

Memorandum of Understanding between the UN Office for Outer Space Affairs (OOSA) and FIG

Speech by Prof. Holger Magel, President of FIG at the signing 13 December 2004

Firstly I would like to thank Mr. Sergio Camacho-Lara, the Director of the UN Office for Outer Space Affairs for the invitation to be here today. We see this Memorandum of Understanding between our two organisations as very important. Secondly, I would also like to thank Takemi Chiku and Cicero dos Santos from OOSA who have worked with Matt Higgins, the Chair of FIG Commission 5 and Markku Villikka, the Director of the FIG Office to develop this important MoU.

Ladies and Gentlemen, FIG represents about 250,000 surveyors and geodesists working in more than 100 countries around the world. Many of those surveyors now see GNSS as a fundamental technology that they rely on every day for hundreds of applications. Therefore I am very pleased that FIG has been a member of the UN Action Team on GNSS.

FIG is already working with other UN Organisations to progress some key global issues; particularly those of significance to developing countries. These include UN programmes on security of tenure, urban governance, urban-rural interrelationship and sustainable development. While such issues need to be discussed firstly at a strategic level we also know that competence in some key technology is vital if we are to deliver solutions to these important global problems. GNSS is one of those key technologies.

As Matt Higgins will detail on Wednesday we have already set up a Task Force within the his FIG Commission 5 on positioning and measurements to act as a forum for surveyors to discuss GNSS and feed policy and technical issues to coordinating mechanisms like the International Committee on GNSS that you will be discussing later this week.

I must say that our interest in working with OOSA extends beyond the important technical and scientific aspects of GNSS. OOSA is also working on the topic of disaster and natural resource management and FIG has recently created a Working Group on that topic. That will give us a mechanism to work with OOSA and UNEP to also progress that important topic.

FIG is also committed to capacity building in developing countries. I note that Regional Education Centres on Space Technology are also coordinated by OOSA. I think that FIG Commission 2 on Education can play a role (with other FIG Commissions) to help to add to the content and depth of courses being run in those centres.

We also need to ensure that these activities are seen more and more to be an important part of society's needs. FIG Commission 3 is working in the area of Spatial Data Infrastructure and this is another mechanism for progressing the issues covered by our MoU. The next FIG Working Week in Cairo, April 16-21, 2005, will also be joint with the 8th Conference of the Global Spatial Data Infrastructure (GSDI) organisation and that offers an opportunity to progress issues such as AFREF which is covered in the recommendations of the UN Action Team on GNSS.

I should say that in all these topics we work very closely with our so-called "Sister Associations" such as the International Association of Geodesy and the International

Cartographic Association, who have also been very active in the UN Action Team on GNSS. I also note that another of our “Sister Associations” the International Society of Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing is very active in the Disaster Management work being coordinated by OOSA.

In conclusion, my thanks again to OOSA for entering into this MoU which I am sure will work to our mutual benefit. I wish all of you the best for the important work you are doing here this week and I thank you for your attention.