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**Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space****Fifty-sixth session**

Vienna, 12-21 June 2013

**UN-SPIDER Regional Support Offices Meeting on the implementation of the planned 2013-2014 Programme Activities****Note by the Secretariat****I. Background information**

1. In its resolution 61/110, the General Assembly agreed that the UN-SPIDER Programme should, when possible, work closely with regional and national centres of expertise in the use of space technology in disaster risk management to form a network of Regional Support Offices (RSO's) to implement the activities of the programme in their respective regions and in a coordinated manner. This network was seen as an important source of knowledge and key to the success of the Programme.
2. The network of RSO should be able to contribute to any of the specific activities included in the UN-SPIDER workplan by taking on the responsibility for funding and implementing a specific activity jointly and in coordination with UN-SPIDER staff. Such activities could include: hosting a regional workshop, promoting capacity-building activities in a region, carrying out missions in a region to support national disaster management planning, supporting national and regional vulnerability assessments, providing mapping support during emergencies, contributing to the systematic compilation of relevant information (including the development of country profiles and the compilation of specific geospatial databases), supporting awareness-raising campaigns and promoting the establishment of regional and national networks of experts.
3. Fifteen RSO of UN-SPIDER are currently being hosted by the following ten national organizations: the Algerian Space Agency (7 October 2009), the Argentinean National Space Activities Commission, the Agustín Codazzi Geographic Institute of Colombia (29 September 2011), the Indonesian National Institute of Aeronautics and Space (19 February 2013), the Iranian Space

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Agency (4 June 2009), the Károly Róbert University of Hungary (7 February 2012), the National Space Research and Development Agency of Nigeria (4 June 2009),<sup>1</sup> the Pakistan Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (9 February 2010), the Romanian Space Agency (4 June 2009) and the State Space Agency of Ukraine (10 February 2010). The following five regional organizations also host Regional Support Offices: the Asian Disaster Reduction Center (ADRC) based in Kobe, Japan (4 June 2009); the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) based in Kathmandu, Nepal (15 February 2013); the Regional Center for Mapping of Resources for Development based in Nairobi, Kenya (22 June 2010); the University of the West Indies based in St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago (8 October 2010); and the Water Center for the Humid Tropics of Latin America and the Caribbean based in Panama City, Panama (15 April 2010).

4. Additionally, the following three countries have indicated in the past their interest to host a UN-SPIDER RSO: Russian Federation, South Africa and Turkey. Updated information on each Regional Support Office, as well as relevant contacts, can be found on the UN-SPIDER Knowledge Portal.<sup>2</sup> These UN-SPIDER RSOs agreed to meet every year during the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee (STSC) sessions of the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS), to review the work carried out during the previous year and to plan future activities in support of the Programme, aiming at implementing the agreed upon plan of work.

5. The first meeting of the established and prospective UN-SPIDER RSOs was held from 9 to 10 February 2010, and focused on the work of the network and on their involvement in the implementation of the programme. From 8 to 9 February 2011 the second meeting was held building upon the discussions of the previous year and benefitting from the presence of representatives from several leading existing mechanisms that make space-based information available for emergency response during the “Expert Meeting on Space-based Technologies and Emergency Response” which was held jointly on the second day of the RSO meeting. The third meeting of the network took place from 6 to 7 February 2012 during the forty-ninth session of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS).

## **II. Main outcomes of the 4th Annual UN-SPIDER Regional Support Offices Meeting, held on 11 and 12 February 2013**

6. The 4th Annual UN-SPIDER Regional Support Offices meeting was attended by representatives of twelve of the fifteen established RSOs and by two of the prospective ones. Not able to attend were representatives from Algeria, Argentina and the University of West Indies. However, a delegate of Algeria delivered a presentation and statement on behalf of the Algerian RSO.

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<sup>1</sup> Date of signature of the agreement.

<sup>2</sup> [www.un-spider.org/content/5699/regional-support-offices](http://www.un-spider.org/content/5699/regional-support-offices).

7. The two-day meeting allowed:
  - (a) RSOs to share information on their relevant 2012 activities and to discuss proposed activities for the coming period as well as to consider the longer-term, strategic planning for UN-SPIDER;
  - (b) RSOs to liaise with the three UN-SPIDER regional desk officers (Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, and Asia and the Pacific) to coordinate their activities in all countries where they are active;
  - (c) UN-SPIDER staff to discuss with RSOs the various requests for inputs to specific activities including the Knowledge Portal, capacity-building efforts and long-term strategy; and
  - (d) The welcoming of three new RSOs to the network, and signing of the cooperation agreement with one of these (ICIMOD) during the meeting; acknowledging new commitment from Russia to also join the network soon.
8. Section III further summarizes the possible support of the UN-SPIDER RSOs as linked to the implementation of the proposed 2012-2013 Programme Activities and as discussed during the annual meeting and subsequently reconfirmed by most RSOs.
9. Reviewing the contributions of the RSO network in 2012, UN-SPIDER staff first summarized in presentations the various activities the RSO network supported during 2012. Also discussed was the need for a better presence of the RSOs on the Knowledge Portal, including information about the activities and regions they cover.
10. RSOs contributed staff to Technical Advisory Missions such as Cap Verde, and provided trainer support for follow-up capacity-building effort such as in Cameroon and Myanmar. A number of RSO representatives attended outreach events and workshops organized by UN-SPIDER such as the Beijing Conference on Space Technologies for Disaster Management (October 2012), the Vienna Crowdsourcing Workshop (December 2012) or others.
11. RSOs have also supported emergency response activities and activations by UN-SPIDER. This included imagery acquisition, processing, mapping, including radar data processing expertise when needed.
12. CONAE in collaboration with UN-SPIDER supported such efforts in Costa Rica and Guatemala, while the RSO in Ukraine supported flood emergency response in Palestine, with very valuable and quick radar imagery processing and mapping of areas affected by floods.
13. Based on agreed commitments during the third RSO meeting some have started developing specific booklets on best practices related to the use of space-based information for various disaster situations such as floods, tsunamis or droughts.
14. The booklets have been referenced and described also in the 2012 UN-SPIDER Activities Report (see [www.unoosa.org/pdf/reports/ac105/AC105\\_1029E.pdf](http://www.unoosa.org/pdf/reports/ac105/AC105_1029E.pdf)). Once finalized, these booklets will also be published for public access on the UN-SPIDER Knowledge Portal. One of the main goals is to ensure that relevant information based on the experience of the RSOs is made available (for information preparedness) for other countries to learn from.

15. SUPARCO of Pakistan, ADRC of Japan (in cooperation with JAXA), ISA of the Islamic Republic of Iran presented their work and their status. Meeting participants commented on the need for the booklets to include examples on how satellite imagery is used for post-disaster reconstruction efforts too, and suggested to also compare historical data to recent droughts.

16. Following the opening address from the Head of the Space Application Section of OOSA, discussions aimed at taking stock of last year's work and at identifying the potential achievements the RSO network could contribute to in the future. In this context, the new policy of the International Charter: Space and Major Disasters (Charter) on universal access was also highlighted. UN-SPIDER and its network of RSO can support the implementation of the Universal Access initiative.

17. A number of presentations described the existing setup, capacities and potential contributions of each RSO. Presenters highlighted: a number of capacity-building activities (e.g. training courses, summer school programmes) they are undertaking in the regions through various mechanisms and with other resources; the fact that they are often supporting already the UN-SPIDER National Focal Points (NFPs) at the national level; that they are holding large satellite imagery data archives or have access to satellite ground stations receiving data over those regions that could all benefit UN-SPIDER activities; and that there are e-learning platforms for capacity-building and social media campaigns and outreach strategies under development.

18. A number of RSOs also highlighted their specific expertise related to disaster management in mountain regions, drought monitoring, or their language-related advantages in the various regions they cover.

19. Break-out sessions gave an opportunity for region-based discussions among RSOs and UN-SPIDER staff in order to identify lessons learnt from past collaborations and joint activities as well as to consider how best to support the planned activities in the various regions. Besides agreeing on region-specific activities, the groups considered other important issues, summarized below.

20. Demand to support the implementation of recommendations issued from TAMs is increasing. The Meeting discussed how to optimize the joint resources through better communication of schedules, the possibility of merging activities to reduce travel expenses, a Train the Trainers (To) approach and the possibility of organizing regional activities to review and assess the implementation of recommendations.

21. Such efforts would ensure that the Programme and its network of RSOs provide more support and better follow up after TAMs, especially as financial resources are diminishing and more difficult to leverage.

22. It was also agreed that strengthening and actively involving the network of UN-SPIDER National Focal Points (NFPs) in communications and activity planning would be beneficial.

23. There was also a common agreement among participants that outreach activities about UN-SPIDER and its promotion should be actively pursued as many institutions and countries are not yet aware of the support UN-SPIDER can provide.

24. As access to data and information and timeliness of delivery to users are still often important constraints the Programme should identify solutions to ensure faster access to data in general, and to develop with all relevant actors a simplified and efficient process to obtain satellite images.

25. Fundraising was also identified as a focus area and it was proposed that OOSA through its UN-SPIDER team increases its efforts for resource mobilization and fundraising. The space industry, the universities, research institutions could be put to contribution through innovative mechanisms. The RSOs and their focal points could also take a more active role, especially within their countries and with their respective governments.

26. As an introduction to the session “Practices on Use of Archived Satellite Imagery”, the UN-SPIDER workplan 2012-2013 was presented. The session included the description of relevant practices and examples on the use of archived satellite imagery in the disaster management cycle (including the booklets discussed above. An interesting discussion developed among the representatives of RSO’s, many of them pointing out different perspectives:

(a) It was proposed that the specific use of the methodology should be as clear as possible in order to be more understandable for each stakeholder;

(b) That the recommendations and definitions should be understandable enough to inform others about what is done and what will be done;

(c) It was suggested to make templates about what exactly should be included, to make their elaboration as clear as possible and to provide more accurate and concise information;

(d) It was also recommended to change the current format of the booklets (the ones in preparation), given that structural improvements could be made;

(e) The use of flowcharts was also recommended as an explanatory tool, with recommendations on the methods expected to be shared on the Knowledge Portal; and

(f) Ways to increase the use of space-based information in hazard mapping should be proposed so the quality of those maps is increased.

27. The need for better communication among the RSO’s and the UN-SPIDER offices was also discussed. Communication is a crucial requirement to guarantee the success of the team’s work, as it was agreed by all participants. Suggestions made during the session included:

(a) Sharing information and data more regularly and more systematically, working together to solve problems and to continuously “educate” each other; and

(b) Making use of the social media advances to maintain more fluent contacts. Re-activating the RSO Skype chat group was specifically requested, and it was proposed to consider various videoconferencing and virtual meeting platforms for regular interactions.

28. A short session on availability and access to satellite imagery data for emergency response considered possible improvements in the way UN-SPIDER supports Member States, based on existing mechanisms and their respective limitations. It was agreed that more could be done for ensuring quicker access to

commercial or other satellite imagery after a disaster or in an emergency situation and that UN-SPIDER has a role to play in ensuring access to all sources and resources, in a neutral and independent way.

29. Discussions covered the potential also offered by new commercial subscription-based solutions to access satellite imagery, both archived and new collections, and looked at ways of exploiting these solutions in the future including through direct contributions from interested RSOs.

30. A number of RSOs, such as the Iranian Space Agency, volunteered their developments in data storage by offering GeoPortal services.

31. A key plenary session looked at how impacts of Technical Advisory Support (TAS) could be evaluated. It was highlighted that after a large number of these missions already completed by the Programme, it is important to take stock and review the performance, the capacity to follow-up and act on the recommendations identified. Measuring the impact of each mission by identifying concrete indicators of achievement (measures of success) is important.

32. The session benefitted from the UN-SPIDER presentation on the requirements and procedural rules agreed to perform a Technical Advisory Mission or Service where. After this presentation, suggestions were made to:

(a) Look not only at the need for outputs but also at process and methodologies;

(b) Institutionalize the use of space-based information at national level through institutional working groups; and

(c) Maximize the knowledge of the RSO's, their focus on different regions and types of natural hazards through communications, collaborations and data/information sharing.

33. The afternoon Breakout Sessions of the second day focused on a number of thematic areas and related cooperation. Topics of high relevance were selected, including droughts, floods, wild fires and allowing the participants to freely select which groups they had most interest in, and then contributing to the respective discussions.

34. In the discussions, the need to better understand water-related drought phenomena and temperature-induced drought. In these areas data collection and satellite imagery are two of the most important tools to provide information about the droughts.

35. The sessions lead to some concrete follow-up activities such as the representatives of Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Panama working together to share information about drought that could be better used in their respective countries. A number of concrete recommendations that emanated from this session are captured in Section III.

36. Before the conclusion of the meeting, a new RSO Agreement was formally signed by the Director of OOSA for subsequent signature by the Director of ICIMOD.

37. The RSO meeting then concluded with the closing remarks of the coordinator of the Programme Luc St-Pierre and those of Ms. Mazlan Othman, Director of OOSA.

### **III. Main actions and recommendations of the Fourth RSO Meeting.**

38. In addition to the important points discussed above, the Meeting recommends to:

(a) Increase the involvement of RSO's in the UN-SPIDER Knowledge Portal;

(b) Improve the sharing of information on relevant planned activities (such as training courses, summer schools, etc.) so that coordination can be more effective and resources used more efficiently;

(c) Give more attention to social networking, but without overestimating its value in the Programme's work;

(d) Plan periodic and/or regional encounters between RSOs and the UN-SPIDER team to compensate for the change from yearly RSO meeting to bi-yearly meetings due to reduced financial means;

(e) Ensure that all opportunities for interactions on joint activities are optimized (e.g. during conferences/workshops where delegates from the RSOs are present);

(f) Consider pooling satellite imagery and data resources with a view of sharing such data over countries or regions RSOs are active, to improve discovery and access to archive data;

(g) Prepare an online guide of where and how to discover and access data that can be downloaded and shared with other RSO's;

(h) Look at means of using precipitation satellite data, including from the upcoming Precipitation Constellation, to provide such valuable information to those countries which do not have modern meteorology services or the required technology;

(i) Continuously and jointly review the agreed Programme of Work and identify areas and actions where RSO support could concretely make a difference and lead to progress;

(j) Design and implement an evaluation method, including a definition of responsibilities and of mechanisms, to measure the impacts of TAS/TAMs; and

(k) Aim to implement the project on use of archived satellite imagery together with UN-SPIDER, with the milestones discussed and agreed.