



INFORMATION NOTE

United Nations/Austria/European Space Agency Symposium on Space Applications for Sustainable Development to Support the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development

“Space Systems – Protecting and Restoring Water Resources”

13 – 16 September 2005, Graz, Austria

“We shall not finally defeat AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, or any of the other infectious diseases that plague the developing world until we have also won the battle for safe drinking-water, sanitation and basic health care.”

Kofi Annan, United Nations Secretary-General

1. Introduction

The United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs, the Government of Austria and the European Space Agency (ESA) will jointly organize the third in a series of consecutive symposia to promote activities to carry out the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), held in Johannesburg, South Africa, in 2002. The Symposium will be hosted and co-sponsored by the Government of Austria (Federal Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Federal Ministry for Transport, Innovation and Technology), the State of Styria and the City of Graz. It will also be co-sponsored by ESA. This will be the twelfth in a series of symposia organized through the United Nations Programme on Space Applications in cooperation with these co-sponsors since 1994.

2. Background

At the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), more than one hundred Heads of States and Governments reaffirmed their strong commitment to the full implementation of Agenda 21, which was adopted at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. They also committed themselves to achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration.

At the same time, the resolution entitled “Space Millennium: Vienna Declaration for Space and Human Development”,* which was adopted by the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE III), contains a strategy for enhancing the use of space science and technology to contribute to the solutions of major global issues. The implementation of the recommendations contained in the Vienna Declaration could support many of the actions called for in the WSSD Plan of Implementation to manage, protect and restore water resources.

* A/RES/54/68

In 2002, the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs organized a symposium in Stellenbosch, South Africa, immediately prior to WSSD to consider steps to carry out actions proposed for inclusion in the WSSD Plan of Implementation. That symposium recommended that pilot projects should be launched to demonstrate operational capabilities of space technologies to support sustainable development. In 2003, with the sponsorship of the Government of Austria, the United Nations Programme on Space Applications began a series of symposia to examine how such projects could be initiated and in which areas. The first of this series of symposia identified management of water resources as an area where space applications could make important contributions to the WSSD follow-up process. The second symposium, held in 2004, discussed various applications of space science and technology for water resource management. That symposium identified steps to be taken for the development of pilot projects that could use space technology in support of water resource management.

Starting with its session in 2004, the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space began to consider matters related to the use of space-related technology in water resource management. The Committee noted that in response to the deepening water crisis, space technology could contribute to a better water resource management by providing data and information on the availability of water resources and water use. The Committee also noted that once converted into practical information, scientific data on water resources provided by satellites could be used to formulate policy and implement programmes at the national, regional and international levels, including those of the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme and other entities of the United Nations system.

Recognizing the pressing need to achieve sustainable and equitable water resource management, the United Nations has launched a number of initiatives. In 2004, the United Nations Secretary-General appointed a group of high-level experts to his Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation, which considers ways for mobilizing political support and financial resources to ensure that the development targets on water and sanitation are met. The United Nations Millennium Project established a Task Force on Water and Sanitation to consider the status of the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals related to water and sanitation and to develop an action plan to achieve target 10 of the Millennium Development Goal 7 that calls for “cutting in half, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation”. On 22 March 2005, in order to ensure greater focus of the international community on water-related issues, the United Nations launched the International Water for Life Decade, which coincided with the World Water Day celebrated since 1993.

Within the framework of the WSSD Follow-up Programme adopted in November 2002 by the Committee on Earth Observation Satellites (CEOS), ESA launched an initiative called “TIGER Initiative”, focusing on “Earth Observation for Integrated Water Resources Management in Africa”. Recognizing the common objectives, the Office for Outer Space Affairs and ESA agreed to coordinate efforts to address the challenges of water resource management.

3. Objectives and Outcomes

The goal of the series of the three symposiums, held from 2003 to 2005, is to promote the use of the demonstrated capabilities of space technology to support some of the actions called for in the WSSD Plan of Implementation. The specific objectives of the Symposium in 2005 are:

- (i) To review progress made in the development and implementation of pilot projects that use space technologies to enhance management, protection and restoration of water resources; to provide drinking water; to mitigate water-related emergencies; and to combat desertification;
- (ii) To examine what low-cost space-related technologies and informational resources are available for addressing water-related challenges in developing countries;

- (iii) To examine what type and level of training is required for which target groups in using space technologies for addressing water-related challenges;
- (iv) To identify a functional partnership that could be established to promote the use of space-related technology and information for water resource management;
- (v) To enhance the participation of women in decision-making on water resource management; and
- (vi) To select a topic for consideration by future similar symposia, possibly from among the themes to be considered by the Commission on Sustainable Development in 2006 and 2007.

4. Theme of the Symposium

The Symposium in 2005 will focus on the follow-up of the outcomes of the 2004 Symposium. This would include progress reports on any pilot projects that might have been initiated since September 2004. The Symposium will also address the use of space technologies to combat desertification, to ensure access to safe drinking water and to manage water-related emergencies, such as floods, tsunamis and mudslides as well as epidemiological, sanitary and humanitarian aspects of such emergencies.

In addressing those topics, the Symposium will place importance on the need for further enhancing coordination and creating synergies with a number of relevant on-going initiatives such as those by the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and its subsidiary bodies, the CEOS World Summit on Sustainable Development Follow-Up Programme, as well as the activities of the United Nations Programme on Space Applications. The Symposium will take into account, as much as possible, the latest results of work of the Commission on Sustainable Development and other bodies within the United Nations system that address water-related challenges in response to actions called for in the WSSD Plan of Implementation.

5. Programme

The programme of the Symposium will include a series of technical presentations of successful applications of space technologies that provide cost-effective solutions or essential information for planning and implementation of programmes or projects to enhance management, protection and restoration of water resources. The technical presentations will also cover the use of space-related technologies in mitigating water-related emergencies, providing safe drinking water and combating desertification. The Symposium will also feature presentations on the needs of end users engaged in water resource management, and those addressing water-related emergencies, that could be met through the use of space technology. The programme will include sufficient time for discussions among participants to identify the priority areas where pilot projects should be launched and examine possible partnerships that could be established.

6. Dates and Location

The Symposium will be held in Graz, Austria, at the Space Research Institute of the Academy of Sciences **from 13 to 16 September 2005**. All selected and invited participants will receive an information package 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. Qualifications for Participation in the Symposium

Applicants must be in managerial or decision-making positions within governmental or research institutions with responsibilities for carrying out programmes or projects in the areas of management, protection and restoration of water resources. Other applicants would work in space-related institutions or companies that carry out activities that could support programmes or projects related to management, protection and restoration of water resources. Individuals who have started space application projects or outreach activities in their institutions and female candidates are particularly encouraged to apply.

Applicants are encouraged to become familiar with the Plan of Implementation of the WSSD and with the recommendations of UNISPACE III (see item 15 below). Selected applicants will be asked to become familiar with those recommendations prior to their arrival at Graz and to prepare some ideas on how to implement particular recommendations.

9. Deadline for Applications

A copy of the completed application form should be directly submitted to the Office for Outer Space Affairs:

Office for Outer Space Affairs
United Nations Office at Vienna
Vienna International Centre,
P.O. BOX 500
A - 1400 VIENNA - AUSTRIA
Fax: (+43-1) 26060-5830
E-mail: oosa@unvienna.org

The original application must be submitted through the office of the Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Programme in the applicant's country. Applicants seeking financial assistance should ensure that their applications are received in Vienna **no later than 17 June 2005**. In view of a large number of individuals that are expected to express interest in participating in the Symposium with funding support by the co-sponsors, financial support will be considered on the basis of merit and on a first-come, first-served basis. Applications received at a later date will also be considered for invitation to participate, although it may be without funding support.

10. Selection of Participants

Participants will be selected by the co-sponsors of the Symposium on a competitive basis from those who meet the qualifications indicated in section 8 above. The selection will be based on the information provided in the application form. Selected participants will be notified in due course.

11. Financial Arrangements

Within the limited funds available to the co-sponsors, a number of selected participants from developing countries and countries with economies in transition will be offered financial support to attend the Symposium. Funded participants will be provided with a round-trip air ticket between their international airports of departure and Graz, Austria, and daily subsistence allowances to cover board

and lodging for the duration of the Symposium. Any cost associated with en-route expenses or any changes made to the air ticket must be borne by the participants.

Due to the limited availability of financial support, participants and their nominating organizations are strongly encouraged to find additional sources of sponsorship to allow them to attend the Symposium. In the past, nominating organizations have often provided for air-travel of participants while the co-sponsors of the Symposium covered all other expenses.

12. Life and Health Insurance

The co-sponsors will not assume any responsibility for life and major health insurance, nor for expenses related to medical treatment or accidental events. This will be the responsibility of each selected participant or of the nominating institution.

13. Points of contact

For the submission of nominations for attendance and funding, please contact Ms. Ayoni Oyeneyin, United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs, at the above address and fax number, or at the following e-mail address: "Ayoni.Oyeneyin@unvienna.org"

For the programme of the Symposium as well as co-sponsorship, please contact Mr. Shuhrat Sulaymanov, United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs, at the above address and fax number, or at the following e-mail address: Shuhrat.Sulaymanov@unvienna.org.

For the local arrangements, such as hotel accommodation, local transportation and meeting facilities and exhibit, please contact Ms. Gerlinde Tuscher, Consultant for Joanneum Research (Telephone (mobile): +43 664 2808 818; E-mail: "gerlinde.tuscher@campus02.at").

14. Additional Information

The latest information on this Symposium and its relevant documentation, including the Plan of Implementation of the WSSD, are available from the web site of the Office for Outer Space Affairs at <<http://www.oosa.unvienna.org>>. The report of UNISPACE III can be found at <<http://www.oosa.unvienna.org/unisp-3/index.html>>.