

Cameroon: A Step Forward



Organised by the National Order of Cameroon's surveyors (OGEC), 'La Semaine du Géomètre' (The Surveyors' Week) held in Yaoundé, Cameroon, was an international event for surveyors and land-related professions. During the week, specialists in cadastre, land and geographic information systems from many different organisations and countries joined Cameroonian surveyors to debate a range of agenda items.

By Bernard Puepi

The Government emerged from the Ministry in charge of Lands and Cadastre, and the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development. Senior staff members of the Department of Land and Cadastre regularly attended all sessions. The number and quality of those invited from abroad were very encouraging. The president of the International Federation of Surveyors (FIG) was represented by M. Daniel Roberge, director Office of the Surveyor General of Quebec, President of Commission 2 of the FIG; professor Stig Enemark, professor of land management, Aalborg University, Denmark, honorary president of FIG; Mr Co Meuer, director of Cadastre International, The Netherlands; Mr Alain Gaudet, honorary president of the Ordre des Géomètres Français, representative of Mr Ma Zuyer, current president of the Francophone federation of Surveyors (FGF).

Two young surveyors, one from Nigeria, Ms Benedicta Ugwebo, and a Cameroonian student from France, Willy Franck Fouodjeu Sob, also attended the seminar.

The event was sponsored by Trimble, represented by vice president MrFosburgh Bryen Allen. The theme of the week was based on the role of surveyors in the country's sustainability development. The director of cadastre made a presentation on the cadastral project, of which one component is already on the way to execution, reported the National Geodetic Network. He described, out of kindness, the currently poor situation of the cadastre and gave indications for government's actions to improve it.

The director of Lands described the main features of land administration and land governance. Civil and penalaty courts are strangled with land disputes and the situation is becoming worse as it takes too long to solve one conflict. The presentation from some of the members of the National Order of Surveyors underlined the fact that the surveying profession's role is misunderstood by decision-makers and the Government. Also highlighted was the difficult relationship between licensed surveyors and the civil servants of the Cadastre department.

Stig Enemark demonstrated the interrelationships between land administration and sustainable development, the role of cadastre and the need of highly trained surveyors to manage land as a vector of fight against poverty. M. Alain Gaudet stressed the necessity of partnership between licensed surveyors and local collectivities as well as the relationship between public and private sectors for sustainable development. Daniel Roberge gave information on the organisation of FIG and on the specific missions of the Commission 2. He announced that next year's meeting of that commission will likely take place in Yaoundé. The delegates received this news with a standing ovation. He also emphasised the importance of land infrastructures in modern societies. He illustrated his demonstration with the case of Quebec, where a multipurpose cadastre is used by many sectors in the economy.

Claire Galpin briefed the audience on her experiences in the cadastre departments of some African countries such as Sénégal and Burundi. There, attempts to build cadastre structures, geared to facilitate land taxations, are completed, or are on the way to completion. "Developments in the cadastre, land registry and mapping agency in the Netherlands" was the topic presented by Co Meuer, indicating how this institution can help developing countries to build their cadastral infrastructures. M.RaficKhouri held a presentation on the necessity of a good geographic information system to promote a sustainable development. M. Madjoundy presented the state of cadastre in Gabon and how the Government was trying to improve it. The presentation made by Pr Kamel Kayadi was centred around the overused ways and means to fight corruption in the land administration. Corruption is a common practice in land transactions, particularly amongst surveyors.

The surveyor is more conscious of his role and responsibilities in society: a specialist of demarcation and the cornerstone of good governance and management of lands. Being aware of his social responsibility, he should behave with integrity and should keep corruption at arm's length.

After this event, the national corporation of surveyors can now appreciate the importance of international contacts for the development of the profession and all its dimensions. Continuously emphasised during the seminar was the importance of a close relationship between the public and the private sector during the smooth implementation of all land and cadastral reform.

'La Semaine du Géomètre de Yaoundé' was a great success as it allowed a large public to have another perspective on the survey profession which for a long period of time has been seen as a profession that creates problems. It is hoped that it will from now on be considered as a contribution to the prevention and the solution to all land disputes, with peace and equity. This is a profession in which participation to sustainable development is vital.