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The Missing Key to Eradicate Poverty

The European Parliament states that land tenure security and property rights provide an opportunity to improve and consolidate bases for development and poverty reduction in some of the poorest regions of the world. With recognised rights and secure physical assets, farmers, small-business owners, slum dwellers and untitled urban inhabitants would be brought into the formal economy, enabling them to secure their investments and intensify production, access credit and start businesses. Property rights hold the key to sustainable development.

Within this perspective, the European Union (EU), as the leading partner on food security and nutrition, issued guidelines on land policies in 2004 and has financed 92 development projects since then. The EU now strongly supports the application of the Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure and the African Frameworks and Guidelines on Land Policies. Furthermore, the European Parliament has recently adopted a report on the role of property rights, property ownership and wealth creation in eradicating poverty and fostering sustainable development in developing countries. This report places land rights at the heart of the EU development policy.

The report emphasises that land tenure reform should begin with accurate land data collection and with systematic titling by means of cadastral mapping using low-cost technologies such as mobile technologies, GPS, GPRS and GIS monitoring tools. It calls for complete openness, and encourages the development and regional



Session on Improving Land Governance in Practice with Stig Enemark second from the left.

sharing of GIS, including satellite and aerial imagery. Technologies for participatory mapping should be taken into account. It congratulates Rwanda on the progress the nation has made with regard to land data, which has made it possible to register all land in the country within a remarkably short period. The report recalls that tenure security can be safeguarded under various forms, provided that the rights of land users and owners are clear. In addition to formal titles, security can be achieved through clear, long-term rental contracts, or formal recognition of customary rights and informal settlements, with accessible and effective dispute settlement mechanisms. Furthermore, the report calls for the EU to channel support towards capacity development and training programmes in land management with the aim of securing land rights for the poor and vulnerable groups, including through cadastral surveying, registration and efforts to equip educational institutions in developing countries.

Against this backdrop, a one-day conference was held at the European Parliament on 9 April 2014 to discuss the future of land policy in developing countries and the role of the international community, and the EU in particular, in the post-2015 development framework.

FIG was represented by Stig Enemark, honorary president, and Jean-Yves Pirlot, president of the Council of European Geodetic Surveyors (CLGE).

Professor Enemark held a brief presentation of the joint FIG/World Bank publication on Fit-for-Purpose Land Administration which was very well received. See the FIG page in the May 2014 edition of *GIM International* for an introduction to this concept, including a case study from Rwanda. ◀

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