



UNITED NATIONS  
Office for Outer Space Affairs

## INFORMATION NOTE

### United Nations/Austria Symposium on “Space Science and the United Nations”

Co-sponsored by  
the Government of Austria, the Committee on Space Research (COSPAR) and  
the European Space Agency (ESA)

22 – 24 September 2014, Graz, Austria

#### 1. Introduction

The United Nations has the mandate to promote international space cooperation and to assist its Members States with capacity building in the use of space technology and its applications. For this purpose the Programme on Space Applications, implemented by the Office for Outer Space Affairs, was established in 1971.

Since its inception, the Programme has organized several hundred international conferences and training courses, bringing together space experts from developed and developing countries. In cooperation with academic institutions around the World it provides long-term fellowship opportunities for education in various space applications fields and in small satellite development. The Programme also led the establishment of UN-affiliated Regional Centres for Space Science and Technology Education in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean and Western Asia.

The initial focus of the Programme in the 1970s and 1980s was on remote sensing and satellite communication applications. However, it was soon recognized that many countries lacked the capacity and expert knowledge to make optimal use of space applications and that space science-related activities could offer a cost-effective, entry-level path for capacity building in the use of space technology and its applications. To address this problem the Basic Space Science Initiative (BSSI) was launched under the Programme on Space Applications in 1991 (see A/AC.105/2013/CRP.11<sup>\*</sup>).

BSSI was a long-term effort for the development of astronomy and space science through regional and international cooperation in this field on a worldwide basis, particularly in developing nations. A series of workshops were held from 1991 to 2004 and astronomical telescope facilities and planetariums, donated by Japan, were established and inaugurated in several developing countries. From 2005 to 2008 BSSI focused on the preparations for and the follow-ups to the International Heliophysical Year 2007, which resulted in the establishment of 16 worldwide instrument arrays with close to 1000 instruments recording data on solar-terrestrial interaction. Since 2009 BSSI contributed with its activities to the International Space Weather Initiative (ISWI), which was concluded in 2012.

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<sup>\*</sup> [http://www.oosa.unvienna.org/pdf/limited/l/AC105\\_2013\\_CRP11E.pdf](http://www.oosa.unvienna.org/pdf/limited/l/AC105_2013_CRP11E.pdf)

The Programme on Space Applications is continually reviewing and adjusting its activities to ensure that they remain relevant to the mandates and priorities of the United Nations and its Members States. Considering the accomplishments to date and the considerable changes and developments in the field of space activities in general and in the space sciences in particular, the time has come to review BSSI activities and to consider together with the international space science community the future role of space science in the overall framework of the United Nations and specifically in the Programme on Space Applications.

## 2. Symposium Objectives

The primary objectives of the Symposium will be to:

1. Briefly review the history and assess the past accomplishments of the Basic Space Science Initiative under the United Nations Programme on Space Applications as well as relevant past and on-going activities of other United Nations entities;
2. Discuss the future role of space science under the framework of the United Nations Programme on Space Applications and compile a preliminary list of possible actions and activities that could be conducted under the leadership of the United Nations or in cooperation with other relevant entities.

In doing so, the Symposium will reflect where the field of space science is heading and what roles international cooperation and capacity building may be playing. The secondary objectives of the Symposium will therefore be to:

3. Bring together representatives in policy- and decision-making functions of major governmental and non-governmental organizations active in the space science field to present and discuss their relevant activities, in particular contributions to capacity building and international cooperation in space science, including in developing countries;
4. Discuss forthcoming and planned space science-related activities in the World and consider the possible opportunities they may offer for capacity building and international space cooperation.

Participants in the Symposium will be invited to address the above objectives and will be asked to consider the following questions:

- Shall space science and space science-related activities continue to be considered under the framework of the Programme on Space Applications to support capacity building and international cooperation in the field?
- Are there other existing relevant frameworks or initiatives that must be considered to avoid the duplication of efforts or to identify potential synergies for cooperation?
- Who would be beneficiaries, stakeholders and potential cooperation partners in the proposed activities and what would be the potential added value for them of the involvement of the Programme on Space Applications?
- Shall priority be given to the consideration of particular space science disciplines and/or topics? If so, which ones?
- What could be the specific future roles and activities of the Programme on Space Applications?

- What level of resources would be required for these proposed activities and how could these resources be obtained?

The observations and recommendations reflecting the discussions at the Symposium will be published as an official United Nations General Assembly document of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space. This document will be the basis for further considerations on the role of space science-related activities in the United Nations Programme on Space Applications.

### **3. Symposium Programme**

Following the opening ceremony of the Symposium, invited keynote presentations will review the history and achievements of the Programme on Space Applications in the field of space science-related activities, in particular under the Basic Space Science Initiative (BSSI). Other United Nations entities and space science related organizations, such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Abdus Salam International Centre for Theoretical Physics (ICTP), the Committee on Space Research (COSPAR), the International Academy of Astronautics (IAA), the International Astronomical Union (IAU) and the International Astronautical Federation (IAF) will be invited to make presentations on their space science activities and their considerations and plans for future activities under the United Nations framework.

The Office for Outer Space Affairs will invite Member State representatives of space agencies as well as space science experts and researchers in policy- and decision-making functions involved in relevant space science activities, including in, but not limited to, the following disciplines:

- Astronomy and cosmology;
- Planetary science;
- Solar physics and space weather;
- Astrobiology;
- Physical and life science research in space.

In particular the participation of experts able to make contributions about the scientific horizons, international cooperation opportunities and capacity building in these disciplines is highly encouraged.

The Symposium programme will be organized into several technical sessions, each of which will cover a suitably grouped range of space science disciplines. Ample time will be set aside for moderated group discussions on the potential role and contributions of the United Nations in supporting space science capacity building and international cooperation, in particular also considering space science activities in the developing countries and may be supplemented by panel discussions focussing on particularly important questions.

The co-sponsors will organize an attractive programme of social events for all Symposium participants. A tour of the Institute of Space Research of the Austrian Academy of Sciences, where the Symposium will be held, and presentations on its activities are also planned.

The detailed Symposium programme will be made available at the Symposium webpage at <http://www.unoosa.org/oosa/en/SAP/act2014/graz/index.html>.

#### **4. Participants**

Symposium participants should be involved in policy- and decision-making functions in the planning or implementation of space science activities in international or national space agencies, governmental or non-governmental organizations, research institutions, industry, universities and other academic institutions. The selection of participants will be based on their anticipated contributions to address the objectives and questions laid out in section 2 of this information note. Applications from qualified female applicants are particularly encouraged. Invited participants will receive a formal invitation letter.

#### **5. Financial Support to Applicants from Developing Countries**

Applicants and their nominating organizations are strongly encouraged to find their own sources of sponsorship to participate in the Symposium. However, within the limited financial resources available to the co-sponsors, a number of qualified applicants expressing the need for financial support will be offered financial support to attend the Symposium. This may include the provision of an economy-class round-trip air ticket between Graz and the applicant's international airport of departure (in-line with established United Nations travel rules) and board and lodging for the duration of the Symposium. En-route and other expenses or any changes made to an air ticket provided by the co-sponsors must be borne by the participants.

Applicants expressing the need for funding support will be selected on a competitive basis based on their qualifications and expected contributions to the Symposium. All funded applicants are required to make a presentation related to the Symposium theme. Successful applicants will be notified from August 2014.

#### **6. Dates and Location**

The Symposium will be held from 22 to 24 September 2014 in Graz, Austria, at the Space Research Institute of the Austrian Academy of Sciences. Invited participants will receive information with details on board and lodging and other local arrangements.

#### **7. Language of the Symposium**

Applicants must have a good working knowledge of English, which will be the only language of the Symposium.

#### **8. Life and Health Insurance**

Life and major health insurance is the responsibility of each selected participant or his/her nominating institution or government. The co-sponsors will neither assume any responsibility for life and major health insurance, nor for any other expenses related to medical treatment or accidental events.

#### **9. Deadline for Submission of Applications**

Applicants are encouraged to use the online application form available from <http://www.unoosa.org/oosa/en/SAP/act2014/graz/index.html>.

Alternatively, the fully completed application form and all other required documents shall be scanned and submitted in electronic format (.doc or .pdf) by email to the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (unpsa@unoosa.org).

In exceptional cases where applicants do not have access to electronic mail, the completed application may also be sent by postal mail or forwarded through the Office of the Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in the applicant's country to the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs, Vienna International Centre, P.O. Box 500, 1400 Vienna, Austria.

Applications must be received in the Office for Outer Space Affairs **no later than Sunday, 20<sup>th</sup> July 2014**. Only complete applications with all the requested information and signatures will be considered.

## **10. Points of Contact**

For questions related to the application process, please contact **Mr. Kurian Maniyanipurathu** (kurian.maniyanipurathu@unoosa.org, Tel: +43-1-26060-4268).

For questions related to the local arrangements in Graz, please contact **Ms. Birgit Kössler** (birgit.koessler@joanneum.at; Tel: +43 316 876 1256; Fax: +43 316 876 1404).

For questions related to the Symposium programme and to co-sponsorship opportunities, please contact **Mr. Werner Balogh** (werner.Balogh@unoosa.org, Tel: +43-1-26060-4952).

**Please frequently check <http://www.unoosa.org/oosa/en/SAP/act2014/graz/index.html> for the latest information on the Symposium.**