



"Space Imaging/CRISP-Singapore"

# Space Technology and Disaster Management

## A Global Strategy for Improved Risk Reduction and Disaster Management Using Space Technologies

The United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA) organised between 2000-2004 a series of regional workshops on the use of space technology for disaster management, bringing the results of the regional workshops to a final international workshop, which was held in Munich last October. This wrap-up workshop was jointly organised by UNOOSA and the German Aerospace Center (DLR), and co-organised by UNESCO, UN/ISDR, and the European Space Agency.

### The Munich Vision

A total of 170 participants from 51 countries discussed in Munich a global strategy, which would contribute to helping developing countries have access and be able to use space technology for disaster management, a strategy put forward as "The Munich Vision: A Global Strategy for Improved Risk Reduction and Disaster Management Using



Space Technologies". The participants in Munich recognised that space-based technologies (earth observation satellites, communication satellites, meteorological satellites and global navigation satellite systems) play an important role in risk reduction and disaster management and put forward a number of recognitions and recommendations in the areas of: Capacity development and knowledge building; Data access, data availability and information extraction; Enhancing awareness; and the need for National, Regional and Global Coordination.

At the national level, institutions within a country should be responsible for coming together to define actions to be carried out collectively with the appropriate space technology institutions responsible for tak-

ing the lead. Particular attention should be given to the local communities, involving local leaderships and grassroots organisations.

At the regional level, interested international, regional and national institutions should come together as a Regional Task Force to advance the actions that are relevant to the region as a whole. UNOOSA will provide support to these Regional Task Forces by contributing to maintaining the list of institutional focal points, bringing into these Task Forces relevant institutions from other regions, and linking and synergising the work of the Task Forces with other international initiatives such as the coordination entity being proposed by the UN Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS), the proposed Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS) and the International Charter "Space and Major Disasters".

### Type II Partnership

Specifically with regard to national and regional coordination participants agreed that the channelling of space technology for risk reduction and disaster management activities at the national and regional levels should be carried out through a Type II partnership of interested institutions and UN agencies, to be registered in the context of the upcoming World Conference on Disaster Reduction to be held in Kobe, Japan.

At the global level, the participants recognised the importance and urgent need of the coordination entity being proposed by COPUOS (see article on p.2), which would be a one-stop shop for knowledge and information sharing (best practices) and also a platform for fostering alliances of international initiatives.

### Inside this issue:

A Global Strategy	1
The International Charter	2
Coordinating Entity	2
STDM 2005 Activities	2
Contact Details	2

## The International Charter

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As a result of UNISPACE III, the European and French space agencies (ESA and CNES) initiated the International Charter "Space and Major Disasters", with the Canadian Space Agency (CSA) signing the Charter on October 20, 2000. In September of 2001, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) also became members of the Charter. The Argentine Space Agency (CONAE) became a member in July 2003. The International Charter aims at providing a unified system of space data acquisition and delivery to those affected by natural or man-made disasters through authorized users. Each member agency of the Charter has committed resources to support this initiative, which is contributing to mitigating the effects of disasters on human life and property in countries around the world.

In March 2003 UNOOSA was accepted as a Cooperating Body to the Charter, a mechanism through which the UN system can request imagery to the Charter members to help respond to emergency situations. Beginning 1 July 2003 UNOOSA set up a 24/7 hotline. UN Focal Points can fax in requests for imagery to support disaster response. Through this mechanism the UN system has successfully had access to Charter products to respond to 14 disasters including the recent tsunami disaster in Southeast Asia.

## Coordinating Entity

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One of the main recommendations put forward at the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE III) was the need to help developing countries have access and be in a position to use space-based technologies (earth observation satellites, meteorological satellites, communication satellites and global navigation satellite systems) for risk reduction and disaster management. From this recommendation several actions were initiated. Initially this recommendation led to the establishment of an action team, known as Action Team 7, led by Canada, China and France, which met several times from 2001 to 2004 and in its final report put forward three recommendations for further action: establish-

ment of a coordinating entity to provide for coordination and the means for optimising the effectiveness of space-based services for use in disaster management; establishment of a fund to provide sustainable resources, and; countries should allocate funds to enable the incorporation of space technology in disaster management activities and also should identify a single point of contact between the coordination entity and the country.

The General Assembly adopted a resolution (A/RES/59/2) following its five-year review of the implementation of the recommendations of UNISPACE III which included the proposal of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space for a study to be conducted on the possibility of creating an international entity to provide for coordination and the means for optimizing the effectiveness of space-based services for use in disaster management. The study will be prepared by an ad-hoc expert group, with experts and required funding to be provided by interested Member States and relevant international organizations, and will be submitted to the Committee for its review at its forty-eighth session, in 2005.

This group is open for participation by any interested Member State and it will meet for the first time during the forty-second session of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (to be held in Vienna, Austria, from 21 February to 4 March 2005).

## STDM 2005 Activities

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In 2005 2 additional meetings are planned continuing the cycle of regional activities focusing on space technology and disaster management:

United Nations /Algeria/ European Space Agency International Seminar on the Use of Space Technology for Disaster Management: Prevention and Management of Natural Disasters - 22 - 26 May 2005, Algiers, Algeria.

United Nations/Greece Regional Workshop on the Use of Space Technology for Disaster Management – Focus on Geo-hazards - October 2005, Greece.

Further information can be found on the website indicated below in the contact details.



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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>.