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Enhancing Land Registration and Cadastre and Economic Growth in India

In his foreword to the programme for this international conference, Prof. Paul van der Molen, chair of FIG's Commission 7 on Cadastre and Land Management, highlighted how difficult it could be to relate investments in land-administration systems to effects on economic growth and alleviation of poverty. In relation to India, the McKinsey Global Institute in its report *The Growth Imperative* (2001) had calculated that removing barriers to the performance of the property market would propel forward economic growth by 1.3%. Aside from inflexible zoning, rent controls and protected tenancies, lack of an efficient land-registration system and cadastre also limited growth. The relation between land policy and poverty reduction had been explored in a World Bank research report *Land Policy for Growth and Poverty Reduction* (2003). Both reports justified investment in improving land records and land access.

Clear Savings

GIS Development, the Centre for Science, Development and Media Studies (CSDMS), The United Nations University and FIG Commission 7 took the initiative of dedicating a two-day international conference to "Enhancing Land Registration and Cadastre in India" as part of the bigger event MapIndia 2006. About fifty international delegates participated in the conference. In his welcoming address Maj. Gen. M. Gopal Rao, Surveyor General of India, highlighted how the majority of disputes in rural areas were land-related, sometimes over generations, and when they failed to act this led to chaotic situations for cadastral authorities. Heavy pressure on land could be observed in urban areas, combined with violation of land laws. In his own introductory remarks, CSDMS president Dr M. P. Narayanan focused on the importance of establishing proper land management, especially in rural areas.

Andr s Ossko, chair-elect FIG Commission 7, told conference that sustainable development was the main issue, not only from an environmental perspective but also from that of economic growth and social development. Mr V. Sampath, director general, National Institute for Rural Development (NIRD), remarked on the significance of maintenance of data; not only private but also collective use-rights and women's access to land were included here. Dr Ravi Gupta, CSDMS, focused on key issues: India loses 1.3% of GDP due to distortions in the land market as a result of unmanaged land records and bad land administration. Her GDP in 2005 was US\$738 billion, so 1% amounted to an annual loss of US\$73.8 billion. The costs of implementing an online cadastre were estimated to be 2US\$ billion so the savings were clear. Gupta also noted that property represented a 7% (2002-2003) share of India's GDP and this could increase significantly, enabling low-cost housing, employment and greater economic activity.

Integrated LIS

On the first day of conference there was a panel discussion on the state of land registration in India chaired by Mr P. Sarangi, director of Land Resources, Ministry of Rural Development. Other key speakers were Dr D. R. Shukla, National Informatics Centre, Mr P. Rajashekhar, Survey of India, and Ms Padma A S, ISRO; they covered the multi-purpose cadastral database, streamlining and simplification of a land-records maintenance process, incorporation of maps and use of GeoICT. Stressed here was the need for procedures to be revised for digital scenarios, and integration into a single environment of different departments involved. In his special lecture on secure land tenure, Mr Vinod Agrawal, Survey and Settlements Commissioner in Andhra Pradesh gave insight into the pilot project on developing an integrated LIS. He told his audience that the proposed LIS would be title-based, with conclusive ownership records. Updating would be integrated with transactions and the system would be operated by a dedicated, self-financing agency.

Lively discussions threw up points including the balance between land titling based on highly accurate survey and mapping approaches and the importance of completeness and the up-to-date status of land administration. Different data-acquisition approaches in relation to the value of the land would seem to provide a solution here, but many seem to have difficulty in accepting less accurate approaches. Development and strategic institutional arrangements were required. Low access and transaction costs were important to encourage land registration. More attention should be paid to the requirements of users and to participatory approaches. Implementation of Information Technology (IT) solutions to support complete, reliable and consistent land administration would not pose a real problem in India. Standards contributed to efficiency; a very important standard was the reference system that could be upgraded for the usage of Global Navigation Satellite Systems. Further, it was concluded that the court was not a good environment for the provision of services. And land

administration was there for all. Deliberations also took place during this event over India’s possible plan to become a member of the International Federation of Surveyors. FIG Commission 7 showed its interest in extending full support in this regard.

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