

**UNOOSA Group of Friends**  
**Space for building forward better**  
Statement Director Simonetta Di Pippo  
20 July 2020

Distinguished delegates, dear participants, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to thank all of you for tuning in to a session that highlights the importance of space as a critical component of Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) for a better world.

We have a decade to go to accelerate international effort towards the achievement of the UN frameworks – the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris climate agreement, and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. As we are closing in on 2030, we must take stock of what happened in the past, and what is happening now to build a better future.

The situation is grim, we are facing an unprecedented global health crisis, still falling behind in emission reduction, suffering from more frequent and more damaging natural disasters, witnessing rapid population growth that puts our planet to its limits for basic resources, and biodiversity suffers from invasive human activities around the world.

Addressing these common challenges to humanity can only be done in a collaborative manner, with all stakeholders coming to the table to find solutions as one society, even as one community. And this is only part of the success. What we must do, more than ever, is to use STI to avert the potentially catastrophic consequences of the current status-quo. Putting science and technology back to the center of our decision-making processes is due, now more than ever.

Without reliable, timely and credible information and data and without the right tools we cannot go far. To adopt the right policies and to implement fitting legislation we must be able to harness the power of all available means. And we have the duty to harness the convening power of the UN to get it done!

In this regard, space exploration plays a critical role. In the six decades since the launch of the first satellite – Sputnik 1 – space has become a game-changer. And in many regards, there is no substitute.

Expanding our knowledge of natural phenomena, monitoring and evaluating changes to our environment, and providing critical data, applications and services for well-informed decision-making – all this is possible thanks to satellites and sensors in space.

The SDGs are all in one way or another taking advantage of using space infrastructure. In a joint research conducted in 2018 we found that almost 40 percent of the targets underpinning the 17 SDGs are greatly benefitting from geolocation and Earth observation. Adding SatComs, to which majority of current active spacecrafts are devoted, would increase this number to well over 50 percent.

So, what to make out of this in short? Without the use of space, the likelihood of successfully achieving the SDGs would be very limited, if not impossible.

Managing urban growth, monitoring, mitigating, adapting to and building resilience to climate change, managing and reducing the risks of natural and technological disasters, ensuring food and water security, monitoring conflicts and tracking refugee movements, or addressing global health challenges – no, I am not attempting to list the issues that we face today. Rather, this is where space contributions become critical.

As a space professional, but more so as a citizen of this planet, I cherish the developments in the space sector over the recent years. The list of countries with at least one satellite has almost doubled since 2010 and the number of satellites in orbit has grown at rates not ever seen before.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century space sector is shaped by a very different dynamic in a multi-stakeholder environment involving an unprecedented range of actors. National and regional space

agencies, commercial sector, non-governmental entities, even academia – these all are now participating in this frontier endeavor.

Yet, despite the great progress, universal access to space science and technology, data, applications and services remains a challenge. That is why we fully embrace capacity-building, to put space technology to work for sustainable economic and social development, not just in individual countries but on a global basis.

And here, international cooperation plays a big role. We have been successful in delivering benefits to an ever-growing number of Member States and it is now, when humanity faces the defining challenges of our time, when we need to step up our efforts.

Space was never meant to be only the privilege of the wealthiest nations. So, the gradual transformation of capacity-building more into delivery of projects and services to the marginalized and most vulnerable communities and individuals is a great way forward, that we, at the Office for Outer Space Affairs, are striving for.

One example. Many of the countries in the Pacific region are on the front line of the fight against climate change. To map recent and ongoing space solution programmatic activity in the region, we launched Space Solutions for the Pacific project in partnership with New Zealand. As a result, three policy areas were identified in which the expansion of space-based solutions offers the greatest impact and UNOOSA is contributing to deliver these services. This novel approach can be used in other regions of the planet too, and we call for member states to express Interest and support to allow us to further expand our action.

Space4Water is a project developed through a collaborative effort with the Prince Sultan Bin Abdulaziz International Prize for Water (PSIPW) to promote the use of space-based technology for increased access to water. Water is a critical resource and it is key that solutions and best practices are collected and shared in a focused manner. The Space4Water Portal was therefore launched to enable all stakeholders in space and water communities to access data and knowledge relevant to sustainable water management.

The Space for Youth and Space for Women initiatives are aiming to bring the new generation to STEM fields and to the space industry, and to ensure that their voices are heard and considered when developing solutions for problems that all generations face on this planet.

And we also pay due care to the need for responsible behavior as the near-Earth environment is a limited resource. To help emerging and non-spacefaring nation become responsible actors, UNOOSA established a legal advisory project called Space Law for New Space Actors.

Through the project we can support emerging space actors in developing an enhanced understanding of the fundamentals of international space law and to implement existing international agreements.

And to meet the needs of the 21st century capacity-building, the Access to Space for All initiative was launched as a great example of a novel, modern and holistic approach. Micro and hyper gravity experiments, satellite development and deployment, in-orbit research as well as access to the International Space Station and the China Space Station – a wide range of opportunities is available under the Initiative.

And among the highlights, we have already helped 2 countries, namely Kenya and Guatemala, to launch their first satellites thanks to our partnership with JAXA, the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency. These are also the only two satellites ever launched under the UN auspices. And counting!

As you can see, political, legal, scientific and technological perspectives – the full spectrum of the impact of space is covered in these activities. And as was already mentioned, Space for Climate Action and Space for Global Health are also under development to institutionalize our contribution through an even better targeted and tailored approach.

Overall, the long history of productive multilateral collaboration in the space sector is a great example of what the international community can achieve with robust institutional support, political will and a common goal.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Over the years, we have learned how unique our planet is. Searching through our Solar System, we find rocky planets, gas planets, asteroids and comets, ice moons – but, for the time being, only one place, our Planet, that hosts life. And while we are looking even beyond, having identified thousands of exoplanets, only few are resembling the Earth.

Astronauts who traveled to the Moon, to Earth’s orbit and to the International Space Station often speak about the “overview effect” – a shift in awareness resulting from a new perspective on the planet. From space, there are no boundaries, conflicts that divide us disappear and an urge emerges to protect this "pale blue dot".

We should always keep this in mind when we look up to the night sky – gazing at the stars and the Moon – this Earth is where we are at home.

I do hope we have shed some light on what space can do for us, what we can do for space, and what we can do for one another through space. And I would like to call for your support in our endeavours. The palette of projects that we have is encompassing a wide range of areas and UNOOSA stands ready to continue supporting UN Member States and UN entities in the use of space for a better world.

We are always looking for new partners to join us in our path towards sustainable development. It is often said that what counts is not the destination, but the journey. I am instead convinced that both the destination and the journey count, because the destination represents the final goal, and the journey the means to reach that goal. We together are in a journey to master the future of our planet, and humanity. This is a huge responsibility, but if not us, who, and if not now, when?

Thanks for listening!

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