

# FIG at 3rd World Urban Forum

The 3rd Session of the World Urban Forum attracted some ten thousand participants from over a hundred countries to Vancouver, Canada between 18th and 23rd June 2006. This was more than double the number of participants at the previous meeting in Barcelona. The number of participants representing professionals, academia and NGOs and grass-root organisations particularly exceeded prior estimates. The meeting paved the way for a new drive forward on the international urban agenda in a world of rapidly growing cities.

Just as the 1976 Habitat I Conference in Vancouver placed local community concerns on the international agenda and highlighted the crucial importance of inclusiveness, the Forum in Vancouver thirty years later lived up to its promise of moving ideas towards action. The meeting symbolised inclusiveness, with balanced participation from public, private and civil society sectors. Compared to previous sessions of the Forum, there was a notable increase in private sector participation. This time it was from Vancouver that a new message resonated: the urban population of developing countries is set to double from 2 to 4 billion in the next thirty years. Over the same period the urban population of the developed world is projected to rise by only 11%.

The quest for innovative ideas and practical solutions was underscored in the six Dialogues, thirteen Round-tables and more than 160 Networking Events. Key points of agreement to emerge from the Third Session of the World Urban Forum in Vancouver 2006 were the following.

- The need for all urban players – citizens, local governments, state and provincial governments, national governments, the private sector and civil society organisations – to work harder to solve urban problems and challenges. There was widespread agreement that they must all do their part, rather than simply transfer responsibility to others.
- That risk-taking and the pursuit of innovation must characterise municipal leadership if cities are to achieve sustainable development. Vancouver's example in taking the lead in such areas as air and water quality, public transit and planning was mentioned often in this context.
- That appropriate engagements, partnerships and relationships need to be built in an inclusive manner to better understand challenges and develop practical solutions. Participants from many parts of the world presented examples to serve as guideposts for these strategies.
- The importance of transparency and accountability. Citizens need to be informed of challenges and steps taken by governments to address them. Transparency goes hand in hand with accountability, which speeds up the process of enhancing actions that work and curtailing those that do not.

FIG was represented in the World Urban Forum by a delegation led by President Holger Magel. Other representatives of FIG included vice-president Ken Allred, Ms Jenny Whittal (South Africa) and the director of FIG. Others active in FIG participated in the conference and preparations for it.

Preparatory meetings included the Expert Group Meeting in Bangkok and Global Land Tool Network in 2005, organised by FIG Commission 7.

President Magel presented two sessions organised by UN-Habitat on the Global Land Tool Network. The first was a Networking Event on the GLTN - Development of pro-poor land tools. FIG is one of the main professional partners of UN-Habitat on this major initiative for the next few years. Newly appointed UN-Habitat deputy executive director Mrs Inga Björk-Klevby officially launched the GLTN following this session. The GLTN Network was mobilised by Dr Clarissa Augustinus and Mr Ulrik Westman.

The Global Division of UN-Habitat organised a Roundtable on gendering land tools. UN-Habitat executive director Mrs Anna Tibaijuka opened this session. President Magel and Ms Jenny Whittal made contributions on behalf of FIG. Focal point for Gendering Land Tools is Dr Siraj Sait.

For FIG, the third major event of the week was the Networking Event organised by the Habitat Professionals Forum. This, under the banner –Public Engagement: The Inclusive Approach–, was attended by more than a hundred delegates; the room was so overcrowded that some delegates had to sit on the floor. The two-hour session included five presentations under facilitator Prof. Magel, chair of the Habitat Professionals Forum.

There was also the meeting of the Steering Committee of the Habitat Professionals Forum. At this future activities, including participation in the 20th Meeting of the Governing Council in 2007 and at the 4th World Urban Forum in Nanjing, China in 2008, were discussed.

Conference also covered launch of an initiative to organise a joint FIG/UN-Habitat Seminar in Stockholm, in conjunction with FIG Working Week 2008. The seminar will focus on slum upgrading and the importance of financial mechanisms. FIG is to consider how to link this

initiative to the other joint activities with UN-Habitat.

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