

# Welcome Address

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to welcome you all to the 8th International Symposium on High Mountain Remote Sensing Cartography. I specially welcome all our foreign visitors coming from Europe, the USA, and neighboring countries. We know this is the second time that this symposium is held in South America and we think that La Paz is an appropriate place to host it. The celebration of this meeting is possible thanks to a suggestion of Saturnino Leguizamón who proposed that we organize it. Although the social and economic problems of our country prevented this symposium from being held in October last year, we planned to carry it out in March of this year, during Holy Week. This week usually brings a break in social conflicts because of the deep religious feelings of the people.

La Paz is a high mountain city located at 3,600 meters above sea level, near the iced peaks of the Cordillera. Many native cultures and customs converge in this city to produce a unique mixture. Its population of one million inhabitants has suffered the impact of crisis in the last years but the impetus of the city is prevailing.

Nevertheless, a new menace is threatening this city and we hope this Symposium can attract attention to this problem. Global climatic change has dramatically reduced the volume of the glaciers in the Cordillera and some will soon disappear altogether, as we will see in some of the contributions to be presented in this Symposium. For decades, the glaciers have been the source of water for the city and we are now faced with the need to urgently solve this problem. Finding alternative sources requires the application of various methods and techniques. We can anticipate that remote sensing methods will have a role in this search.

During the next days we will have the opportunity to learn about new developments in remote sensing technology and its applications. We hope it will be useful for all the participants and enable us to apply remote sensing cartography to preserve biodiversity, to help in the prevention of natural hazards, and to develop new rational exploitation projects for natural resources. We hope you enjoy your stay in La Paz and the field trips to the Altiplano and Eastern Cordillera. We also hope you will return to Bolivia in the future.

Finally, we want to express our gratitude to all the institutions which have collaborated in the organization of this meeting. Thanks to Academia Nacional de Ciencias, Servicio Nacional de Geología y Técnico de Minas, Institut de la Recherche pour le Développement (IRD) of France, Carrera de Ingeniería Geológica y del Medio Ambiente, and SELPER – Bolivia.

Thank you all for coming.

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