

OPENING REMARKS

Thank you for the floor. I would really like to thank everyone for joining us today.

We are experiencing an extraordinary situation with global implications and seeking the right solutions exemplifies the need for multilateral action. Covid-19 has spread into every corner of our planet in just a few months and affected societies and their health, economy, tourism, sports and culture among many other areas in an unprecedented way.

And it is now when we truly recognize the vital role of science, technology and innovation. The value of space programmes has manifested greatly during this pandemic. Enabling contact tracing and identifying affected areas, through disease modeling and transmission monitoring, to remote work, tele-health and communication, for our businesses and to stay close to our friends and families. These are but some aspects where space plays a critical role.

At the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs, we therefore assign great importance to the availability of space benefits to everyone. While historically space activities were only affordable just for a few nations, access to space has changed dramatically in the last 10 years. But out of 193 UN Member States only about 80 have ever had a satellite in orbit. We are still far from making the benefits of space universally available.

It is high time we ensure that space-based data and infrastructures are utilized to their maximum potential in all corners of the world. What exactly must be done? I would like to highlight three words - partnerships, networking, cooperation.

UNOOSA has exemplified this approach exceptionally well in the past few decades. Thanks to the great support of our partners, we have been able to make a real difference in the world. Bringing non-spacefaring nations into the space community, enabling students to turn their ideas into research, training individuals and teams to use satellites to save lives, improve food and water security, and accelerate global efforts towards sustainable development as such.

And building on the success of past health-related activities, we have taken immediate steps to seek solutions and help the international community in addressing the Covid-19 crisis. A dedicated Task Force on Space for Health was established to improve inter-Office coordination in developing concrete response to the novel needs.

And to help bridge the information crisis, UN-SPIDER compiled examples of contributions and best practices using space in addressing COVID-19. This helps to facilitate the discovery of solutions already developed and used by global space stakeholders.



Today's webinar is also an integral part of overall effort to harness the power of space to tackle the challenges of humanity. And in tackling COVID-19, let us use space not only in the current phase but also in the recovery phase. The world will need to re-start and satellites will certainly have their say in not only returning the status-quo, but in shaping a more livable and safer planet.

What we need right now to foster innovation in combating global challenges is diversity and integrated efforts. I am therefore excited to have with us for this webinar a nice variety of speakers with different backgrounds and stories. In the next hour or so we are going to listen to different perspectives on the work that has been done by different stakeholders.

We are going to delve into the specific role of UNOOSA as well as activities of the international space community. I am really looking forward to your interventions, and I would like to thank you all for your contributions. As we said, partnership, networking, cooperation!

Thank you