



A word with the FIG President, Teo Chee Hai

TEO Chee Hai is a licensed/chartered surveyor in Malaysia as well as being that country's national delegate of the Association of Authorised Land Surveyors Malaysia.

He holds a Bachelor's degree in Applied Science (Surveying) as well as an MSc. Last year at the Sydney congress he became FIG President and will serve for a total of four years.

Divides and disconnects. FIG President Teo Chee Hai talks to **Richard Groom** about the challenges facing the organisation in the 21st century.

In the report you delivered at the FIG Working Week in Marrakech you mentioned a divide between professionals and policy makers and between professionals and people at the grass roots. Would you like to expand on these divides and what action you plan to take?

I do not think I am alone in recognizing these divides. While this may not be an issue in some jurisdictions, in others it is. Leading up to my presidency, I have heard remarks about the inability to present views let alone influence policy, leading to an expressed desire for greater advocacy, if that's the right term to use. In my recent encounters with some grass root organizations, beneath the warm exchanges, I could not but detect both some frustration and also the desire to work with professionals such as us to address issues that are human in nature.

In this regard, one plan is to incorporate into the next Working Week, space for peer-to-peer learning and I certainly hope that presidents and/or heads of delegation of our member associations will take advantage of this to engage one another so that we can begin to address these divides. I am aware of one of our member associations in Africa that has a programme to engage the grass roots in issues, which are close to the surveying profession.

You also mention a 'disconnect' between practitioners and the younger generation of surveyors (including surveying students); academics and practitioners, academic programmes and industry practices; and the profession's estimation of its role and actual reality. Please could you explain these disconnects and how FIG is dealing with them.

I had the opportunity to engage with professional members, academics and

graduates and students at the same time during a recent visit to a member association. If you had been present in that hall, this disconnect would be apparent to you. FIG will continue to put its primary "event energies" into our working weeks and congresses during my term to ensure that these are the primary events where all, from across the breadth and depth of the profession, can participate.

FIG introduced an Academic Members Forum in Marrakech, working towards its first Young Surveyors Conference in Rome next year. These new initiatives are all aimed at bringing together practitioners, industry, academia and the next generation of surveying professionals.

We are also asking our member associations to engage with our commissions, especially with regards to commission activities, in the hope that activities and events at the regional and local level will afford opportunities to address these "disconnects".

It strikes me that the divides and the disconnects are actually similar in the sense that communication is at the core of the problem. A Young Surveyors Conference would seem to me to reinforce 'silos' rather than break them down. On the other hand, at the 2008 FIG Working Week in Stockholm the organizers arranged speed mentoring sessions as a means of facilitating discussion between young surveyors and their more experienced counterparts. Is this the sort of measure that you think is needed to help bridge the divides and get us better connected?

Agreed - better communication and the willingness to engage will begin the process of bridging this divide.

As for the Young Surveyors Conference, we are attaching it to our Working Week for the inaugural event and are working out the programme at the moment. However, going forward the challenge is to integrate that into our working week itself and also provide avenues for interaction with more experienced participants such as those speed mentoring sessions that were organized in Stockholm,

On the subject of money, I hear that there has been disquiet amongst member organisations where individuals may be members of two or three FIG member organisations and therefore (indirectly) are paying the €4.48 FIG membership



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