

Address to the Opening Ceremonies
INTERGEO 2002
at Frankfurt, Germany
October 16, 2002
Robert W. Foster

President Graeff,
Vice President Magel,
Colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen:

I thank you for the opportunity to speak to this assembly. It is an honor for me to be here at INTERGEO, one of the greatest shows in the surveying business, and to speak on behalf of the FIG Council to this important meeting where we will hand over the administration of FIG to the German Council under the leadership of Prof. Holger Magel. I have full confidence and optimism for the future of the Federation under Prof. Magel's strong leadership.

I would like to review what I consider to be some of the major accomplishments of FIG during the three years of our term of office.

We have accomplished a significant change in the governance of FIG. Beginning with President Holger Magel's incoming administration, we have a vice president elected by the FIG General Assembly and following a short time of transition, all presidents and vice presidents of FIG will be elected directly by the General Assembly. This accomplishment has provided for a true democratization of the Federation and the potential for a world-wide participation in the administration of the Federation.

A permanent office for FIG was established in Copenhagen in 1999 and has operated smoothly and efficiently during the term of the American Bureau under the office direction of Markku Villikka. I extend my personal thanks to Markku for his work and dedication to FIG and for relieving me of many of the burdens of the office of presidency.

A main objective of our administration, beginning back when we were only a "Shadow Bureau" during the UK Bureau's tenure, was to create a reserve fund for the Federation. No longer would a transition from one bureau to the next (now called a Council under the new governance arrangement) find FIG with a zero bank balance and no funds for

start-up of the new administration.

We have planned for a reserve fund and I am happy to report that we hand over administration of FIG to the German Council with a surplus of almost 200,000 euros.

An FIG Education Foundation was founded in 1998. Though still young, the Foundation's accounts are building (approximately 53,000 euros at this time) and the first grants in support of education and capacity-building projects are being made this year. In addition the Foundation has forged a strong relationship with the Environmental Systems Research Institute, Inc., ESRI, whose president, Jack Dangermond, has accepted the position of Honorary Chair of the Foundation Fundraising Committee. ESRI has offered to donate software licenses and training grants with a value of US\$7,000,000 to 25 institutions who are Academic Members of FIG. To date 15 of those grants have been made and there is a brisk competition for the rest. It is a robust beginning for the Foundation and I congratulate Holger Magel for his progressive leadership of the Foundation during these past three years.

The membership of FIG continues to grow, and grows in every category of membership of the Federation. Perhaps the most rewarding aspect of this growth is the manner in which FIG is able to assist the surveying profession in the developing countries and those countries in economic transition. I have discovered in my travels that FIG is held in highest regard in those countries most in need of assistance; and very often the most valuable form of assistance we can offer is in encouragement of the development and advance of surveying education. The FIG Surveying Education Database and the new Academic Membership category are two of the notable efforts we have made in that regard.

As we look to the future of FIG I would respectfully make three suggestions: FIG must develop a new system for planning and developing working weeks and congresses. Both the risks and the rewards have in the past been assumed by the local organizing committees. As a result control of much of the meetings has been out of the hands of the Council (formerly Bureau) and the Director of the FIG office. I suggest more control be retained by the Council and Director and though the risks may be greater, if well-planned these meetings can also return a significant surplus of funds to FIG.

FIG has created a rewarding working relationship with agencies of the United Nations and the World Bank over the past 10 years. I encourage a continuation of the efforts that have produced memoranda of understanding and cooperation with several UN agencies;

and important documents such as the Bathurst Declaration of 1999 and the Nairobi Statement on Spatial Information for Sustainable Development produced by FIG Commission 3 and UN HABITAT in 2001.

The new governance model for FIG makes it possible for true representation on the Council of leaders from all parts of the world. If FIG is to be a truly international body, representing surveyors everywhere, the leadership of the Federation must also be truly international. In the past FIG has been administered by the national group hosting a Congress. From now on FIG will be administered by a council chosen by the General Assembly. There is now an opportunity for even the smallest or poorest of our members to participate in the leadership and administration of the Federation; the production of quality leadership is not the exclusive ability of only our largest and richest members. My suggestion to future councils and nominating committees is that they find qualified FIG leaders from every region, hemisphere and continent of the world.

Finally I offer my congratulations and best wishes to Prof. Magel and his council for a successful term of office. The American Bureau leaves FIG in good condition and in good health. We also leave FIG in good hands - and I am confident that FIG will reach new heights of accomplishment under the leadership of my good friend Holger Magel.