely funded through members' yearly membership fees. There are several benefits for membership of FIG, like international recognition, access to the international surveying community for exchange of experience and new development, and continuous professional development, among others. Our general administration, which is headed by me as an elected president, is done with the support of the General Assembly and a council, which is elected for four years. Each country has a vote. And an elected president sets an agenda once he receives the mandate.

For me, I have a slogan, and that is: We should both fly high and keep our feet on the ground. Flying high is about addressing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and partnership with the United Nations Development Council at that level. And keeping our feet on the ground is about supporting our member associations and individual surveyors in their own understanding of the society in their own countries and the issues as they unfold.

Can we know Nigeria's rating in your global association?

At the moment, Nigeria has a very special status, because the delegation from Nigeria at our conferences is quite strong and big. It's probably the only country that provides a delegation of that size. Normally in a conference, you will have quite a lot of delegates from the host country, but sometimes, the delegates from Nigeria would outnumber the host countries. So, the standing of Nigeria is very high from that perspective. It's very important for developing

countries like Nigeria to play a key role. Because of our contributions to the global agenda, it is important for us to have member countries that are committed to making things go on very well. And Nigeria is such a country. We are very pleased with Nigeria's commitment and contributions to the association.

What's a Surveyor's role in a country's economic development?

The Surveyor's role is two. One is that you serve the client as necessary. But the real role is to serve society. Surveyors know the issues about land. And they have the responsibility to advise the politicians on developing the right policies and taking right decisions on dealing with land issues. That's a very serious responsibility. And the more you demonstrate your commitment in this area to the politician, the higher the standing you have.

One of the key issues in government's seven-point agenda is land reform. Is there a role FIG could play in this regard?

FIG could support the efforts of our member associations, like the NIS. But FIG will not dream of intervening in the politics of Nigeria. You will decide on your land policies, but we will support the efforts of our member associations. And if they ask for it, we will help, for instance, in designing the key steps to be undertaken to develop a comprehensive land reform policy. FIG is actually a community of experts. So, we could call our experts from various countries that have experience and expertise in this area that could contribute to the problems or the issues that you are dealing with in Nigeria. But, we will never dream of interfering in the politics of our member countries.

Nigeria recently won the hosting right for FIG's working committee in 2013. What's the significance of this to Nigeria, NIS and FIG?

To host our working week means that the global surveying community comes to Abuja, Nigeria. That means the whole surveying world would be focused on Abuja. It's just like hosting the Olympics. So, everybody will be talking about that city. That means that in the whole wide world, you have the chance to present to the worldwide surveying community your achievements, your problems and how you have dealt with issues. And everybody will listen, because, now, you are on stage. Whatever you ask for, whatever you present, you have a lot of attention. That's what the hosting means for Nigeria. And for NIS, it affords an opportunity to show to the government that the whole surveying community is around to support the efforts of NIS. And they can arrange for people like myself and other experts to meet with decision makers and high-level politicians, because we are all here. And you know that bringing over 1,000 international professionals to a city like Abuja will attract some political attention, right? And finally, to FIG, it means a lot. First of all, to be able to allocate the conference to a country that has contributed so heavily to FIG- that's great. And, also, to have a working week in a developing African country, I think that's a great achievement. And I can't think of many other countries that can actually do that next to Nigeria. I will like to see that Nigeria, not only makes the best use of the opportunity of hosting the working committee, but also contributes to the region by taking up the responsibility of a leading role in the region and ensure that we use this opportunity to also develop the less developed countries in the region, and develop a strategy around that, so that Nigeria contributes to development, not only in Nigeria, but also in the region.

Nigeria has over 30 polytechnics and universities, some of which offer Survey-related courses, even at post-graduate level, what kind of support can FIG provide in terms of curriculum, capacity building, equipment and so on?

FIG provides some institutional support in surveying and in education. For developing countries, adequate programmes in surveying are necessary, sometimes requiring ministerial approval. I may come down myself to try to convince politicians about global best practices in the areas you mentioned. To meet the situation in Nigeria at the moment, it might be a good idea to arrange a seminar in Nigeria to address the issue of surveying education. Indeed, not only for Nigeria, but also for the region. But again, that will have to come from a request from the country. We can then bring in some key experts to come here and do some seminars and present the worldwide best practice to address the needs.

Let's take a global perspective now. What's the role of Surveyors in the global pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)?

To me, it's about partnership. If we look at the MDGs, the eight goals are actually about partnership for global development. We have a responsibility there, to engage in this partnership, especially with agencies like the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO), United Nations' Habitat (UN-HABITAT) and the World Bank. On this issue, we are the experts. And we are recognised as the leading global experts in the area of land tenure, land use, land value and land development. So, the UN is looking up to FIG for support in developing a global agenda in the area of land governance. And that's why we organized this big conference with the World bank in March this year, where we invited 200 experts from all over the world to address the issue of land governance. So, we try to push and develop the global agenda and also try to pick specific issues. Because we are the experts in this area, we have a responsibility to contribute to this and try to establish the basic condition for the poorest people, to improve their living condition. That's our role.

Climatic change, particularly, global warming, is a topical issue presently. What challenge does this pose to an international institution like yours and to surveyors as professionals?

We should find our role in addressing this issue because it's so central in the global agenda. But, a lot of the issues relating to climatic change are actually political, because it's about the nations in the rich world and all the consequences as they show in the poorer countries. But, I am arguing that we can actually contribute a lot if we can provide guidelines on how to better incorporate the issue of climatic change into our land administration systems. There is a whole range of issues that should be dealt with or included in the land administration systems to adapt to the consequences of climate change. Even for a country like Nigeria or Bangladesh that suffers from the possible consequences of climate change. In Bangladesh, one day the sea level rises, taking one third of the country. They will have to deal with the consequences in terms of controlling the use of land and allocate the people in places where they are not vulnerable. So, we can do something about it.

Now, the United Nations is partnering FIG on its Habitat programme. Can we know the benefits of this to the federation and whether this would rub off on Nigeria?

With the United Nations Habitat, we engage in their agenda called the 'Global Land Tools Network'. That is the global agenda they have set for developing tools that can address land

issues, such as land tenure issues. Its main objective is to contribute to poverty alleviation and MDGs through land reform, improved land management and security of tenure. Among others, they developed the concept of 'Continuum of land rights', rather than just focusing on individual land tenure, by improving and developing pro-poor land management. And this enjoyed tremendous support by most stakeholders, because that is the only way forward for developing countries. So, we will support this agenda. All our work with UN-Habitat comes back to improving the tools for dealing with land issues, especially in developing countries like Nigeria.

As an authority in land governance, what can Nigeria learn from Denmark?

This is a tricky question! Ehm.. It is important to understand that there is no way you can just transfer a system like we have in Denmark to work in a country like Nigeria. You have to take into account the culture, the history and the whole development in this country. And then you can learn from how systems are organized in other countries and their culture and history and then establish what is trustable and suitable to your needs. This is the only way forward. You never look at transferring the system of one country to another.

Sure, I agree. But, you can learn from another country. For instance, you can learn from maritime governance in Denmark.

Yeah, land administration includes marine resources. So, there should be a seamless connection between land and the sea. In many countries actually, there is much more value connected to the marine areas than the land. Yes, marine administration is quite important.

Okay, what's your assessment of Nigeria on land governance?

I shouldn't lecture you too much on land governance in Nigeria, because you should know better. But, I would say that this topic is crucial to Nigeria. And this is because the history and the way you have organized the relation between people and land, such that at a certain time the government took over all land in trust as I understand it. And you have a free hold, which is in fact, leasehold. That is what obtains here. But in most countries, you are able to have full free hold. I understand that you tried in the 70s or so and passed a law on land use. In principle too, there were attempts on land reforms. But, obviously, you did not establish the institutions that could deal with policies laid down in the law. So, the option of getting secured titles or secured tenures may be too cumbersome. It's all about establishing the right institutions to deal this, so that the whole set up within the land administration area becomes trustable to citizens. Otherwise, they will just find other ways to do these things. And you may have focused too much on the urban areas and somehow neglecting the rural areas. So, huge areas in Nigeria are still not being covered in a sense by this attempt at land reform. And I understand that that's part of what you want to turn around now with the seven-point agenda you have adopted. To me, it actually looks very, very promising. And whatever FIG can do to support these efforts in Nigeria, we will be happy to do. But it has to come from you.

Can you also elaborate on what it means to manage land as you stressed in your lecture?

That means to deal with land in a way that land functions, namely land tenure, land value, land use and land development are dealt with in such a way that the issues of today still take

the future into account. You don't misuse natural resources. You take care of present needs without jeopardizing future needs. That's what sustainability is all about.

You also harped on a paradigm shift, that the surveying profession has moved from land measurement to land management...

This is a global thing. And if you don't adapt to that swing, you may simply be out of business. It doesn't mean that measurement is not important. It is just that technology has now developed to a stage that an average person can just undertake Surveying. Satellite, space technology etc have replaced the previous rigorous demands of Surveying. You no longer need to climb the mountains to practice astronomy.

So, today's surveyor has to shape up, improve capacity and be pro-active.

In your capacity as FIG president, can you set an agenda for NIS for the next couple of years?

I think it is important for the institute to increase members' awareness and build and strengthen the profession so that they are pro-active rather reacting to whatever happens. That is in fact the model that any professional association should follow. But I am sorry to say that it is not all of them that actual do this. So, again you are a little bit of role model.

You are in Nigeria for the first time. What's your impression of the country?

As I said I am shaken by your commitment to deal with the problems you are facing. I am talking of land issues. I am shaken by your commitment to really deal with them. That's impressive. I intend to go round the country before I go back, so as to have the real feeling of the country, how life is in the rural areas, rather than limiting my impression to Abuja. But I can tell you that I really like to be here and will come back again some time.