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LAND and DEMOCRACY

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Land, and the interaction of human societies with it, has resulted in many economic, social, political and environmental outcomes and concerns. The dialogue between these competing and overlapping factors requires a land administration system that is able to support the ever-changing relationship between humankind and land, to facilitate complex decision-making and to support the implementation of those decisions. Therefore, appropriate and effective land administration is of crucial importance for sustainable development.

Fortunately, there has been a growing awareness of these issues and, as a result, world attitudes are changing. Nations are now generally more conscious of the fact that the actions of individuals can have global consequences. This awareness has arisen as a result of the greater availability of information. This in turn has re-ignited the debate about how land can best be administered for the good, not only of individual landowners and users, but also for the community as a whole. The imperative to re-examine land administration systems in the context of sustainable development is now overwhelming.

It is likely that, as the concept of obligations in land grows and as the complexity and scope of interests increases and becomes, not only parcel relevant, but also areal, zonal, catchment or regional based, a new approach to the recording of these interests will emerge. At the global level, it is clear that ecological systems treat jurisdictional boundaries with contempt. As the reality of these new concepts becomes widespread there will be a need for a change of individual and group behaviour in relation to land use as the societal rights take on a new significance. Spatial information infrastructures that embrace such diversities are a necessary component to be built into any meaningful re-engineering of land administration systems.

Whatever form it takes, a public recording of these rights and responsibilities means that members of society will be made aware of the behaviour of others and the impact of their own behaviour on members of the state, national and perhaps global community. The consequences of local actions therefore will be seen and considered in the framework of a global cadastre by adopting the concepts of custom, territoriality and the links between humankind and land, which encompass the symbiotic relationship between terrestrial space and the behaviour of human society. A capacity to record the landscapes of the mind, which holds the key to customary land rights is necessary and should be developed. As citizens of the world we should direct our energies to explain and instruct society at large in the means of comprehensively showing, and making public, individual and group rights and obligations to the land.