

Address by Juha Talvitie at the opening of FIG Working Week in Helsinki on Tuesday 30 May

Excellences , Distinguished Colleagues,

It is a great honor to have the opportunity to say a few words about the progress of FIG over the past 30 years and the FIG Helsinki Congress in 1990. At that time FIG was a very different organization. There was no permanent office and no salaried staff, but a Bureau office in the country where the next congress would take place. There were three official languages; English, French and German, and we had one trilingual secretary at our service. You can imagine that she was a very busy lady! All official documents were prepared in three languages; all meetings and commission sessions had trilingual simultaneous interpretation. There was no internet or email, documents were sent and received by post. For short messages, we used the Telefax. ----- And some call them the good old days!

I have tried to recall the footprints that the Helsinki congress and the Finnish Bureau have left in the FIG ways of working. Here are some.

We prepared the first work plan for the whole four-year term and we introduced agendas for all administrative meetings. These practices are still in use.

We also established the FIG Publication series and published 7 booklets. Now the series include 68 publications.

Probably the most visible achievement was the introduction of the FIG Badges. Golden, Silver and Bronze. The first 35 badges were given at the Helsinki Congress. This practice has continued and is widely appreciated. When FIG now has a permanent office it would be appropriate to give a badge also to the Director of the FIG Office.

At the Helsinki Congress the General Assembly ratified the New Definition of a surveyor. The work that had started 15 years earlier at the PC meeting in Helsinki in 1975, was finally completed. This definition has now been modified.

An important achievement was the strengthening of close cooperation with some UN organizations, especially UN- HABITAT and UNEP. The Executive Director of HABITAT, Dr Arcot Ramachandran was the keynote speaker at the opening of the Helsinki Congress.

He began his address by saying very aptly: “Land is the starting point for all settlement development, and at the beginning of this process stand the surveyors”. This is a fundamental principle that still speaks to the great responsibility placed on this profession.

One of our working groups studied the commission structure and recommended the setting up of the Inter-Commission Advisory Committee which marked the start for the creation of ACCO in 1991.

One important decision at Helsinki was the appointments of new commission vice chairpersons. Four of them, in particular, deserve a special mention: Stig Enemark, Helge Onsrud, Ian Williamson and Markku Villikka. Their wisdom has served FIG very well..

Ladies and gentlemen I will conclude my address by noting that the theme of the Helsinki Congress was “The challenge of the Information Society for Surveyors”. almost 30 years later, the theme of this working week “Surveying the world of tomorrow – From digitalization to augmented reality” continues in the same vein.

I do hope that there will be a further FIG congress in Helsinki, maybe in 2038. At the moment it is impossible to imagine what the relevant themes might be. We are facing amazing times of change and development. I hope that people can look back to a proud history of professionalism, problem-solving and cooperation at FIG and embrace the future with optimism and hope.

I wish this working week, its organizers, speakers and participants every success. May FIG prosper in its future endeavors.

Thank you.