

# **Breathing the Olympic Spirit – The Mission of the FIG in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

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**Opening speech at the FIG Working Week 2004 in Athens on May 23**

## **1. WHERE THERE IS NOBLE COMPETITION, THERE IS VICTORY**

Ladies and Gentlemen, in its publicity campaign to attract a large number of visitors to the forthcoming Olympic Games here in this city, our host this year, Greece, has adopted the slogan “Where there is noble Competition, there is Victory”. The slogan comes, as many of you will know, from Aristotle, one of the greatest thinkers in our history – unfortunately often wrongly interpreted and put into practice in the sense of “Where there is ruthless Competition, there is Victory“. Many recent political, banking and managerial scandals, in both the old and the new worlds, bear witness to this enormous misunderstanding of Aristotle’s message. As against this, it is gratifying that responsible politicians and academics, such as Johannes Rau, President of the Federal Republic of Germany, whose successor is being elected today, and the Swiss Professor Ulrich Thielemann, are increasingly calling for a new economic ethic; for an ethic concerning a more prudent management of our natural resources and our environment, for an ethic concerning a fair balance between productivity and quality of life, between the maximisation of profits and the optimisation of profits, and finally for an ethic concerning the balance between the interests of commercial undertakings and the interests of society as a whole.

Let me say right at the beginning: “Breathing the Olympic Spirit” means for the FIG in the best Aristotelian sense the support of a noble competition for the encouragement of the most innovative ideas, of the most sustainable strategies and of the socially fairest measures, and where possible the implementation of them itself. In many countries of the this world noble competition or the competition of ideas is understood as meaning simply a social market economy – in contradistinction to unbridled capitalism on the one hand and stifling and rigid (State) socialism on the other hand. But unfortunately the much praised social market economy is in a state of crisis, and for this reason - although the concept undoubtedly continues to be valid – can in many cases no longer be recommended one hundred per cent and applied as a universal remedy. The miserable economic and social data in many developed countries confirm the illness of a (too) social market economy. What is needed is the revival of the ancient Greek principle of noble competition, what is needed is the noble competition of the best ideas, in short the competition of innovation. When these ideas and innovation take account of the principle of sustainability, victory will result. In relation to the social market economy this means that we must come more to an eco-social and thus to a sustainable market economy. I also see noble competition in my own university where under the umbrella of the requirement of sustainability a competition for the best ideas and research projects for the future and the victories of the most innovative teaching areas may be observed. I see this on a greater scale in my own country, in Bavaria and in Germany, where the public authorities must give up traditional methods of administration and are required instead to develop new ways of thinking and new scales of values for the public good. I see this also and particularly in the new expanded Europe and elsewhere, where in the future it

will be a matter of a sharper and it is to be hoped noble competition of ideas and innovation. Old recipes are no longer valid. The changed political, economic, demographic and technological conditions demand new approaches. They present new questions and new challenges, require new approaches, answers and solutions, in short: they demand innovation!

In political, economic and academic circles there is a growing consensus that only innovation provides the preconditions for more growth and affluence and thus also (once more) for more social justice and peace. Here it is also necessary to take leave of the idea that “Father State” is alone responsible for the welfare of its citizens. The civil society must promote and assume more and more self responsibility. But particularly the civil society requires innovation just as much as the State, communities and the economy!

Innovation is ultimately decisive, on the global, national and local levels, for poverty and affluence, for what is viable and for what is not viable in the future.

## **2. HOW IS INNOVATION TO BE ACHIEVED?**

But, Ladies and Gentlemen, how are we going to achieve innovation, what are the central factors which lead to innovation?

One of the most successful strategy consultants acting on a global basis Professor Roland Berger, an honorary doctor of my University, recently identified seven decisive factors for economic growth and the development of affluence. They are:

1. natural resources
2. human resources (human labour)
3. technical progress
4. capital
5. knowledge, including the marketing of this knowledge
6. the political regulatory framework, e.g. a social market economy as against a planned economy and
7. scale of values and performance paradigms.

Berger finally concludes that the speed of structural change in State, society and economy is decisive for growth, employment and affluence. Structural change – thus once again the central message – will be best stimulated by innovation, by freedom and by (noble) competition.

Back to the factors which make for innovation: whereas in the past there was no lack of factors 1 and 2, the present day challenges lie more by factors 3 (technical progress), 4 (capital) and 5 (knowledge). This is where in Berger’s view the future of a nation will be decided; it is these 3 factors which determine the division of the world in the industrial/knowledge age into poor and rich. Taking Germany as an example, as well as many other European States, he ascertained that much too little is being invested in High Tech or High Serve both as regards technical progress as well as capital and particularly knowledge, i.e. research and teaching. The adherence to successful but, from the standpoint of innovation,

in the final analysis old techniques such as mechanical and vehicle engineering will not suffice in order to survive in the future.

Where too little innovation takes place, the necessary structural changes will take place too little from the inside and will be imposed from the outside.

I believe that each of us is aware of the central importance of the above factors and considerations, particularly as we belong as surveyors and geodesists to a strongly technology permeated and at the same politically influenced profession. Without knowledge, i.e. without research and teaching, without impressive technical progress and without the availability of investment we would not have reached the stage about which our keynote speaker IAG President Professor Gerhard Beutler is going to speak tomorrow, namely “The Revolution in Geodesy and Surveying”.

But let me refer to an equally central important factor which particularly in the context of the current good governance discussions and appeals and in the light of many mistakes in international aid policy has moved increasingly into the focus of international attention. That is success factor 6, the so-called political regulatory framework. This also includes the so-called institutional question. Without the lasting establishment of an “institutional landscape” based on good governance principles, i.e. without the establishment of cadastres and land registers in transitional, post-conflict or transformation countries, the aid provided by the international community in the field of land reform will remain to a large extent ineffective. Without the assurance of a functioning and corruption free administration and public service, many supporting measures in e.g. Urban and Rural Development will remain ineffective; without the establishment of an ethically oriented private economy there will be no lasting success. Added to this must also be a change of mind in the scale of values, i.e. it must be generally recognised that achievement must be worth while. Achievement involves also the creation and recognition of elites and corresponding educational institutions. I cannot go further into this subject here, but would at least like to point to the renewed “New Institutional Economics” discussion.

Thus far, ladies and gentlemen, the central important messages which all or many nations of this world must take to heart. In addition to these factors, based above all on innovation, there must naturally be – as already mentioned – other fundamental conditions of modern and future viable societies. I mean here above all the strengthening of the communal level and of local government as well as the participation of the private sector and of citizens, without which a State – which only activates – cannot be functional. The history of the world shows us, and does this almost daily, that this consciousness cannot be imported and cannot be brought about quasi at the pressing of a button. Careful and lasting self developing processes, i.e. endogen processes are necessary here. These processes can, and indeed must, be carefully accompanied and assisted from outside. Finally, it must be clear to all of us, that everywhere in the world the model of the paternalistic and centralistic State has failed. The State must assume vigorous central tasks, which include e.g. responsibility for creating an appropriate institutional landscape. And I should like just here to make an absolutely clear acknowledgment in order to prevent misunderstandings. The necessary or desired strengthening of privatisation must not be allowed to go hand in hand with a weakening of public administration. It was always the case, and it will remain the case in the future, that a

strong functioning private sector needs functioning and independent strong partners in the public sector!

At the same time increased responsibility will rest on communities, the economy, citizens and NGOs. This is the challenge and the mission, also and particularly for the FIG in the 21<sup>st</sup> century!

### **3. THE MISSION OF FIG IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY**

Ladies and Gentlemen, the FIG is already 126 years old. We were able last year to celebrate a splendid jubilee in Paris, and for this I thank our French friends once again most sincerely. In these over 125 years the FIG has clearly shown that it has remained dynamic and that it, as I sought to make clear in my Paris speech, has found answers to the questions of the time. But I also said that we may not rest on our laurels. I have no reason to fear that we will not continue to find the right answers – thanks to a fantastically motivated group of colleagues in the member associations, in the commissions, in the Council and in the FIG Office. The highly successful BMW group has an attractive slogan. It is: “Business is people, good business is good people”. We have these good people, these human resources, for whom we in the Council and the Office work and who commit themselves for us and our common ideals and philosophies. We in the FIG practice not share holder value but a strong stake holder understanding. We are aware also of the great importance of cooperation with e.g. our sister organisations such as IAG, ICA, ISPRS and many others, who are committed to the idea of “building a better world”. But all our efforts would be limited, if we did not also have a very trusting relationship characterised by reciprocal benefit and great efficiency with many UN agencies and international donors, who are also actively represented here.

I thank you all sincerely for the inspiring partnership and the functioning network. Only in this way can we be successful together in the face of increasing tasks and react as needed much more quickly than if we were to seek salvation by ourselves and in reliance on our own resources!

The problem for associations such as the FIG and for functionaries such as myself is to be able to make clear at home why and for what we voluntarily spend so much money and time, where the benefit at home arising from what we do is not directly apparent and felt. Here we all have a common task in conveying more convincingly the why and wherefore. We should here make clear of something to which Ulrich Beck, the originator of what has become the world famous concept of the “risk society”, recently drew to my attention, namely that our FIG is a wonderful example of cosmopolitanism, which helps to take away from countries and their citizens anxiety about the unavoidable globalisation, to prepare them for this and to integrate them in the international community without taking from them their national identity. Our FIG stands for richness of history, knowledge, cultures and values as well as for a peaceful und enriching coexistence. Withdrawal into our national shells and sticking our heads in the sand is no longer an answer to the coalescence and the internationalisation of our world. All the States and citizens of this world must realise and accept this more and more – in the good sense (growth) as well as in the bad sense (e.g. worsening global climactic changes or international terrorism). Europe, already so many sided, has once again set a wonderful example of the right way with the 1<sup>st</sup> May. And it is a marvellous coincidence that

we have a few weeks later gathered here in Athens in the place where the idea of cosmopolitanism was born, a sign moreover that the global (cosmos) perspective already existed much earlier. Cosmopolitanism means nothing else than that we are all members of this one world but at the same time retain our national or local (polis) roots – this is after all the ethos of our FIG is characterised and the way it functions!

We have one request to our partners in the UN: please make these thoughts clear to the national Governments and say how useful and how necessary are the activities of such civil society associations, in order to make the world a more peaceful, more just and finally also a safer place.

As we have just heard, this goal can only be achieved by more innovation. The technical-scientific FIG stands for the generation and implementation of decisive innovation! It wants to encourage innovation for and in its member countries and it wants to be continually innovative in its own ranks and commissions. The change in the FIG which is taking place at the moment and is reflected in our motto “shaping the change” is clear evidence of the ability of the FIG to change. This ability should also not in the middle term fight shy of possible changes in the commissions.

Everyone who takes part in sport and knows the Olympian motto, *citius, altius, fortius*, knows just as every researcher knows that innovation is achieved only through more competition. Everyone also knows that in research as in sport competition must take place in accordance with recognised rules, whether they be ethical or sporting. The FIG has in recent years cultivated and encouraged the competitive spirit; we have endeavoured through intensified exchanges with our sister organisations and through major conferences as well as internally between the commissions to arrive at greater competition and at the best ideas. The balance is respectable. I will in my presidential report during the General Assembly set out what has happened alone since Paris. Let me pick out just one example: as a quick response to the request of UNEP Chief Töpfer we set up in Commission 8 our own Working Group “Disaster and Risk Prevention and Management” in order to find here innovative answers and solutions by our profession to and for one of the most urgent problems in our vulnerable world. Professor Beutler will tell us tomorrow what fascinating innovative ways are open to us in the intensified cooperation in the use of the global geodetic infrastructure; the many presentations in this Working Week will once more confirm the dynamism and innovative spirit in our professional fields and in the FIG and the great extent to which the success factors which lead to innovation have played a role, whether they be human resources or whether it be a matter of technical progress or of knowledge including capacity building, the establishment of the political framework as in cadastre and land management fields or in scales of value. We can present these potentials, ladies and gentlemen, with pride to our global partners as well as to national governments and institutions. We want to work further on ensuring that the FIG remains a guarantee for lasting innovation as the pre-condition for more fairness, quality of life and balance between poor and rich.

“Breathing the Olympic spirit” – in this spirit we want here on this classical spot to experience a noble competition of the candidates for important functions in the FIG. This is where the future of the FIG will particularly be decided! “Where there is noble competition, there is victory” – irrespective of the outcome of the competition I can already say this: one

victor is quite clear. It is the FIG, which can be proud of its capacity for continual self renewal and innovation through ever new heads and ideas. It can also be proud of such member associations as here in Athens or next year in Cairo etc., because they are prepared to act as hosts for such major events and to invest for them much time, energy and money. I know that our Greek friends have put in a great deal of effort and I thank them already for this most sincerely!

Even when knowledge, capital and technical progress decide world wide between poverty and affluence, persons who are themselves enthusiastic and can inspire enthusiasm in others remain without doubt the A and O of every organisation. I am proud to be able to say that there is no shortage of such persons in the FIG.

In this sense I wish our Conference every success.  
The FIG Working Week 2004 is hereby opened!

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