

Austria, Item 8

Disaster Management 60th STSC (6 – 17 February 2023) Ambassador Gabriela SELLNER

Chair,
Excellencies – Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Natural disasters have unfortunately become part of our daily life and will continue to do so in the next decades, especially with the view to the ongoing climate crisis. On the first day of our Subcommittee Meeting the terrifying news of one of the most **devastating quakes in the Turkish-Syrian border region** reached us. Let me repeat that our thoughts are with the people in the affected regions and their families.

This Committee recognised early on, how **important, useful and necessary** space technologies are in **assisting disaster preparedness**.

By resolution 61/110 of 14 December 2006, the UN General Assembly decided to establish the "**UN Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response - (UN-SPIDER)**" as a new UN programme with the following **mission statement**: "*To ensure that all countries and international and regional organisations have access to all types of space-based information and develop the capacity to use it to support the full cycle of disaster management*".

Austria has been a **founding member** of UNSPIDER and supported the programme since it's beginning:

From 2007 – 2011, Austria supported the programme with a **series of three funding agreements with UNOOSA**. The cooperation covered initial investments necessary to set up the programme and several workshops on education and training in the selected priority region Africa.

From 2012 to 2019, during the second phase of our cooperation with UNSPIDER, Austria supported the **secondment of several experts** supporting the programme.

Subsequently we looked for a **different approach**: The aim was to find **synergies between Austrian priorities in development cooperation policy and Austrian space expertise**.

We are very proud to be able to inform you that the **Austrian Development Agency** started a dedicated project last year.

The project is called „**Drought Early Warning in Mozambique via Satellite Soil Moisture Data**“ and will be realized by the **Technical University of Vienna**. The local project partner is the **Eduardo Mondlane University in Maputo**.

Monitoring of droughts and their impacts in Mozambique is still in development. Accurate information about soil moisture is **one of the strongest predictors of droughts** with direct effect not only on crop yield, but moreover on the availability of water, livelihoods and food security in the larger scope.

The project will support **developers and decision makers**. It will **enhance the knowledge base** regarding **Earth Observation-based soil moisture for drought and crop monitoring** and for **forecasting**. It will support the **integration** of this kind of data in **existing tools and approaches**. Last but not least, it will **provide capacity building** and **joint learning** with freely available remote sensing data.

Target groups include the Red Cross, the World Food Programme, International and National Research Centers and Institutes, the Mozambique’s Meteorological Service and several ministries.

The **expected results** of the three-year project are **improved accuracy of drought monitoring** and **early warning tools** to enhance agricultural practices and tools. This will improve interventions to mitigate the impact of droughts.

The project was presented during the **World Space Forum in December 2022** and contacts with UNSPIDER have already been established.

We will keep you informed about the project.

We hope that this will be **another concrete step** to demonstrate the benefits of space technologies for certain policy areas, in this case development cooperation, and to **bridge the last mile to the user**.

Thank you!