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Open Informal Session of the United Nations Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities (UN-Space)

Engaging Space Tools for Development on Earth –  
Contribution of Space Technology and Applications to the  
Post-2015 Development Agenda

Wednesday, 14 May 2014, New York

**OPENING STATEMENT**

**BY**

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Distinguished delegates,

I warmly welcome you all to the eleventh Open Informal Session of the Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities.

The post-2015 development agenda, unified in its content and universal in form, will require effective, enhanced and innovative tools to support its implementation. Among those tools are the ones offered by space science and technology, which could act as both an enabler and a catalyst for the efforts of countries with regard to progressing towards internationally agreed development goals and for sustainable development.

Challenges to our societies, including that of global climate change, and to food security and global health, are all interlinked with disasters, and we need a holistic approach to those problems and concerns in order to make sound long-term decisions. Meeting those challenges would be facilitated if efforts for an increased coordination are made to ensure a timely and adapted integration of the space-based technology applications of remote sensing, satellite telecommunication and global navigation satellite systems to multi-source geospatial datasets.

Against this background, the Open informal session, today, will focus on the pivotal importance of space technology and applications for eradicating poverty and advancing development in the post-2015 framework. Through its multifaceted nature, from Earth observations to telecommunications, from tele-epidemiology to global navigation, space

technology can catalyse socio-economic development in virtually any sector, bridging the gap between developing and developed countries.

Distinguished delegates,

The open informal session is an interactive forum for Governments, national authorities, United Nations system entities, private sector and civil society to discuss the use of space technology within the United Nations system for the benefit of its Member States and other stakeholders. The Open informal sessions aim to achieve a stronger focus of overall policies and strategies on a particular issue of interest to Member States.

In the past, the themes of the Open Informal Sessions included *inter alia*: Space technology for sustainable development and disaster management: opportunities within the United Nations system; The use of space-derived geospatial data for sustainable development in the United Nations system; Public-private Partnerships and Innovative Funding Approaches in the United Nations System to Promote the Use of Space Technology and its Applications; Space-related activities of United Nations entities in Africa; Space technology on Emergency Communications; Space and Climate Change; Space for Agriculture and Food Security, and Space and disaster risk reduction: Planning for resilient human settlements.

Distinguished delegates,

The United Nations Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Affairs, also known as UN-Space, is a formal inter-agency mechanism, instituted in mid-1970s to respond to the need for increased coordination of activities relating to the peaceful uses of outer space within the United Nations system. The Meeting reports to the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS), and generates biennial reports of the Secretary-General on coordination of space-related activities within the United Nations system (the most recent report outlines directions and anticipated results for the period 2012-2013 and addresses the use of space-derived geospatial data for sustainable development (A/AC.105/1014)). The upcoming Secretary-General report for the period 2014-2015 addresses the post-2015 development agenda, and will be issued for the fifty-seventh session of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space in June this year. The Inter-Agency Meeting also produces special reports on selected topics, such as Space benefits for Africa: contribution of the United Nations (A/AC.105/941), Space and climate change (A/AC.105/991), and Space for agriculture and food security (A/AC.105/1042). The Meeting also focuses on dedicated topics, such as climate change, disaster management, and geographic information strategies.

Distinguished delegates,

Benefits of space technology can and must be harnessed for the benefit of all, but there are still limited awareness and capacities of policy makers, local authorities and planners of its application for development. Agricultural planning and crop monitoring; water resource management; climate change assessment, adaptation and mitigation; rural and urban planning; tele-education; tele-health; disaster management and response; emergency communications; environmental protection; forests, weather, and sea level monitoring and are just a few examples of areas where space technology acts as an enabler for further growth and development.

The Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, through its agenda item on space and sustainable development and under the item of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee devoted to socioeconomic development in the context of the Rio+20 conference and the post-2015 development agenda, currently work towards a common approach to those global processes within the Committee as a whole. At the same time we note the need to increase awareness at the global level to fully recognize the importance of space tools and geospatial information to meet the objectives of the global development agenda. Space tools have become important means of implementation of development objectives and goals.

The General Assembly Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals is now completing its work on sustainable development goals, and the post-2015 development agenda is taking shape. In this context, and building upon the contribution of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space to the Rio+20 conference articulated in its report A/AC.105/993 from 2011, the establishment and strengthening of sustainable and standards-driven spatial data infrastructures merit recognition as means of implementation of those development goals and objectives.

In that sense, concerted efforts are required to ensure continuous monitoring and assessment of the environment in meeting sustainable development objectives at all levels. It is therefore essential to increase the number of countries with enhanced autonomous capabilities to access and use Earth Observation and in-situ geospatial data and information in support of decision making processes at national, regional and international levels. This includes the development and implementation of associated standards-based infrastructures and relevant institutional arrangements by means of strengthening capacity, knowledge sharing and technological cooperation while promoting a multi-sectoral approach.

The open informal session today therefore endeavours to review challenges and opportunities in mainstreaming space technology in key areas under the post-2015 development agenda process, and will look into common perspectives for increasing its use for attainment of global development goals.

Next week, the High-Level Event of the General Assembly “Contributions of North-South, South-South, Triangular Cooperation, and ICT for Development to the implementation of the Post-2015 Development Agenda”, will focus on mobilizing political commitment for increasing the understanding of the role of scientific and technological cooperation in eradicating poverty and accelerating the achievement of several of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), such as those aimed towards achieving gender equality, ensuring environmental sustainability and combating diseases. This reaffirms the need to promote a wider application of technology as the means of implementation of the post 2015 Development Agenda.

On behalf of the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs, I once again welcome you to this Open Informal Session and look forward to a fruitful discussion and to making this session a success.

Thank you for your attention.