

UN-ECA CODI III Conference in Addis Ababa

Dr. Reinfried Mansberger, Vice-Chair of Administration of FIG Commission 3 (Spatial Information Management), presented FIG as an observer at the 3rd Meeting of the Committee on Development Information (CODI) of the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UN/ECA) at UN Conference Centre, Addis Ababa May 12-16, 2003.



Fig.1: Plenary Conference Room of UNCC



Fig.2: Meeting of the Subcommittee "Geoinformation"

The Committee on Development Information (CODI) is one of the seven subsidiary bodies of the Commission for Africa, established in 1997 by the 23rd Meeting of the Conference of African Ministers responsible for Economic and Social Development and Planning. As a subsidiary body of the Commission, CODI provides policy and technical guidance for the sub-programme "harnessing information for development". The Development Information Services Division (DISD) is responsible for implementing this sub-programme which covers information and communication technologies; statistical development; database development and management; geo-information and library, documentation and information services.

The meeting of the Committee was attended by approximately 300 delegates from almost 45 African countries and by about 100 observers of several institutions that are not members of the Commission, but also with a professional focus on matters of development information.

The Committee meets every two years, organising its work in plenary meetings and in three subcommittees for

- Information and communication technologies (ICT);
- Statistics (STAT), and
- Geoinformation (GEO).

Reinfried Mansberger presented a paper in a plenary session with the title "Geoinformation to Support Decentralization and Community Empowerment" (paper and ppt-files of the presentation available on the FIG web site and Commission 3 website). This presentation can also be downloaded from the CODI III-homepage (<http://www.uneca.org/codi/codi3docs.htm>) in English and French language.

The FIG representative also participated in a pre-conference symposium on “Establishing Permanent Committee on SDI, incorporating AFREF (African Geodetic Reference Frame)”. He further attended all plenary sessions and the sessions of the Subcommittee “Geoinformation”. This subcommittee session was attended by delegates from 23 African member states and by 40 observers.

A one-day sightseeing tour, together with the Prof. **John Trinder**, President of ISPRS and Prof. **Bengt Rystedt**, President of ICA was used to exchange experiences and to discuss actual challenges for our profession.



Fig.3: Representatives of ISPRS (John Trinder), FIG (Reinfried Mansberger) and ICA (Bengt Rystedt) during a field trip to the Blue Nile Gorge



Fig.4: Ethiopian colleagues levelling for a (Japanese financed) road project in the Ethiopian highlands

Reinfried Mansberger also used the visit at the conference to promote the 2nd FIG Regional Conference and 10th Anniversary of ONIGT “Urban-Rural Interrelationship for Sustainable Environment” (Marrakech, Morocco, December 2-5, 2003) and to discuss some organisational issues with the Secretary General of the Local Organising Committee, Prof. **Mohamed Timoulali**.

At the meeting of the Subcommittee on Geoinformation (CODI-GEO) Kenya was elected as chair, Morocco as vice-chair and Congo as rapporteur for the next two years (2003-2005).

Following results and recommendations were adopted by CODI-GEO:

- Geoinformation is crucial for good governance and should be made readily accessible to governments and communities.
- The way geoinformation is presented makes it appear too technical and thus it is not understood and appreciated.
- Many African countries have made achievements in the establishment of NSDI, but there are still many countries with little progress in this respect.
- Fundamental datasets are a crucial component of SDI, but these are missing in most African countries.
- To include the functions of a Permanent Committee on SDI for Africa by expanding the terms of Reference of CODI-GEO.

- National agencies as producers of geoinformation should give priority to digitise their analogue spatial data holdings.
- Governments should recognize GI production as an investment and as a national asset and, therefore, should increase the allocation of funds in their national budgets.
- All three CODI-subcommittees (ITC, STAT, GEO) should undertake at national level concerted actions and work together in order to sensitise and educate policy-makers of the benefits and value of information for development and good governance.
- First Announcement of 2nd Regional FIG Conference in Marrakech was distributed amongst participants of CODI-GEO session.

In informal meetings concerns about the African situation of the education of academic education were raised. For example, Prof. **Heinz Rüter**, University of Cape Town, South Africa, was interested in the establishment of an African Education Group. At the moment Prof. Rüter is the only academic professor on surveying on the African continent. He requested support from FIG, ISPRS and ICA to promote academic surveying education in Africa.

Reinfried Mansberger
Vice Chair on Administration, FIG Commission 3
Email: mansberger@boku.ac.at