

UN-Space High-Level Panel

UNITED NATIONS: REINFORCING SYNERGIES FOR UNISPACE+50 AND BEYOND

21 June 2018, 13:00-14:00, M Plenary room

Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Dear colleagues,

It is a pleasure to be part of this panel with the UN family in Vienna to discuss synergies in our work.

The efforts of all our organizations are, of course, united under the Sustainable Development Goals.

As UNISPACE +50 has made eloquently clear, space technology has an important role to play in supporting the international community in achieving the SDGs.

For the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, satellite images and navigation satellite data inform some of our flagship research.

This includes detection of opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan, Mexico and Myanmar, as well as coca cultivation in Colombia, Peru and Bolivia.

Time series of satellite images help us to determine crop calendars. We can verify eradication of illicit crops in Afghanistan, Colombia and Mexico.

Furthermore, we can monitor illicit mining in Colombia, and quantify terrorist groups in areas with illicit crops in Afghanistan

Space technologies are used to detect deforestation and illicit crop cultivation in protected areas in South America, and for spatial modelling to map the risk of illicit crop cultivation, using satellite-derived data on crops, elevation and population.

They enable us to assess the impact of development projects implemented in areas with illicit crops in Afghanistan and Colombia, as well as monitor key indicators for the SDGs using socio-economic data.

UNODC is also using satellite SAR/Optical images, kindly provided by EU Copernicus/EMSA, in our work on the ground to support maritime law enforcement responses by Sao Tome' and Principe, Senegal, Gambia, Togo, Liberia, and Cabo Verde.

Since 2016, our Global Maritime Crime Programme has supported several exercises with national maritime law enforcement agencies aimed at identifying vessels, undetected by standard AIS/VMS signals, which could be involved in illicit activities, such as transshipments, which are often related to illegal fishing or smuggling activities.

Further exercises are planned for this year in Sri Lanka, Cameroon and Guinea Bissau.

Moreover, our Office is partnering with Vulcan Inc, in the Seychelles to enhance maritime domain awareness capability to counter illicit activity at sea, with a focus on fisheries crime.

The Vulcan system known as SkyLight uses satellite imagery and data-analysis software to detect vessels that operate with the identification transponder switched-off and are possibly engaged in illegal maritime activity.

UNODC has also worked directly with OOSA to support a conference in Nairobi on technology solutions and applications using satellite information to address wildlife trafficking.

Using space technologies and remote sensing to counter wildlife and forest crime is certainly an area of interest for our Office.

The potential for using satellites to take action against human trafficking, for example by locating fishing boats or factories where victims are being forced to work, has also been a topic of international discussion in recent years.

This is part of a wider debate taking place on the use of such technologies to document and detect, and thereby help to protect human rights.

Action in this regard would have to address a number of issues related to surveillance, privacy and rights. The potential exploitation of technologies by violent non-state actors may also pose risks.

Going forward, the international community must seek to strike a balance between these concerns on the one hand, and enabling the effective use of such capabilities on the other.

UNODC is certainly ready to try to meet this challenge, and we look forward to expanding our cooperation with OOSA and other partners to support innovation, and harness space science and technology for good.

Thank you.