

Dear Mr. Chairman,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Distinguished Guests.

It is my great pleasure to welcome you all at the UN WPLA Workshop devoted to the topic „Enlargement of the European Union – challenges for the Land Administration.

A special welcome should be extended to the representative of the United Nations’s Economic Commission for Europe Mr. Vinogradov, and the Chairman of the Working Party on Land Administration Mr. Bengt Kjellson as well as to the WPLA Bureau Members who made the decision to accept the Hungarian initiative announced at the Edinburgh workshop on „Organisational Sustainability and Capacity Building” in 2003.

This is actually the second WPLA workshop that has been held in Budapest. The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Republic of Hungary hosted its first WPLA event on the topic „Land consolidation and land market development” in 1999 sharing its experiences gained by the bilateral cooperation project with Germany on land consolidation called TAMA.

The relation between Hungary and the Working Party of Land Administration of the United Nations’ Economic Committee for Europe goes back to nearly a decade.

Enabled by the Phare Programme of the European Union, our experts were able to participate the preparatory talks in Geneva which lead to the set up of the ad hoc group of experts called “Meeting of Officials on Land Administration” in early 1996.

Expert of the Hungarian Land Administration also took part in the Cadastral Task Force lead by Professor Peter Dale. As a response to the high demand from the countries in transition at that time, the Task Force elaborated the *Guidelines on Land Administration* with the example on the information technology development of the Hungarian Land Office Network in its appendix. This official publication of the United Nations was announced at the HABITAT II in Istanbul and was used as reference in the past 10 years worldwide.

The proposed and accepted theme of this workshop, namely the Enlargement of the EU – Challenges for the Land Administration is very timely from many aspects.

Land administration is not only important from the viewpoint of the security of the property rights in the market economies, but it strengthens the market of urban real estates and rural immobilities, provides vital services for the citizens, private and public sector and contributes very effectively to the policy support in many sectors including agriculture and environment.

Sustainable agriculture and integrated rural development needs land related measures. This is the reason why the quality of land related services have direct impact on the efficiency of the agricultural policy implementation, which means - since 1st of May 2004 - the Common Agricultural Policy of the European Union with special emphasis on its Integrated Administrative and Control System (IACS). The importance of the agriculture and the rural livelihood was clearly reflected by the recent protestation of the farmers which was followed by hard talks and final agreement between the farmers and government. Also in the field of rural development a Dialog was started between the academia, NGOs and Governmental representatives.

This workshop gives excellent opportunity to highlight Hungarian achievements and lessons learned in all of the themes selected.

In the field of institutional development Hungary made a very forward-looking upgrade of the land administration when merging the single institution model was introduced merging the legal registry (“Grundbuch”) with the cadastre part in the early 70’s. This advanced model supported by appropriate legislation and institutional rearrangement made possible the easier execution of the change management in the early 90’s.

The reasons of establishing the unified, multipurpose land registry system in Hungary include

- The data integrity and consistency were not well maintained in the two records
- Parallel data updating and registration were not anymore acceptable, and
- To reduce the cost for saving the central budget

When land registration, cadastral mapping, land-use, land valuation, land protection as well as the topographic mapping at larger scale became the responsibility of the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, this institutional setup facilitated very much the cope with two major drivers, namely the transition to the market-driven economy and the preparation which were needed for the European Union membership.

During the transition time the unified, multipurpose land registry has been effected heavily by the mass privatisation (eg. by the execution of Compensation Act), and the number of transactions increased dramatically. About 75% of the arable land was effected by the privatisation and the compensation, which means, about 5.2 million hectar went to the property of 2.6 million individuals. The land has been dramatically fragmented due to the fact that the new owners received their land - intentionally or not - in 2-3 different locations. The fragmented parcel structure became a barrier for the sustanaible farming activities. About 1.5 million hectar of land remains undivided joint property which resulted in 53% of the cultivated lands that are rented today. The land market was strengthened significantly by the establishment of the National Land Fund, which became in the second year the largest owner of the rural areas. The Land Administration and the National Land Fund Management cooperate closely and they just elaborated three pilot project initiatives for the Ministry in multiagency environment and participatory basis involving the local stakeholders.

In order to ensure transparency and efficiency in the land registry related services, the European Commission provided massive financial and technical assistance for the modernisation of the Land Administration. Started in 1991 with the support of the computerisation of the land registry, today not only the 118 District Land Offices, but the 19 County and the Capital Land Offices are also equipped by information technology facilities capable to handle digital cadastral maps. These offices have been interconnected by an intranet data and document transmission network called TAKARNET, allowing internet based access to the services via extranet. So far there are about 3000 service subscribers and the number of on-line clients increasing steadily. Since some years, even the governmental portal offers access to the content of the first part of the property sheets, namely the descriptive data of the parcels such as parcel number, address, area, features of cultivation according to a nomenclature, soil quality etc).

Institutional development and the legislative harmonisation with the EU were the primary goals of the National Programme on the Adoption of the Acquis communautaire (NPAA)

which was implemented in the Lands, Mapping and Remote Sensing Part of the Agricultural Chapter between 1998-2004.

These application oriented developments were dominantly implemented by the Institute of Geodesy, Cartography and Remote Sensing (FÖMI) with a speed as was enabled by the budget. Within the programme framework the achievements include

- Country coverage of the CORINE Land Cover database with extended resolution and nomenclature, CORINE 2000 Land cover with full country coverage,
- LUCAS area sampling based land use survey for EUROSTAT,
- Aerial survey of the country at the time of the full agricultural census and producing digital Orthophoto Database for Hungary,
- Set up Digital Elevation Database with multipurpose useability,
- Operational monitoring of industrial crops and provision of yield estimation gradually extended to the whole country,
- Set up of GIS assisted vineyard registry supporting the vineyard communities, and the supervising authorities by data, products and know-how transfer (this work has to be completed as soon as possible for the remaining ones vineyard regions),
- Establishing the Land Parcel Identification System and the technology applied for the Area-based Subsidy Control with Remote Sensing.
- Recognised the FÖMI RSC's advanced solutions in this field, Hungary was the first new Member State, where CwRS Conference of the European Commission was held last November attracting about 300 participants, mostly civil servants and prime contractors from all countries of the EU.
- International cooperation on institutional development and knowledge transfer in land consolidation with Germany, the Netherlands and FAO. The Dutch-Hungarian project TALC accelerated the completion of the Land Consolidation Strategy which were elaborated by leading institutions of the sector learned also from the lessons and guidelines of FAO and FIG.
- Strengthen links with European Institutions and Organisations such as EuroGeographics, EUROGI and the Permanent Committee on Cadaster in the EU. Set up smaller scale digital map products according to international commitments on European and global level for EuroGeographic. In EUROGI, the Hungarian contribution was to perform a 22 European country wide in-depth survey on Cadastral GI Systems.
- Based on the guidance of the Vienna Initiative and the FAO-FIG Conference held in Munich on Land Consolidation, execution of the World Bank project by establishing a regional center of excellence on property rights and land market development issues. The Central European Land Knowledge Center (CELCenter) became a legal entity established by the Ministry of Agriculture and Regional Development just before the end of the project.

In order to meet the requirements of the user community and applications, there is an immediate effort to increase the capacity and capability to handle digital cadastral data countrywide. Thanks to the Acceleration of the National Cadastral Programme financed upon bank credit, all cadastral maps will be available with full country coverage in vectorised form until the end of 2007. The National Cadastral Programme is based on intensive and proven Public-Private –Partnership. The data availability will facilitate and speed up integrated rural developments and the associated land-related measures such as the land consolidation. Realising that provision of useable data and other costs of the land consolidation is an issue,

we emphasized in Brussels to take the land related measures into consideration in the Rural Development Plan of the European Union for the period of 2007-2013.

Very recently the environmental measures have also receive intensive support from the Land Administration (NATURA 2000, delineation of less favoured areas, fighting against plant species which are causing allergies etc).

The newest challenge is to be prepared for the adaption of the INSPIRE Directive of the EU, which is now in the co-decision phase. It is anticipated, the Directive will enter in force before 2007. The preparatory phase needs a strategy, intersectoral coordination, and clear understanding of the major stakeholders involving the governmental, academia, NGOs and the private sectors. The majority of the core data sets of the Spatial Data Infrastructure prescribed in the Annexes I and II are belonging from the responsibility point of view to the Ministry of Agriculture.

Taking into account the expected socio-economic benefits, the set up of the National Spatial Data Infrastructure matching with the INSPIRE could be a mega-project of the National Development Plan. Such a project would take care also the data collection, processing and updating, which is out of the scope of INSPIRE considering, such a task should be performed by national measures and resources. Data policy, financing, implementation of EU regulations such as the Water Framework Directive, the Public Sector Information Directive and others needs intersectoral and public discussions and immediate governmental actions.

It is a good sign for such a horizontal governmental cooperation, that the Interministerial Coordination Committee on Information Society under the auspices of the Ministry of Informatics and Communication set up a permanent Subcommittee on Satellite Navigation while based on the initiative of the Hungarian GI Association (HUNAGI) supported by the MoARD, an ad hoc Task Force has been established to elaborate the Strategy on the National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI). Most recently, also the relevant committees of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences issued resolution which foster the development of the NSDI.

These ongoing processes pave the way for the readiness and competitiveness in the field of European programmes such as GALILEO and GMES, the Global Monitoring of Environment and Security.

Integrated, unified multipurpose cadastre is one of the fundamental element of the NSDI answering the questions related to location and ownership both with time stamp. It will be substantial part of the Digital Earth concept, which is developed with remarkable speed in countries such as China, Japan and New Zealand. The rich data content, the wide range of applications of the Hungarian GI community as well as the horizontal institutional networking called interest at the recent Symposium in Tokyo and there is good chance that – with the support of the relevant EU institutions and organisations Hungary will win the right to host the 2009 Digital Earth event for Europe at a time as the transpository phase of the INSPIRE Directive will be finished.

Finally, I would like to underline again: the land has extreme importance for the society. Land is a social, ecological, economical and emotional issue for the citizens, having direct impact on the quality and sustainability of the rural livelihood. Knowledge shared in due time based on proven, best practices can save time, money and energy. I am convinced, this workshop will be an effective forum for exchange of views and the rich experiences of the institutions of

the Hungarian Land Administration and will provide useful contribution to the overall result of this workshop. The professional competence and extensive experience of the participants of this WPLA Workshop is a guarantee to achieve these goals in the three selected themes of the meeting. I wish in this sense fruitful discussions for the benefit of all of the participants who represent their country, institution or taking part as individual experts.