

3rd Geospatial Conference in Tunis (GCT)

17 – 21 March 2014

The conference is aimed at geospatial practitioners in North Africa and attracts participants primarily from Tunisia, Libya and Algeria, but with a number of other North African countries represented. The theme of the conference is building geospatial bridges for sustained development of North Africa. Many of the international geospatial vending companies were represented in the exhibition but also smaller companies operating in North Africa.

The conference was opened by Stefan Oeldenberger, managing Director of 3G (German GeoConsultants Group), which organized the conference. The conference theme was emphasized by the presence of the acting German ambassador to Tunisia at the opening. The interest of the Tunisian government was indicated by the presence of representatives from the Ministry of Higher Education and Telecommunication; the Ministry of Industry from Libya was also present. Oeldenberger referred to the establishment of the African Geospatial Sciences Institute (AGSI) and noted the role of ISPRS in helping in this through the Scientific Initiative Grant to develop a curriculum for AGSI, and the workshop held on the day before the official opening of the conference.

The presentations in the conference were almost exclusively from companies and regional government organisations. These did emphasise the applications of technology to Africa and demonstrate the use of geospatial data in the region. The question and answer sessions gave a good indication of the level of use and understanding of the technology. Agriculture is a major application of remote sensing in Tunisia as demonstrated by presentations on the use of an SDI for agriculture, making good use of technology, and a presentation on Rapideye indicated how regular observation can detect the presence of ground water and detection of illegal ground water extraction. Another presentation on a GIS for agriculture included the use of kites to obtain imagery to determine a fine DTM of 15cm resolution. The exhibitors also give workshops and demonstrations to showcase their products.

The conference is primarily for the benefit of organisations in North Africa and companies that do business in the region. The participants are clearly very familiar with geospatial data products but there is a clear impression that there is a high potential for expansion of the geospatial business in the area if government and industry can be made aware of the benefits of using the data. The role of AGSI in this could be important in raising awareness.

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