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Distinguished guests, dear friends,

on behalf of both cooperating host organizations, DVW, German Association of Geodesy, Geoinformation and Land Management, Working Group 2 –Spatial Information and Spatial Data Management, and Mainz University of Applied Sciences, i3mainz, Institute for Spatial Information and Surveying Technology I would like to bid you a warm welcome to Mainz, the capital of German state Rhineland-Palatinate.

Johannes Gutenberg, the inventor of movable type printing is Mainz's probably most celebrated native son. Following his epoch-making invention of printing the dissemination of information became cheap and rapid in a so far unimagined way. The era of long, arduous, costly production of hand-written works and copies abruptly ended. Far reaching new exciting opportunities evolved from the printed word produced by the printing press which allowed a broad community access to knowledge, information, ideas and ideologies. 'All lives on Earth were changed forever by the printing press', says the City of Mainz website. To cite the City of Mainz website again, Gutenberg 'has been accorded the honour as the godfather of Information Technology' and 'the Information Age is now, the World Wide Web, internet, computers all descendents and variations of Gutenberg's pioneering work'.

Following such a long-time tradition, i3mainz, 'Institute for Spatial Information and Surveying Technology' focussing on the spatial component of Information Technology was founded more than 500 years later at the birthplace of printing. One of the institute's fields of activity is the scientific support of Spatial Data Infrastructure development.

Spatial Information Technology is a core part of a spatial data infrastructure which provides for a basis for spatial data discovery, evaluation, download and application for users and providers within all levels of government, the commercial sector, the non-profit sector, academia and the general public. Efforts have to be made to bring together those elements of local, regional, national and global SDIs which are already available with all other SDI components provided by a broad community of current and potential users. Integration of SDIs is a must at both, technical and organisational, levels to support sustainable development of our world, of rural and, even more, of urban areas. May this FIG Commission 3 workshop 'Spatial Information for Sustainable Management of Urban Areas' be a worthwhile contribution to reach these goals.

Welcome to the birthplace of printing, enjoy the historic spirit of the Gutenberg inventive talent to exchange and create new ideas for the best of our blue planet.

Hartmut Müller
Chair of Local Organizing Committee