وكالة الإمارات للفضاء
UAE SPACE AGENCY

**UAE Space Agency**

# Statement for UNISPACE +50 High Level Segment

## His Excellency Dr. Ahmad Bin Abdullah Humaid Belhoul Al Falasi, Minister of State for Higher Education and Advanced Skills and Chairman of the UAE Space Agency

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**Delivered on:** 20 June 2018 in Vienna, Austria

**Session:** Ministerial Statement at High Level Summit

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**Your Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, good morning.**

It is a great honour to be here today with the international space community at this UNISPACE+50 High Level Summit.

We have an important opportunity during this event to analyse and help shape the future course of global space cooperation. It's also a good time to reflect on what has been achieved in the past 50 years and decide where we want to be within the next half a century.

It was exactly 50 years ago that the world witnessed the launch of the first manned spacecraft to orbit moon. It was the year in which humans first left low Earth orbit, during the successful Apollo 8 mission. Incredible milestones have been reached since then and I believe through advancements in technology, data, science and the way we work together - the next 50 years are full of promise and opportunity.

In the UAE, we have set long term plans such as the Mars 2117 plan that will involve us collaborating with international organisations and scientific institutes. Initiatives such as the UAE's Mars Scientific City and Mars Hope Probe, will allow us to tackle regional and global challenges and bring significant benefits to humanity by 2021. The UAE Astronaut Programme will nurture and develop a group of ambassadors that will help lead us to a bright future within the space sector. This comes at a time of dramatic global change during the fourth Industrial Revolution and age of digital transformation.

Today we are focused on three fundamental elements within the international space industry:

- Firstly, communications remains a critical aspect of our space sector and we see continuous technological advancements within this field. In the UAE, we have been strongly positioned

in this area for more than a decade with Thuraya and Yahsat. We were proud to witness Al Yah 3 in orbit earlier this year, which will expand Yahsat's services to 95 per cent of Brazil and 20 African countries bringing important benefits to those areas.

- The second key element is Remote Sensing, which has significant strategic value in terms of resources and human capacity development. The UAE Space Agency, working in partnership with Khalifa University of Science and Technology and the American University of Ras al-Khaimah, has been working on the preliminary design of the MeznSat 3U CubeSat, which is being developed to monitor and study the Earth's atmosphere.

- The third aspect is space exploration in which we are making great strides in. Besides the impact on our national space sector, these strides are having a direct influence on the growing interest in STEM education in the UAE; in my capacity as the Minister of State for Higher Education and Advanced Skills, I have seen young people become more and more engaged in STEM education in the country and the wider region. We had three generations of the same family apply to the UAE Astronaut Programme – a grandfather, father and son which shows the tremendous excitement and inspiration the space sector is having. We had more than 4,000 applications for the programme, which has now shortlisted 95 applicants. They hail from diverse educational and vocational backgrounds including civil aviation, air force, medicine, engineering, technology and education.
- There are some key interdisciplinary aspects of space that we need to develop which include a focus on renewable energy, solar panels, agriculture and psychology.

Sustainability and energy efficiency are critical and we have developed successful projects here such as Masdar City, where 100% of the water is recycled. Water conservation is vital for space missions in which it currently costs 10,000 USD to send 1 litre of water into space. We need to find new and cost effective ways to manage water use and space projects are helping to make that happen. The Mars Scientific City that is being developed replicates conditions on the red planet and will help us solve issues around water, energy and food and also help with our human capacity development initiatives.

We believe space is a message of hope for the youth and citizens of our region. We live in a challenging part of the world but what we are showing is that, if we focus on tolerance, innovation, creativity and science, we will make progress as a united community.

International and regional cooperation continues to be a major commitment of ours. We have signed agreements with many of the world's leading space agencies and exchange knowledge

continuously. For our region, we have been working with Arab space industry leaders from across the Middle East to increase collaboration and help develop national space capabilities as well as research and science facilities.

Today, we will mark another milestone through the adoption of a UNISPACE+50 resolution which will enable us to continue to work together, exchange knowledge and learn from our experiences.

Your Excellencies, distinguished guests, I would like to thank you for your time and I look forward to speaking to many of you throughout the day.

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