

Editorial

As we approach 18 months since the last ISPRS Congress in Istanbul, planning is well along for the Commission mid-term symposia in 2006 and the next Congress in Beijing in July, 2008. Council and the Technical Commission Presidents urge everyone to check the ISPRS calendar at www.isprs.org for up-to-date information on all events currently planned for May 2006 through July 2008, and to refresh your knowledge regularly for additional opportunities. With 60 Working Groups spread across eight Commissions, there are many ways for members and their constituents to participate in developing the science and technology of geomatics, remote sensing, GIS, mobile mapping, 3D reconstructions, modeling, and a host of other emerging applications.

Most noteworthy among the area where our collective energies can be developed and applied is in disaster mitigation, assessment, and management. The devastating impacts of the Indonesian tsunami (Dec. '04), and the destruction of coastal Louisiana from hurricanes Katrina and Rita (Aug-Sept '05) are grim reminders that natural disasters can totally change the lives and welfares of millions of people, rich and poor, in just a few minutes. Even our most advanced scientific understanding of the causes and risks associated with different types of disasters is of little consequence to those in the path of destruction, however, if we cannot develop plausible models and implement workable plans to avoid devastating consequences. As a "society of societies and organizations," ISPRS members have an opportunity to participate in developing image and GIS-based scientific and technical means to: (a) evacuate large areas, (b) assess local and regional damages almost immediately; (c) to direct efficient rescue and responder services; and reduce threats to public health arising from contaminated water or from other environmental causes. Events in the United States remind us how primitive our technologies are in preparing for, let alone implementing, disaster relief measures. Even more, we are reminded how vast the gap between scientific and cultural preparedness, on the one hand, and government-run responses on the other. We cannot work only with those who develop the science and technology, but with those we hope will adopt our most promising new methods.

ISPRS leadership is aware of our Society's pivotal roles (scientific, technological, social, and economic) in helping to reduce the losses and costs of disasters, and is working through several international bodies to develop and deploy meaningful ways to respond in all disaster-prone regions of the world, including areas that are traditionally underserved and which are therefore most vulnerable. Among the bodies with which your Society are currently engaged are: (a) the United Nations (primarily UNOOSA); (b) the International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU--specifically the GeoUnions, consisting of ISPRS, IUGG, IUSS, IGU, and IUGS); and, (c) the newly formed international governmental organization called the Group on Earth Observations (GEO--through its "system of systems," GEOSS)

There is room for every ISPRS member to get involved (first) by participating in relevant ISPRS Commission and Working Group activities, and (second) by conveying the aspirations and goals of our professions to local government leaders. Our ability to participate as an international society aiming to improve disaster reduction technology rests with you as a member society or organization of ISPRS. Your Ordinary, Associate, Regional, and Sustaining membership fees, open doors for your members to work with the Commission Presidents and Working Groups as relevant and crucial experts in these noble causes. They also provide you a line of communication through ISPRS liaison to top-level international bodies and their corresponding disaster reduction science and technology activities. There is much to do, and the journey will be long; but we must all do it. Generations yet to come will consider us wise and prudent to have cared for their safe futures.

Oh, yes... notices for 2006 membership fees will be mailed in December, 2005. A few of you are still in arrears for 2005 and earlier years. Please remit all outstanding payments as soon as possible, so we can continue to serve your interests.

Stan Morain, ISPRS Treasurer

