

It's Always about People!

"It's always about people," said Lianne Dalziel, Mayor of Christchurch. Disaster loss increases every year in terms of mortality, the number of people affected and economic and environmental impact. Surveyors and geodesists play a crucial role in disaster mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery.

The annual FIG Working Weeks are exciting events, bringing together the international community of surveyors to experience interesting plenary and technical sessions, workshops, a trade exhibition and a variety of side events and social functions. The 2016 Working Week in Christchurch, New Zealand, attracted almost 700 colleagues from 70 countries.

In the opening ceremony Sir Tipene O'Regan from the Heritage Name Commission of New Zealand's Geographic Board talked about inheritance identity and the way the original tribes are 'reinventing' and 'reconstructing' themselves after the colonisation. Their first question is not "Who are you?" but "Where are you from?". The participants were then welcomed by Mark Allen, president of the New Zealand Institute of Surveyors, Simon Ironside, co-conference director, and FIG President Prof Chryssy Potsiou – with

impressive introductions to the theme of the event.

GOOD COORDINATES

The theme of the 2016 Working Week was 'Recovery from Disaster'. This reflects New Zealand's experiences while recovering from the 2011 Christchurch earthquake sequence. Many inhabitants worldwide face various disasters such as flooding, storms, tsunamis, droughts and the after-effects. Surveying and spatial professionals are key actors in improving, simplifying and shortening disaster mitigation, rehabilitation and reconstruction. Disaster loss increases every year in terms of mortality, the number of people affected and economic and environmental impact. Mayor Dalziel made the statement of the week, inspired by a FIG poster: "Good coordination starts with good coordinates". Duncan Gibb, founding general manager of the Stronger Christchurch Infrastructure Rebuild Team

(SCIRT) shared his experiences, which were about leadership, communication, collaboration with people and ways surveyors generate solutions.

ROLE OF SURVEYORS

Ms Margareta Wahlström, keynote speaker at the opening ceremony, led the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction until the end of 2015. "How can you get politicians to follow your advice?" she asked rhetorically, before stating that the real issue is influence. Disasters are political issues. The crucial role of surveyors needs to be marketed.

"NMAs (*national mapping agencies, Ed.*) should be in the position to generate, maintain and provide quality geospatial information and services across all phases of the emergency cycle," said Dr Hiroshi Murakami, deputy director general of the Geospatial Information Authority from Japan. Meanwhile, Prof Dr Jixian Zhang presented a very comprehensive overview of solutions from China.

ACTIONABLE AGENDA

Gregory Scott, leader secretariat for the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM), presented the global perspective with impressive statistics on disaster loss – both in terms of numbers of affected people (more than 1.5 billion) and in money (more than one trillion dollars). The Post-2015 Development Agenda is actionable, and data about people and place is an indispensable element in this agenda.

FIG President Potsiou stated that "FIG will move toward more holistic, multi-sector partnerships to more systematically address the global challenges, including dealing with disasters and achieving secure land rights for all by 2030. FIG has developed a close relationship with important international



▲ The international participants were greeted with a Maori welcome dance.

institutions. FIG strongly believes in the power of joint research with the UN and the World Bank, in advising on smart, evidence-based solutions that shape the development agenda. FIG will coordinate more of what we do so that we are more strategic and ensure that priority goes to activities with the highest returns. FIG will do more to build on new technologies, create new opportunities for surveyors, and capitalise on more affordable high-resolution spatial data”.

YOUNG LEGS, GREY HAIR

“What about Land Surveyors without Borders?” asked Keith Bell from World Bank. And: “Can FIG lead national professional bodies to put surveyors on the pro bono humanitarian map?” Today we have developed a network of Young Surveyors; a new generation of global surveyors, working at the local level yet aware of the global issues and contributing solutions to the global agenda. Their young legs combined with the grey hair of our experienced experts will make the difference. They can develop the capacity and approaches explained by Sam Johnson

from the Student Volunteer Army. We need action, not expensive administration with hierarchy. High-resolution cloud-free imagery will soon be available, standards are available, the Open Geospatial Consortium offers to operationalise them helped by the geospatial industry: all achievable within a fit-for-purpose approach.

FROM MAPS TO MODELS

Mark Nichols from Trimble gave a fascinating overview of the future related to the developments in spatial modelling, cloud-based solutions, crowdsourcing and virtual reality. He furthermore gave an impressive description of Trimble’s role after the earthquake, helping Christchurch to keep its commercial sector alive.

THE CONFERENCE

A series of interesting papers were presented – papers and presentations can be found at the FIG website. Special symposia were organised on History, Small Island Developing States, the Social Tenure Domain Model, and Reference Frames. Special sessions were organised



▲ Participants were brought to a sports arena for the Working Week by buses because the conference centre was damaged during the earthquakes.

in cooperation with both UN-Habitat/GLTN and FAO. FIG Platinum sponsors Esri and Trimble were well represented at a remarkably comprehensive exhibition. The local hosts had done their utmost in organising this very successful event. FIG was honoured to contribute to this global exchange of knowledge and congratulated the New Zealand Institute of Surveyors (NZIS) for facilitating this event so efficiently.



▲ Plenary Hall was decorated in true Maori style – here with Mark Allen, NZIS, Mayor Lianne Dalziel, President Potsiou, Margareta Wahlström, UNISDR, Hon Nicky Wagner and Duncan Gibb.



▲ The new FIG Council for the term 2017-18 – Rudolf Staiger, Mikael Lilje, President Chryssy Potsiou, Orhan Ercan, Diane Dumashie and Louise Friis-Hansen.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The 39th General Assembly elected two new vice presidents: Orhan Ercan from Turkey and Mikael Lilje from Sweden. The new team of vice presidents for FIG President Chryssy Potsiou for the term 2017-2018 now comprises: Rudolf Staiger, Diane Dumashie, Mikael Lilje and Orhan Ercan. Another exciting election was the close-run vote for the venue for Working Week 2020, in which Amsterdam, The Netherlands, was eventually chosen over Interlaken, Switzerland. At the end of the event, the FIG flag was handed over to Helsinki, Finland, which will be the host of the FIG Working Week in 2017

CLOSING REMARKS

In her closing remarks, FIG President Potsiou pointed out that “humanity has lived with natural disasters for centuries but their impact was not felt to the same extent in the past as is experienced now: the more the people, the more the development, the greater the loss. In surveyors’ understanding, good coordinates lead to good land administration, insurance and compensation for better recovery”. ◀

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