

forward at the same speed," said Meden. "But at least it gets people thinking about the ideas so that we can have a discussion the following year and move forward. Several of the issues did move forward since last year's conference."

Winfried Schuch, from LBB Idar-Oberstein, said of this year's conference: "This is how it should be." Open, two-way communication is essential to progress, he said, because while it doesn't always resolve all the issues immediately, it gets them out on the table for others to think about. But he also added that the discussions have to continue outside of the conference.

"Outside of these meetings here, we have to get more independent working groups together," he said. "I prefer to have working groups for special points ... meeting four or five times a year, and then [presenting] the solution to the auditorium."

Matthias Marks, *leitender Baudirektor*, SHBA Reutlingen, agreed, adding that day-to-day business often gets in the way of these discussions. "And if you come together once a year then it's just an exchange, it doesn't go further than that. You can never do more than just raise an issue or question or give a suggestion."

One forward-thinking initiative proposed last year that took wings outside the conference walls is called the "A-E selection" initiative, in which the District has asked to be a part of the A-E (Architect-Engineering firm) selection process normally reserved solely for the *bauamts*.

"In the past, we've noticed that the U.S. has sometimes been displeased with our choice of the designer," said Marks. But after having been the lead manager on a project that included the District in the A-E selection process, he said he's very happy with the outcome and believes the concept should be broadened to make it the rule, not the exception.

Schuch, who recently included the District on an A-E selection board to build a C-130 hangar on Ramstein Air Base, said he felt comfortable with the partnership because he knew that the District's

early approval would mean endorsement throughout the project.

"We wanted to know that everyone could accept the A-E," he said. "If we cannot come together we cannot hire them."

One caveat to the initiative put forth by Schuch was the minimum threshold for involving the District in the A-E selection. "We must have a borderline. It can't be done for a project of \$1 million or whatever," he said, arguing that the time and labor costs to the *bauamt* would be the same as the costs for a larger project.

Marks concurred, reasoning that the inclusion of



Matthias Marks, *leitender Baudirektor*, SHBA Reutlingen, gives short remarks after accepting several Silver Castle awards on behalf of his team at this year's partnering conference. At the conference, Marks discussed with participants his organization's experience with the "two-step search procedure" for an Army Lodge project in Böblingen.



Col. Margaret Burcham gives closing remarks after thanking the guests at this year's partnering conference at the Ramada hotel in Wiesbaden. In total, more than 50 of the District's most important stakeholders came to the meeting, which took place Nov. 8 and 9.

the District in A-E selection should depend on the situation.

"There shouldn't be a regulation that says when the U.S. should and should not be involved," Marks said, "but rather it should be done on a case-by-case basis."

Meden said he was glad to see such an active discussion at this year's conference and added that the candor helped create opportunities to advance some of the initiatives even further.

"I'm happy with the progress that we made from last year's conference," Meden said, "and am looking forward to seeing what next year's has in store."

Since the conference, discussions have continued, said Meden. In late November, several District members including the district commander met to discuss initiatives with several local and regional *bauamt* personnel in Rheinland-Pfalz. The future, Meden said, holds even more of these discussions in store.

at a glance...

NAU's top, ongoing partnering initiatives

- **Cross-leveling work** – The District is seeking creative ways to equitably share work between *bauamts* as well as introduce the concept of standard design centers.
- **A-E selection** – The District is seeking to have a voice in the A-E selection process.
- **Contractor schedules** – The District is requesting a more detailed construction schedule, including interim completion milestones, critical path, and clear end dates.
- **Contractor evaluations** – The District is seeking to make an official database of the A-E firms' evaluations of construction contractors.
- **Functional designs** – Also known as Design-Build, the District is looking to expand to all *bauamts* the ability to award construction contracts based on functional designs.