

INFORMATION NOTE

United Nations/ Austria Symposium on “Integrated Space Technology Applications for Climate Change”

Organized by
The United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs

Co-Organised by
The Government of Austria

7-10 September 2015, Graz, Austria

1. Introduction

Climate change has been recognized as the challenge that needs to be addressed globally, through an integrated approach involving mitigation efforts as a way to keep green-house gas emissions under control, and through adaptation efforts as a way to minimize the impacts and effects of climate change in communities around the world. Integrated space technology applications are facilitating the geospatial visualization of the manifestations of climate change. Through the combination of archived and up-to-date imagery, space agencies are demonstrating how the Arctic polar cap is diminishing in recent decades, how sea-level rise is affecting communities in a differential way, and how glaciers are receding worldwide. Remote sensing applications are now used as a way to track deforestation and re-forestation trends worldwide, and offer an objective basis to track such processes. The Conference of Parties held in Lima in 2014 highlighted the need to also focus on adaptation.

The upcoming Conference of Parties on climate change to take place in Paris at the end of 2015 will be the venue where the new climate change agreement will be launched. The draft version of this agreement includes a proposal to request the support of Annex II Parties to the Convention and those Parties in a position to do so, to “shall support the LDCs in the implementation of national adaptation plans and the development of additional activities under the LDC work programme, including the development of institutional capacity by establishing regional institutions to respond to adaptation needs and strengthen climate-related research and systematic observation for climate data collection, archiving, analysis and modelling.”¹

As a way to contribute to the promotion of integrated space technology applications in the context of climate change, the United Nations and the Government of Austria are organizing the *United Nations/ Austria Symposium on “Integrated Space Technology Applications for Climate Change”* under the framework of the United Nations Programme on Space Applications. The Symposium will take place in

¹ Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action. Negotiating text; Advance, unedited version as of 12 February 2015. Available at:
http://unfccc.int/files/bodies/awg/application/pdf/negotiating_text_12022015@2200.pdf

Graz, Austria, from 7 to 10 September 2015. It will be supported by the Government of Austria, the European Space Agency, the State of Styria and the City of Graz. It will bring together experts from the space and the development community as well as decision makers, researchers and practitioners to discuss the most recent advances and methods to use space-based applications to support the identification and implementation of measures to contribute to disaster risk management in mountain areas.

2. Background and Objectives

In recent years, climate change has been recognized as a process which may deter sustainable development throughout the world. As a global phenomenon, climate change poses a threat to the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. In the context of peaceful uses of outer space, governments reiterated the need to protect the Earth's environment, and to promote international cooperation on the use of satellite applications for such topics as climate change. Satellites offer a unique point of view to observe climate change-related variables and features at the global level such as sea-level rise, deforestation trends or carbon emissions; and to measure on a permanent basis other parameters which may be too difficult or costly to observe from the ground such as changes in polar ice-caps and glaciers, and social trends such as increasing exposition of vulnerable communities to phenomena related to Climate Change.

The objectives of this Symposium are:

- 1) To discuss ways in which countries affected by climate change can make better use of space applications to assess vulnerability to climate change;
- 2) To identify potential alternatives in the context of mitigation and adaptation to climate change;
- 3) To improve synergies among space agencies and organizations targeting efforts on climate change;
- 4) To strengthen international and regional cooperation in this area;
- 5) To raise awareness on the recent advances in space-related technologies, services and information resources which can be used to assess the impacts of climate change and the effects of measures implemented to reduce such impacts.

4. Location and Date of the Symposium

The Symposium will be held from 7 to 10 September 2015 at the Space Research Institute of the Austrian Academy of Sciences. Invited participants will receive information with details on hotels and other local arrangements.

5. Programme of the Symposium

The programme of this Symposium will include keynote addresses, plenary presentations and discussions on the following topics:

- Integrated space technology applications in the context of:
 - The water cycle – including permafrost and glacier melting;
 - Mitigation and adaptation: the use of integrated space technology applications in agriculture, forests and ecosystems exposed to climate change;

- Disaster-risk management, response and recovery – hydrometeorological hazards exacerbated by climate change.
- Political and legal aspects regarding the use of Integrated Space Technology Applications in the upcoming framework for climate change, to be launched in the COP in Paris at the end of 2015:

The outcome of the symposium will be a series of observations, recommendations and proposals for future activities regarding the use of space technology applications for disaster risk management in mountain areas.

6. Language of the Symposium

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

7. Participation

The International Symposium is expected to bring together participants from national, regional, and international organizations from:

- Government agencies including ministries of development and planning, environment, agriculture, health, natural resources, and space agencies;
- National, regional and international organizations involved in space applications, environment and mountain development;
- Academic and research institutions;
- Non-governmental organizations;
- Private Sector and industries.

Applicants must have a well-established professional working experience in a field related to the theme of the Symposium. **Applications from qualified female participants are particularly encouraged.**

Selected participants who are funded by the co-sponsors of the Symposium will be required to prepare a presentation of approximately 10 to 20 minutes on topics relevant to the Symposium objectives. Presentations on actual on-going projects will be of particular interest to participants of the Symposium. In addition, they are expected to contribute to the moderation of discussion sessions and reporting activities.

The sponsors will jointly select international participants from candidates nominated by their governments and/or institutions. Selection of these participants will be made on the basis of: (i) hierarchical level and experience relevant to the Symposium objectives; (ii); degree of current involvement in the use of integrated space applications and/or involvement in development processes in mountainous areas; (iii) content and relevance of the abstract submitted as part of the application; and (iv) educational background. Compliance with the instructions issued in the application form is mandatory. A limited amount of funding will be available to sponsor the travel and/or accommodation of a limited number of participants.

8. Deadline for Submission of Applications

Completed applications including the signature page with signatures and seals or stamps must be received

by the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs no later than 29 May 2015. International participants are kindly requested to submit their application online at <https://register.unoosa.org/civcrm/event/register?reset=1&id=38>

9. Life and Health Insurance

Life/major health insurance for each of the selected participants is necessary and is the responsibility of the candidate or his/her institution or government. The co-sponsors will not assume any responsibility for life and major health insurance, nor for expenses related to medical treatment or accidental events.

10. Contact Information

For information regarding the programme of the Symposium, as well as regarding the application process, please contact:

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