



## November/December 2007 Updates

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1. **UNOOSA's New Director** – The Secretary-General of the United Nations appointed **Ms. Mazlan Othman (Malaysia)** as Director of the Office for Outer Space Affairs (OOSA), a post she held already from 1999 to 2002, and we are pleased to confirm that she has taken up her new post last 12 December 2007. After leaving OOSA in July 2002, Ms. Othman joined the National Space Agency of Malaysia as Director General. Ms. Othman's earlier career highlights were: Founding Director General of the Space Science Studies Division in the Malaysian Prime Minister's Office and University Lecturer (physics) at the National University of Malaysia. Ms. Othman holds a Ph.D. in Astronomy and Space Sciences (1981), and a BSc (Hon) in Physics (1974), both from the University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand. She is Secretary-General and Fellow of the Academy of Sciences of Malaysia and a Member of the International Astronomical Union. Ms. Othman, the author of two scientific books, is also a Fellow of the International Academy of Astronautics, the Institute of Physics (Malaysia) and the Malaysian Scientific Association. In 2007, Ms. Othman was elected Chairman of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS).
2. The **United Nations General Assembly** during its last session of the main part of the current 62<sup>nd</sup> Session endorsed the work plan for 2007 of the **United Nations Platform for Space-Based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response (UN-SPIDER)**, along with the platform programme for the biennium 2007-2009 and the plan of work for the period 2008-2009. Check out: <http://www.unoosa.org/oosa/en/unspider/docs.html>. At the same session the United Nations General Assembly also endorsed the draft resolution on the **International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space** which, among other decisions, urges all countries, in particular those with major space capabilities, to contribute actively to the goal of preventing an arms race in outer space, agrees that Bolivia and Switzerland become members of the **Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space**, and endorses the Committee's Space Debris Mitigation Guidelines. For further info: <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2007/ga10684.doc.htm>
3. **“Workshop on Establishing a University Network in Latin America for Disaster Reduction”** and **“Training Course and Workshop on Landslide Warning and Risk Assessment in Central America”**. Dates: University Network Workshop: 26 – 27 March, 2008 - Training course and Workshop: 28 March - 4 April, 2008. Location: Antigua and Atitlan, Guatemala. Objective of the University Network – Similar to the UNEDRA Network for Africa this Network will contribute to disaster risk reduction in Latin America through capacity building by generating a network of Universities from Latin American countries that are developing or offering

courses in Disaster Management with a clear spatial component; Forge inter-action amongst universities in Latin America with interest in teaching on disaster risk reduction, through information sharing, capacity building and collaborative research; share experiences on course activities that have already been initiated; identify Universities that have interest in developing such courses; learn about other initiatives on disaster management training programmes; learn about programmes on the use of Geo-information for Disaster Management; and make an inventory of the requirements for support for setting up educational programmes on Geo-information for Disaster Management. For further info contact: **Dr. Cees Van Westen** - Director UNU-ITC DGIM School – ITC E-mail: [westen@itc.nl](mailto:westen@itc.nl). UN-SPIDER is supporting this initiative.

4. **International Disaster and Risk Conference - IDRC Davos 2008** to be held in Davos, Switzerland from August 25th to August 29th, 2008. Conference Motto: "Public-private partnership – Key for integral risk management and climate change adaptation". IDRC Davos 2008 is expected to bring together over 1.300 interested individuals, policy makers, risk managers, scientists and other risk experts from politics, governments, science, the private and civil sector, NGOs, etc. to focus on the array of risks facing society today and on effective strategies to manage and reduce these risks and disasters. The conference will continue the dialogue between the different risk areas and their stakeholders, but also serve as a bridge between science, risk governance, technology perspectives, problem solving and capacity building. Check out: <http://www.idrc.info> where you will find all relevant information about IDRC and for abstract and proposal registration. UN-SPIDER is supporting this Conference as well.
5. EARSeL (European Association of Remote Sensing Laboratories) is organising the **First International Conference on Remote Sensing Techniques in "Disaster Management and Emergency Response in the Mediterranean Region"**. This Conference will be held in Zadar, Croatia from 22-24 September 2008. The First Announcement can be accessed on the website: <http://www.earsel.geosat.hr>. Deadline for submission of abstracts is 31 December 2007. For further info: Prof. Marinko Oluic, Zagreb - e-mail: [geo-sat@zg.htnet.hr](mailto:geo-sat@zg.htnet.hr).
6. The fourteenth session of the **Asia-Pacific Regional Space Agency Forum (APRSAF-14)**, under the main theme entitled "Space for Human Empowerment", was successfully held from 21-23 November 2007 at the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) in Bangalore, India. It was jointly organized by ISRO, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan (MEXT), and the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA), and gathered more than 130 participants from 19 countries and 5 regional and international organizations. The results of APRSAF-14 including the Recommendations, adopted by all the participants at the Closing Plenary, are posted on the following website: [http://www.aprsaf.org/text/ap14\\_info.html](http://www.aprsaf.org/text/ap14_info.html). The Plenary also agreed that the next Session, APRSAF-15, would take place in Vietnam in the fourth quarter of 2008. Particularly important were the recommendations that refer to the implementation of Sentinel Asia: they agreed with the launch of the next phase of Sentinel Asia starting from 2008 to 2012 with the goal to expand utilization of disaster-related information including environmental changes together with its member countries and international organizations, increasing the number of Earth observation satellites from the Korea Aerospace Research Institute (KARI), the Geo-Informatics and Space Technology Development Agency (GISTDA) of Thailand, and some other entities, as well as satellite communication; they also agreed to establish the new Joint Project Team for implementation of the second phase of Sentinel Asia early next year, with JAXA as the secretariat.
7. **PreventionWeb** is a new information service to increase knowledge on disaster risk reduction (DRR) – <http://www.preventionweb.net>. For the first time, a website will provide a common tool for both specialists and non-specialists interested or working in the area of disaster risk reduction to connect, exchange experiences and share information. The site is a project of the secretariat of the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction. Prevention Web relies on content contributions from the DRR community and includes: disaster risk reduction news, country reports, publications, good practices, fact sheets, networks and communities, and more. The beta release period will emphasize content development by calling for contributions from the community at

large – UN, international, non-governmental, academic, and civil society partners. Watch and Listen to a site demo: <http://www.preventionweb.net/english/about/>.

8. **Cyclone in Bangladesh** - On 15 November 2007, Cyclone Sidr (Category 4) which landed on Bangladesh widely caused serious damages in the southern and central districts (GLIDE: TC-2007-000208-BGD). According to the OCHA's situation report No.10 released on 26 November, the death toll stands at 3,243, with 880 missing and 34,708 injured. More than 7 million people were affected. 365,772 houses were damaged and another 875,710 houses were partially damaged. Also extensive damage to roads and public buildings is evident including educational institutions. The International Charter Space and Major Disasters was activated by UNOOSA at the request from WFP ([http://www.disasterscharter.org/disasters/CALLID\\_186\\_e.html](http://www.disasterscharter.org/disasters/CALLID_186_e.html)) and Sentinel Asia also was activated ([http://arrs.adrc.or.jp/adrc/MyMap/adrc/satellite\\_photos.jsp?gnum=TC-2007-000208-BGD](http://arrs.adrc.or.jp/adrc/MyMap/adrc/satellite_photos.jsp?gnum=TC-2007-000208-BGD))
9. **UN responds to record number of emergencies in the Americas in 2007.** The United Nations sent a record number of disaster assessment teams to emergencies in the Americas in 2007, offering a potential glimpse at the future of climate change. Nine of the 14 teams dispatched this year by the U.N. went to Central and South America, the highest number in history, including the first ever to Mexico, according to the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, known as OCHA. Previously the highest number of missions to the region was the eight sent in 1998 after Hurricanes Mitch and Georges devastated the region. Check out: (<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=25166&Cr=natural&Cr1=disasters>). UN-SPIDER will in 2008 be organising two regional workshops in the region: the first one will be in June and will be for the Central America and the Caribbean; the second workshop will be in September in Brazil for South America.
10. The **International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD)** is organising a **Mountain GIS e-conference** from 14-25 January 2008 to promote geo-information science and technology for the integrated mountain development. The conference will be held on a virtual platform and, as it is with the nature of the virtual conference, the participation is open to all. They are looking forward for proactive participation, constructive criticisms and vibrant discussions from the broad base users involved in different spheres of geo-information applications. To participate in the e-conference just register online at: <http://www.mtnforum.org/rs/ec/index.cfm?act=reg&econfid=15>. You can also showcase your case studies/applications at: <http://www.mtnforum.org/rs/ec/index.cfm?act=shc&econfid=15>.
11. **Advanced training Course on Spatial Planning as a Strategy for Mitigation and Adaptation to Natural Hazards.** 3-8 March 2008, Santiago de Compostela, Spain. This course will address the perspective of strengthening the role of mitigation in risk management through spatial planning. Innovative approaches will be brought on how to translate the concepts of sustainability and vulnerability assessment into effective measures in an integrative program which assembles risk analysis and management, and spatial planning, bringing a new rationality. Prevention and reduction of exposure to natural hazards will be reviewed as key mitigation strategies. This Advanced Training Course is designed to enable some of the outstanding specialists to share their expertise, and provide opportunities to both young scientists and decision-makers to learn more about these problem areas and the new scientific insights in the matter. Check out: <http://www.xente.mundo-r.com/science/atc/index.html>.
12. **International Conference on Management of Landslide Hazard in the Asia-Pacific Region** - 11th -15th November 2008 - Organizing Institutions: Japan Landslide Society, International Consortium on Landslides, Research Centre on Landslides of Disaster Prevention Research Institute (DPRI) (Kyoto University, Japan), Research Center for Natural Hazards and Disaster Recovery (Niigata University, Japan), International Landslide Centre (Durham University, UK), Nepal Landslide Society, and Department of Applied Geology (Karlsruhe University, Germany). Registration and abstract submission: 31st January 2008. Check out: <http://japan.landslide-soc.org/index-e.html>. Contact: Prof. Dr. Toyohiko MIYAGI ([miyagi@izcc.tohoku-gakuin.ac.jp](mailto:miyagi@izcc.tohoku-gakuin.ac.jp)), or Dr. Vishnu DANGOL ([vdangol@yahoo.com](mailto:vdangol@yahoo.com)).