

Speech by Associate Professor Abbas Rajabifard, Incoming President, GSDI Association, Friday 19 June 2009

Dear colleagues, friends, ladies and gentlemen.

It is a great honour and privilege for me to assume the role of President of the GSDI Association.

The Association plays a critical role in helping to address societal problems through the use of spatial capacity. Therefore I commit to provide the leadership the Association requires in order to achieve its objectives and implement its strategies, and commit to listen and respond to your needs as members and work very closely with our GSDI Board.



We have come along way since the GSDI initiative began in 1996 and the Association came into existence in 2002.

The scope of the Association has broadened considerably in this relatively short time. This reflects the expanding uses to which spatial capacity is now able to be deployed, the increasing diversity of organisations and skills now using this capacity, and the corresponding expansion in demands of Association members.

Those who have steered the Association along this dynamic road have done so in a responsive and measured way, ensuring appropriate adjustment and continuity in Association affairs. Many people have contributed to this outcome, far too many people to mention here by name.

However there are a few individuals I must recognise – Bas Kok, for his leadership and friendship during his term as President, Harlan Onsrud for his dedication and vision over the years, and Al Steven for his input and contribution in the planning and organization of GSDI conferences and activities of the association over many years.

I would also like to recognize our outgoing GSDI board members:

- Past President Jarmo Ratia (Land Survey of Finland)
- Non-Profit Gabor Remetey-Fulopp (Hungarian Association for Geo-information)
- Region - Africa Olajide Kufoniyi (Regional Center for Training in Aerospace Surveys, Nigeria)

Also, I would like to congratulate and welcome to our new and re-elected board members.

The GSDI-11 World conference was a milestone in our GSDI journey. So, as incoming president I would like to take opportunity and thank our partners for this conference, particularly Alessandro Annoni and his team in the INSPIRE program, and Rob van de Velde and Jacqueline Meerkerk and their team in the Dutch Geonovum program and Dutch Space for Geo Information program.

As Professor Kok stated in his opening Conference address, the conference theme, ***SDI Convergence: Building Bridges in Support of Local to Global Challenges*** tells us what we aspire to do and why we seek to do it. Bas' hope was that we focus in this conference on investigating and sharing how we can apply our expertise to build bridges across disciplines and borders to make life better on this planet we all share. In my mind the conference has met and exceeded these expectations.

The huge size of the conference program points to the relevance and level of interest in the subject areas of the conference partners.

The conference has shown, once again, the essential requirement for the Association to partner in order to delivering credible outcomes, with INSPIRE and Geonovum at this event, as we did with FIG in GSDI 9.

Through the various plenary, parallel and poster sessions the conference has presented material covering a multitude of topics:

- Societal challenges;
- Convergence and collaboration (GEO/GEOSS, GEOSS/OGC/GSDI, the UNSDI, and, government, business and the scientific community);
- SDI development (national, regional, continental -INSPIRE, and in the marine environment);
- SDI applications;
- Technical issues (data interoperability and harmonisation, ...);
- Research and development;
- Policy and governance (SDI assessment, data sharing, return on investments; business models); and
- Capacity building (GSDI knowledge network, regional newsletters, future spatial skills, International Geospatial Society, Rotterdam Geo Youth Capital 2009; Master Classes).

We have a strong strategic focus in the Association. This shows we are an organisation strong on teamwork and an organisation on the move.

- Our activities are dedicated to international cooperation and collaboration in spatial data infrastructure development to address the social, economic, and environmental issues confronting the world;
- We regularly offer conferences such as this one to enhance communications among practitioners as well as among the leadership of other geospatial organizations. We purposefully take our conferences to different parts of the globe in order to serve all parts of the planet;
- We publish monthly newsletters within and for various regions of the globe in multiple languages in order to keep all geospatial specialists aware of opportunities to become engaged and participate in their own regions;
- We offer a regular small grants program in furtherance of SDI development in developing nations;
- We are expanding support of our working committees that are actively addressing technical, legal and socioeconomic, social impact, and communication issues;
- An important priority for us is to enhance our inclusivity so that we better respond to the individual needs of members, are open and accommodating to the ideas of others, and draw people from different backgrounds into our Association. **The creation of an International Geospatial Society** which is an individual Arm for our Association and this is an excellent example of this strategy.

I believe the essence of what we do in the Association is help to create an enabling environment that enhances outcomes in societies, economies and the global environment. **The betterment of societies through spatial enablement is one of my goals as President.**

Spatial enablement will assist both developed and developing countries to pursue sustainable development objectives and it will ensure better productivity and efficiency.

Therefore, I would like us all to consider as a theme for the GSDI Association in the next period,

and the GSDI 12 conference in Singapore in October 2010 (jointly with the PCGIAP) – “**Realizing Spatially Enabled Societies**”.

‘Spatially Enabled Society is a scenario for the future. Because we **are living** in an increasingly complex and rapidly changing world.

Our relationships with our physical world and the way we use our social networks are changing as we deploy technology in new ways to create new ways of interacting with each other.

Spatial information and technologies are key tools in this transformation because we define our relationships by place. The ‘spatial enablement’ that these tools create can reshape our lives.

I look forward to working with you and receiving your contributions,

But before I finish, please let me to call to the podium Mr Bas Kok to come and receive a token of our appreciation, which can be worn to identify him as one of the significant GSDI past leaders.

This is part of a new culture that we started from this conference to recognize and acknowledge the contribution of the past President. The other past presidents in our Association also received these recognitions on Wednesday.

I would also like to ask Dr Al Steven to come and receive a small token of appreciation.

Once again thank you for your support and look forward seeing you in Singapore next year.

Thank you.

Abbas Rajabifard

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GSDI-11 World conference, Rotterdam