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Graz Hosts United Nations Symposium on Space Solutions for Water Management

VIENNA, 10 September (UN Information Service) -- A four-day Symposium on "Water for the World: Space Solutions for Water Management" will be held at the Austrian Academy of Sciences in Graz, Austria, from 13 to 16 September. The Symposium is being jointly organized by the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (OOSA), the Government of Austria and the European Space Agency (ESA). It is the second in a series of three consecutive Symposia, held from 2003 to 2005, with the aim of promoting the use of the demonstrated capabilities of space technology to support some of the actions called for in the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD). The Symposium will be hosted and co-sponsored by the Austrian Federal Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the Austrian Federal Ministry for Transport, Innovation and Technology, the Province of Styria, the City of Graz and ESA.

The Symposium will address space applications to enhance management of water resources, with the emphasis on the need for further creating synergies among a number of relevant ongoing initiatives. The United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, for example, began to consider "Space and water" from its session in 2004. The Committee is also responsible for the inter-governmental coordination of the implementation of the recommendations of the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE III), many of which are relevant to improving water management. The Committee on Earth Observations Satellites (CEOS) launched the TIGER Initiative as part of its WSSD follow-up programme, focusing on Earth observation for integrated water resources management in Africa. The Symposium will also take into account the latest results of the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development and other bodies within the UN system that address water resources management, in response to actions called for in the WSSD Plan of Implementation.

The specific objectives of the Symposium for 2004 are: (i) to review the needs of end users engaged in the management of water resources and to examine how space technologies could help; (ii) to examine what type and level of training is required for which target groups; (iii) to identify a functional partnership between space agencies, space-related research institutions, river basin authorities and ministries and government agencies responsible for water resource management in developing countries; and (iv) to identify the steps needed to initiate pilot projects. Through the working group to be established with representatives of river basin authorities and space agencies, the Symposium aims to develop an action plan to initiate a pilot project to provide training in the use of space technologies for integrated water resources management in developing countries.

Decision-makers and programme managers from governmental institutions and the private industry from the following countries and organizations are expected to attend the Symposium: Afghanistan, Algeria, Austria, Bangladesh, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Chile, China, Croatia, France, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Honduras, India, Iran, Jordan, Morocco, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, Paraguay, Philippines, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Senegal, South Africa, Syria, Tajikistan, Tonga, Tunisia, United States, Uzbekistan, Venezuela, Viet Nam, United Nations Environment Programme, United Nations Development Programme, ESA, International Space University, and OOSA. The following river basin authorities are also participating in the Symposium: Comision Administradora del Rio de la Plata, Lake Chad Basin Commission, Niger Basin Authority, The Nile Basin Initiative Secretariat and Senegal River Basin Authority,

The United Nations Programme on Space Applications is implemented by the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs and works to improve the use of space science and technology for the economic and social development of all nations, in particular developing countries. Under the Programme, the Office conducts training courses, workshops, seminars and other activities on applications and capacity building in subjects such as remote sensing, communications, satellite meteorology, search and rescue, basic space science, satellite navigation and space law.

The United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (OOSA) implements the decisions of the General Assembly and of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and its two Subcommittees, the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee and the Legal Subcommittee. The Office is responsible for promoting international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space, and assisting developing countries in using space science and technology. Located in Vienna, Austria, OOSA maintains a website at <http://www.oosa.unvienna.org>.

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