

# ESRI User Conference



The 2009 ESRI Middle East and North Africa User Conference (MEAUC) took place from 10th to 12th November in Manama, Bahrain, at the Diplomat Radisson Blu Hotel. The MEAUC is designed as a resource for ESRI GIS software users in this region, serving as a forum for learning and discussion regarding GIS updates and projects, and

for attendees to build relationships with other members of the international ESRI user community. This year's MEAUC was held under the patronage of His Excellency Sheikh Mohammed Bin Mubarak Al Khalifa, Deputy Prime Minister for the Government of Bahrain.

More than 450 professionals from many different industries and with varying levels of GIS experience gathered to get their questions answered; address current trends and learn how to achieve more GIS-driven results in their organisations and communities. Attendees were addressed by ESRI president Jack Dangermond, saw the latest GIS applications and tools, heard time-saving tips and tricks that further GIS investment and met with ESRI staff and business partners. Khalifa was attending the conference deputising for His Excellency Sheikh Ahmed Ateyatalla Al Khalifa, Minister of Cabinet Affairs for the Kingdom of Bahrain.

According to Dangermond it was very important to bridge the gap between GIS users in different countries and continents. "What stems from putting on collaborative events abroad reaches far and wide and makes great strides in designing our future for the better. And it's important for GIS professionals to realise this and play an active part in it." During the plenary session, Dangermond discussed his vision for GIS and its impact on our world. He explained how GIS was now not only about providing maps and information, but was also an indispensable tool for analysis and decision making in developing environmental policies and urban planning.

Attendees all used this opportunity to strengthen their GIS knowledge and skills. Key resources such as technical workshops led by ESRI product managers and paper sessions on successful GIS applications provided solutions to technical issues and cost-saving ideas for specific markets. Participants could also connect one-to-one with ESRI staff, swap best practices with peers, and hear from industry leaders on how best to leverage GIS today. The MEAUC featured GIS content from areas spanning the public and private sectors, education, and societies.

"GIS is slowly transforming into a pervasive technology, and many countries in the region are embarking on a national National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI) initiative to act as the platform of choice for integrating diverse islands of information that exist in various departments and government organisations," said Dr Ghulum Bakiri of MicroCenter, the ESRI distributor in Bahrain. "This conference gave GIS professionals and decision makers an outstanding opportunity to share their experiences and gain valuable insight into essential best practices in this challenging undertaking."

More MEAUC information is available at [www.esri.com/meauc](http://www.esri.com/meauc). The next conference for users in the Middle East and North Africa will also include European users, and will be held from 26th to 28th October 2010 in Rome, Italy.