

The World Space Forum 2019
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Closing remarks by
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Dear Ms. Mischkulnig,

Excellencies, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon everyone. The time has unfortunately come to bid farewell to the inaugural UN/Austria World Space Forum. I do hope you have enjoyed your presence here.

With almost 300 participants – well 299 is close enough I would say - who came together from 66 different countries and a notable female representation of 1/3 of the participants, we have had a truly remarkable gathering here at the Vienna International Center which is also the home of space affairs in the United Nations system.

On behalf of the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs, please allow me to express, once again, my heartfelt appreciation to our Austrian co-hosts – the Federal Ministry of Transport, Innovation and Technology, and the Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs, for their steadfast support in organizing the event.

I would also like to extend my gratitude to the Mayor of Vienna for hosting us in the City Hall to kick-off the World Space Forum, to our great colleagues in RUAG Space Austria for an interesting technical tour of their premises, and to the Planetarium Wien for a fascinating visit. My thanks also go to our additional sponsor, the European Space Agency.

Finally, let me thank our moderators, panellists, rapporteurs, technicians, interns and all the other support staff. We have had four days of enriching sessions with dynamic exchanges covering a wide range of topics.

I cannot agree more with what has already been said – space has indeed become a game-changer for the society, enticing new stakeholders to invest their political, financial and human capital into this frontier field. And this year's participation of a very diverse audience underlines the current trend.

This event is, in a sense, a new adventure for UNOOSA, one that is innovative and effective, and we are aiming to expand it in the coming years. Events like this one are an invaluable opportunity for all of us to connect with people we would likely not have met otherwise. The World Space Forum in this regard takes advantage of the unique convening power of the UN to bring together stakeholders from all corners of the society.

As we look ahead to the next years and decades, we will be welcoming even more actors to the already broadening space community – in principle the best news one can get as space is one of the key tools for the achievement of the SDGs. However, at the same time, it is hard to overstate the need to maintain space safe, secure and sustainable.

As I said already yesterday, space is a global commons, it belongs to all of us. And actions and activities of one stakeholder inevitably influence everyone else. It is therefore in the best interest of all to behave responsibly in a manner that our current deeds will not negatively impact the future generations.

In this regard, let me just offer you some numbers and I would like you to think deeply about them – 1957 one, 1962 one hundred, 1973 one thousand, 1999 five thousand, 2020 ten thousand, 2050 fifty thousand. I am sure many of you know exactly what this represents. It is the number of objects launched to outer space and I do believe it delivers a clear message.

While we can only guess what the situation will be in three decades, megaconstellations, rockets re-usable immediately after landing, expanding commercial activities, or the growing number of space debris all represent major disruptions to the conventional way of conducting space activities and raise a red flag.

The continuing health and sustainability of the space environment is dependent on cooperation and mutual understanding among the wider community. And the World Space Forum indeed offers a platform for expanding such efforts. Of course, we need more than just words and pleasant exchanges. That is why it is so crucial that we set our minds to turn this week's discussions into action.

You are all part of this broader space family, and I can assure you that the UN stands ready to work with each of you to facilitate productive and impactful collaboration for a better world for individuals, communities and nations all around our beautiful planet Earth.

And as the basic step in the process, let me challenge all of you to talk to 10 of your peers and colleagues, family members or friends, and spread the word about space as the agent of change.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to conclude by once again expressing my sincere gratitude to everyone for making the UN/Austria 2019 World Space Forum an event to remember.

With plenty of work ahead of us, we look forward to keeping in touch to explore how you can all play a role in bringing the benefits of space to everyone, everywhere.

And to ensure that we can collect all your ideas and feedback that you haven't had a chance to share with us, let me kindly ask you, as one final thing, to fill in a short questionnaire which is already available on our website.

Thank you and safe travels home.