

"An extraordinary event in an extraordinary country"

Says Professor Holger Magel, President, FIG at the FIG Working Week 2005 and GSDI-8 in Cairo, Egypt

The FIG Working Week 2005 was organised in Cairo, Egypt from 16-21 April, 2005. This was the first time that the annual FIG Working Week was organised with another international organisation. The FIG Council and the local organisers – the Egyptian Committee for Surveying and Mapping (ECSM) and the Egyptian Survey Authority (ESA), decided to organise the conference jointly with the Global Spatial Data Infrastructure (GSDI). So the joint conference "From Pharaohs to Geoinformatics" combined elements both from the FIG Working Week and the GSDI conference (this time GSDI-8).

Mahmoud Abu Zeid, Minister of Water Resources and Irrigation. The conference was held under the patronage of the Government of Egypt and Prime Minister, Dr. Ahmed Nazif, who unfortunately was unable to attend. The Prime Minister's greeting was given by Dr. Abu Zeid. The greeting from Dr. Tarek Kamel, Minister of Communication and Information Technology was presented by Dr. Hora Baraka. The welcome address from the organising committee was given by Dr. Eng. Ahmed Fouad El-Sheikh, Chair of the Organising Committee and President of the Egyptian Committee on Surveying and Mapping (ECSM). The GSDI presentation was given by Dr. Mukund Rao, President of GSDI. The keynote opening address was about the conference title "From Pharaohs to Geoinformatics – Shaping the Change" presented by Prof. Holger Magel, President of FIG, who also formally opened the conference.

The professional quality of the plenary sessions attracted many positive comments. Especially the first plenary session, in which the presentations were made by Dr. Ismail Serageldin, CEO of the Alexandria Library and Mr. Jack Dangermond, President and Founder of ESRI and Mrs. Preetha Pulusani, President of Intergraph Mapping and Geospatial Solutions was highly praised. At the other two plenary sessions the topics were Land Management and SDIs (with Dr. Paul Munro-Faure (FAO), Dr. Clarissa Augustinus (UN-Habitat), Ms. Dorine A. J. Burmanje, Chair of the Board of Dutch Cadastre and Eng. Mohamed Mosaad Ibrahim, Ex-Chairman, The Egyptian Survey Authority, ESA as speakers) and on the Future of the SDI

/ Surveying Communities (with Prof. Ian Dowman, President of ISPRS, Prof. Hans Sünkel, Rector of the University of Graz and Dr. Hisham El Sherif, Chairman of IT Investments Group, Egypt as speakers).

The technical programme was fully integrated so there were no separate programmes for GSDI or FIG delegates, neither separation in the registrations etc. This allowed more interesting and broader discussions at the technical sessions than normally possible.

There was high-level participation from professionals. Presidents of the following associations attended the conference: ISPRS (Prof. Ian Dowman), IAG (Prof. Gerhard Beutler), ICA (Prof. Milan Konecny), IHO (Vice Admiral Alexandros Marathos) and ISM (Prof. Yu Changxing, immediate past President). In addition, International Federation of Hydrographic Societies was presented by John McCarthy with whom FIG signed an Memorandum of Understanding in Cairo. The International Steering Committee for Global Mapping (ISCGM) had their annual meeting in Cairo and had, in addition, two sessions in the technical programme, chaired by Prof. Fraser Taylor, President of ISCGM.

The technical exhibition was bigger than has been the case during the last years at the FIG events. More than 40 booths were booked and the list of exhibitors included a good selection of international, regional and local exhibitors.

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The conference turned out to be the biggest ever FIG annual conference outside the quadrennial congresses. It attracted more than 900 participants from about 80 countries. The attendees got an excellent opportunity to familiarize themselves with the history, trends in surveying and SDIs for the future. In the technical programme more than 400 papers, presentations and posters were made.

At the opening ceremony the keynote address from the Government of Egypt was made by HE Dr.