

Successful FIG Congress

It was a privilege to attend the FIG Congress in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in June this year and to witness the success – not only of the Congress management overall, but also of the advances in policy development and exposure of the profession in the international sphere. The opening session was an impressive event, attended by the Prime Minister of Malaysia, the Honourable Dato' Sri Mohd Najib bin Tun Abdul Razak. The Association of Authorized Surveyors Malaysia (PEJUTA) did an outstanding job in convincing the Prime Minister to open the Congress. In his speech (which is also available on YouTube) he stressed the importance of spatial information for sustainable development in Malaysia. Prior to his presentation, the president of FIG, CheeHai Teo, spoke well of the significance of the work being undertaken by FIG with respect to sustainable development, and the overall importance of the work of the surveying profession and its contribution to society.

This year, the Young Surveyors Network sessions were held for the first time at a FIG Congress. The plenary sessions covered details of challenges to the profession brought about by undernourishment, climate change and economic progress; the key roles that the profession can play in the betterment of society and the environment; and actions that need to be taken to achieve the targets set in the Post-2015 Development Agenda towards 'Realizing the Future We Want for All'. Some plenary speakers said that they had never seen an FIG Congress looking so interesting. Other plenary sessions included statements on the many challenges in the world as the population continues to grow, with the associated rise in urbanisation and changing climate; this is the very 'stuff' of surveyors, and hence their role is more important than ever before.

The FIG publication *Fit-for-purpose Land Administration* has gained considerable recognition by organisations such as the World Bank and was discussed in detail at the Congress. A fit-for-purpose system should be flexible, affordable, reliable, attainable, upgradable, a continuum of accuracy and inclusive. Land administration systems developed by Western nations, which took hundreds of years to achieve into their current form, are not necessarily transferable to developing countries such as in Africa or central Asia. Sessions were held describing approaches taken by various countries to develop their land administration systems to satisfy the needs of their people while ensuring that they remain financially viable.

One important development for the profession is the proposed resolution to be presented to the UN General Assembly later this year for approval on the development of an operational global geodetic reference frame (GGRF) – infrastructure that will support the increasing demand for positioning and monitoring applications which will have significant societal and economic benefits. This is said to be the first time that a geospatial information resolution has been brought to a General Assembly of the UN, and credit is due to the UN-GGIM (Global Geospatial Information Management) for achieving this recognition.

The topics discussed at the 15 parallel technical and special sessions were very diverse and they provided something of interest for all participants. Overall, the Congress was a great success in terms of organisation and its impact on policy development, and the Malaysians deserve hearty congratulations for staging such a successful event.