

# Space as a Global Commons

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## How do we ensure as the title of our session states that we are working together towards sustainable space?

There is an urgency to consider and act on this issue.

- With each passing year, our technological civilization becomes increasingly dependent on the satellites in orbit.
- The primal threats to our civilization – global climate change and space weather – can only be understood, and dealt with by using the global perspective of observations from space.
- We need to recognize also that we are extending the human presence, whether through robotic spacecraft or eventually with humans, throughout our solar system. And we have a commitment as a civilization to behave responsibly in this endeavor. To protect the environments we will explore, and to protect ourselves against any contamination of our planet that results from this exploration.

## Space as a Global Commons

It follows therefore that, given the centrality of space for the future of our civilization, we need to have policies and practices in place, which are shared by all spacefaring nations, that will allow and encourage each and every nation that desires to and has the capability to use and to explore space for peaceful purposes, to do so.

We thus need to recognize, encourage, and enable space as a global commons. A 'commons' in the English language is a piece of land owned by and used by all members of a community, as in a pasture used by all residents of a village. Many nations of the world view space as a global commons, a resource not owned by any one nation but crucial to the future of all humankind.

The mission of COSPAR, the organization of which I am President, can in fact be summarized as encouraging and enabling space as a global commons.

- We encourage and facilitate, as we have since 1958, international cooperation in space research, with the core belief that every nation, who is able to pursue scientific research from or in space, and is doing so for peaceful purposes, should be encouraged to do so.
- We place special emphasis on the primal threats to our civilization, global climate change and space weather, by developing roadmaps that encourage that the full capabilities of our technological civilization can be brought to bear to protect the wellbeing of society.
- We have a special mandate to set the standards that spacefaring nations should follow to ensure that we neither biologically contaminate the bodies of the solar system that we will explore, nor will we suffer biological contamination to our own planet resulting from this exploration. All of which is required by the UN Outer Space Treaty.
- We conduct capacity building workshops throughout the world to increase participation in space research.

## Our common mission in pursuit of space as a global commons

Indeed, almost every aspect of the mission of COSPAR is supportive of the seven Thematic Priorities that are being considered for the UNISPACE+50 roadmap – from global partnerships, through space weather and resilient societies, to capacity building. And we need to work together in pursue of our common missions.

We need to dedicate ourselves to the principle that the civil space programs of the world must provide the knowledge required for the survival of our civilization. We are a society rife with strife, often rooted in the past, often instigated by those who would exploit the ignorance and the most base instincts of their followers, and in all cases a serious impediment to the wellbeing of the people affected. We are also a society in denial about how fragile is our civilization on our insignificant planet in the backwater of the cosmos, whether due to our own misconduct or some cosmic event.

We need to pursue policies and practices that ensure that civil space can be the guide that leads us safely past the vulnerabilities of our planet, offers opportunities to improve the wellbeing of our people, and points the way toward a future in which we are a spacefaring civilization, secure and prosperous.