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**Committee on the Peaceful  
Uses of Outer Space  
Scientific and Technical Subcommittee  
Fifty-first session  
Vienna, 10-21 February 2014  
Item 6 of the provisional agenda\***  
**Space technology for socioeconomic development in the  
context of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable  
Development and the post-2015 development agenda**

**Global health**

**Discussion paper submitted by Canada**

This Conference room paper contains a Discussion Paper on Global Health, presented by the Canadian delegation.

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\* A/AC.105/C.1/L.332.



## Discussion Paper on Global Health, presented by the Canadian delegation

### Background

Action Team 6 (AT6) completed in 2010 a three-year consultation on the topic of tele-health and tele-epidemiology, and presented its final report entitled “The use of space applications to improve public health” to the 48th Session of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee (STSC) in February 2011.

- The report noted the *significant role played by space technology in supporting the operational needs specific to public health practice, including areas such as early warning systems for infectious diseases, health surveillance programmes as well as for emergency preparedness and field response.*
- Noting the numerous initiatives, programs and activities related to tele-health and tele-epidemiology, the report proposed that it was *time to foster more synergy and to create new integrated platforms to promote the convergence of common interests and needs in this area. The international community should benefit from these initiatives and the lessons learned shared in existing forums.*
- Furthermore, the report suggested *three areas for coordination and engagement, namely: (1) cross-disciplinary capacity building and training; (2) the provision, and integration of space-based, health and environmental data; (3) and the development of strategic frameworks including policies, infrastructure and leadership, that should be framed within national and regional implementation plans.*

Several developments occurred since the report was tabled, namely:

1. An Action Team 6 Follow-up Initiative (AT6-FUI) under the leadership of the University of Koblenz-Landau, Germany, held a series of workshops with the support of the Office of Outer Space Affairs, and is promoting the creation of an open community approach to apply spatial methods in order to address targeted health issues in the world.
2. The United Nations Office of Outer Space Affairs has shown a continued interest in Space and Global Health and a dedicated support to the organization of numerous workshops over past years.
3. The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and the post-2015 development agenda held in June 2012 stressed the importance of the space technology for the benefit of the sustainable development on Earth. The Annex to the Resolution adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, document number A/RES/66/71, which presents the contribution of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, expresses explicitly “the need to look more closely into how advanced space research and exploration systems and technologies could further contribute to meeting challenges, including that of global

climate change, and to food security and global health, and endeavour to examine (...) the benefits, particularly for developing countries”.

4. In 2013, the Subcommittee agreed that the agenda item on the implementation of the recommendations of the UNISPACE III be renamed as “Space technology for socioeconomic development in the context of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and the post-2015 development agenda”. In the same vein, the Working Group of the Whole also agreed that it should study the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, with “global health” as an ongoing subject of discussion under this item.
5. On the margin of this session, the Delegation of Japan has planned a side-event to encourage discussion of COPUOS Member States about the use of space technology for global health in the context of the post-2015 development agenda. The event entitled “Space and Sustainable Development: Space Technology & Research for Global Health” will address tele-epidemiology by using earth observation satellites, and space medicine on the International Space Station.
6. Canada has circulated a draft paper on tele-epidemiology aimed at reviewing current parameters that can be monitored from space to help with the detection and prevention of important diseases, and with the spirit of improving our understanding of the role and availability of these technologies, as well as their use and applications to support public health functions in various countries.

### **Avenues for collaboration**

Global health refers to the health of human populations in a global context in a way which transcends the perspectives and concerns of individual nations. Global health represents the endpoint for a variety of concerns explicitly expressed in the work of the STSC and includes themes such as public health security, food security, water safety and climate services. The STSC has the opportunity to take concrete steps to promote the contribution of space technologies to sustainable development, and more specifically for “Global Health”.

In this context, the following are points for consideration as the Committee focus on new avenues of collaboration in this field:

1. Should the definition of “Emergency” be review to include not only natural disasters, but also global health security events such as the pandemic propagation of diseases? This could broaden the application of the mandate of UN-SPIDER and provide an efficient means to further disseminate information and train national organizations into spatial technologies to support global health;
2. Should the Signatories of the Charter for Space and Natural Disasters be invited to broaden the scope of application of the Charter to include health security events such as pandemics and focal public health emergencies? This would allow the appropriate activation of the Charter in these disastrous situations;

3. Is there merit in promoting the creation of a UNOOSA-WHO Collaborative Center on Space & Global Health to address global health emergencies and health security issues? The WHO model of “Collaborative Centres” could be used for that purpose, led by a COPUOS Member State.
4. Can we formally engage WHO to link all United Nations bodies interested with tele-health and tele-epidemiology in an effort to disseminate information and promote initiatives in these areas throughout the United Nations system?
5. In the pursuit of the ongoing initiative from Member States, and consistent with all the work done so far, should the creation of a focus expert group with a multi-year workplan be considered to better scope the use of space technology for global health and improve collaboration?

The benefits of such a focus group could be important and contribute to focus the attention of Member States on this topic; to concentrate their energy onto achieving concrete results; to deliver a framework enabling Member States and especially developing countries to take full advantage of space resources for health purposes.

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