



UN-SPIDER May 2009 Updates

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<http://www.ungiwg.org/cgi-bin/mailman/listinfo/unspider>

1. UN-SPIDER at the Second Session of the Global Platform for Disaster Reduction, Geneva, 15 – 19 June 2009

UN-SPIDER, the Group on Earth Observation (GEO), the Asian Disaster Reduction Centre (ADRC), and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) are conducting the following side event during the above meeting: “**Accessing space-based information to support disaster risk reduction**” on Tuesday 16 June 2009, from 13:30 – 15:00 PM. This side event will contribute to promoting synergies aimed at enhancing the use of space-based information for disaster risk reduction and it will include presentations by several institutions, and will also be used to launch a **global thematic partnership** and a **regional platform that promote the access and use of space-based information**. If you will be attending this Global Meeting please do consider attending this side event.

For more information >> [ISDR](#)

2. UN-SPIDER facilitates access to satellite imagery for disasters in Bangladesh, Afghanistan, and Tajikistan

In early May, unusually powerful mudslides damaged the dwellings of over 1800 people in Uyaly in the Central Asian Republic of Tajikistan. UN-SPIDER experts worked with UNDP Tajikistan to activate the International Charter Space and Major Disasters for the acquisition of satellite imagery. DLR-ZKI created a map of the mudflow extent based on data acquired by the SPOT 5 satellite. In mid-May, in response to floods which affected approximately 10,000 households in the Northern and North-eastern regions of Afghanistan, UN-SPIDER worked with OCHA Afghanistan to activate the International Charter. SERTIT produced maps of the water bodies using data acquired by SPOT, LANDSAT, DMC NigeriaSat-1, and PALSAR satellite series. Finally, tropical Cyclone Aila hit the coast of West Bengal on 25 May 2009. More than 3 million people were affected by the cyclone. UN-SPIDER provided support to the World Food Programme (WFP). SERTIT created maps of the flood impact based on data acquired by SPOT, ALOS, ENVISAT, LANDSAT, and RADARSAT satellite series. Additionally, ITHACA - Information Technology for Humanitarian Assistance, Cooperation and Action provided direct support to WFP and made available the first post-disaster map to the field team in less than 24 hours after the request came in. ITHACA worked closely with the Italian Space Agency in the acquisition of imagery from the Cosmo-SkyMED constellation.

For more information >> [International Charter](#) and [ITHACA](#)

3. United Nations launches first Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction

The United Nations launched the first global report uncovering how disaster risk is intensively concentrated in a very small portion of the earth's surface and unevenly distributed. Based on more than 30 years of disaster data, the report highlights three main risk drivers that will be magnified by climate change and proposes 20 recommendations to help make the world safer. “Disaster risk is rising in an alarming way, threatening development gains, economic stability and global security while creating disproportionate impacts on developing countries and poor rural and urban areas,” said UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon at the launch. “While we cannot prevent natural phenomena such as earthquakes and cyclones, we can limit their consequences.”

Full Story >> [PreventionWeb](#)

4. Pacific Disaster Risk Management Partnership Network holds fourth annual meeting

The fourth annual meeting of the Pacific Disaster Risk Management Partnership Network was held from 12-13 May 2009. The Partnership Network was established in February 2006 as regional and international organizations involved in capacity building in disaster risk management sought to strengthen cooperation. The theme of the meeting was "Strengthening Collaboration and Cooperation". The objectives were to review the status of current and planned Partnership activities in the Pacific, establish South-South cooperation with the Caribbean community, examine opportunities for improved strategic alliances and engagement at regional and national level within the Pacific, and prepare for the Pacific region's contribution to the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction. UN-SPIDER was represented by Programme Coordinator **Mr. David Stevens**, who discussed with partners the establishment a global thematic partnership on space-based information for disaster risk reduction.

Further info>> [Pacific Disaster Net](#) and [SOPAC](#)

5. Satellite data can suggest when and where epidemics will strike next

The article recounts how researchers at the Goddard Space Flight Centre, NASA, warned authorities in Kenya of an impending rise in the cases of malaria in the country. The Kenyan authorities responded accordingly and mitigated the impacts of the disease on the population. The forecast was made possible by an analysis of satellite-based data. The article states that attempts to foresee epidemics such as malaria have benefitted from crunching data from satellites, which is a much less costly and rapid process than conducting fieldwork on the ground. Satellites transmit copious information on temperatures, precipitation, vegetation cover and even the health, moisture content and chlorophyll-production of plants.

Full Story >> [The Economist](#)

6. Satellite imagery shows fragile Wilkins Ice Shelf destabilised

Satellite images show that icebergs have begun to calve from the northern front of the Wilkins Ice Shelf – indicating that the huge shelf has become unstable. This follows the recent collapse of the ice bridge that had previously linked the Antarctic mainland to Charcot Island. "The changes to Wilkins Ice Shelf provide a fabulous natural laboratory that will allow us to understand how ice shelves respond to climate change and what the future will hold for the rest of Antarctica," commented a researcher. The combination of high resolution TerraSAR-X images and the more frequently acquired Envisat images increases the understanding of ice shelf break-up more than ever before.

Full Story >> [European Space Agency](#)

7. Protecting rescue workers deployed in a catastrophe

Fraunhofer researchers are currently working on a localization solution to better protect rescue workers when they are deployed in a catastrophe – or find avalanche victims more efficiently. Their work combines satellite-based positioning with terrestrial guidance tools and situation-based sensor systems (such as integrated toxic gas sensors). The new system is intended to improve the coordination of deployed rescue professionals in the event of catastrophe, while ensuring their own safety at the same time.

Full Story >> [Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft](#)

8. NOAA announces new cooperative institute for climate and satellites

Scientists from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, USA (NOAA), have teamed up with experts from the University of Maryland and North Carolina State University to form the Cooperative Institute for Climate and Satellites. The new institute will use satellite observations to detect, monitor and forecast climate change, and its impact on the environment, including ecosystems.

Full Story >> [NOAA](#)

Conferences and Workshops:

We maintain a Calendar of Events with upcoming Conferences, Meetings and Events relevant to the area of space-based solutions for disaster management and emergency response. The Calendar can be viewed at:

<http://www.google.com/calendar/embed?src=h1a93vb3rk6ud1tvrejujsfk8s%40group.calendar.google.com>

3rd Central Asia GIS Conference - GISCA'09, "GIScience for Environmental and Emergency Management in Central Asia", in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, 27-28 August 2009

This conference will be hosted by the Kyrgyz State University for Construction, Transportation & Architecture and supported by the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA); the conference will bring together practitioners from Central Asian countries. Topics to be discussed include GIS for Environmental Management, Emergency Management, and Health; New Trends and Technologies in GIS&T; Spatial Data Infrastructures; and Educational Programmes. UN-SPIDER will be organising a pre-conference meeting on 26 August 2009 and will be providing funding support for experts from the disaster management community to attend this meeting as well as the conference.

For more information >> [Austria-Central Asia Centre for GIScience](#)

AfricaGIS 2009: "Geo-spatial Information and Sustainable Development in Africa" in Kampala, Uganda, 26-30 October 2009

The "AfricaGIS 2009" International Conference is one of the leading geospatial conferences in Africa and provides a platform where geo-information professionals from Africa and around the world come together to learn and interact about geo-information technology and its applications. UNOOSA is supporting this Conference and will be co-organising a special session on space-based information for risk and disaster management. Funding will be available for travel support for selected participants that have their paper accepted to be presented in this special session.

For more information >> [Conference website](#), [Conference flyer](#), [Funding Support from ISPRS](#)

"3rd International Academy of Astronautics (IAA) African Regional Conference" in Abuja, Nigeria, 24-26 November 2009

The conference aims to provide a forum for the presentation and discussion of topics related to the theme, "Space for Africa: Joint Participation, Knowledge Development and Sharing". Papers are invited in the following areas of the conference subthemes: integrated earth observation system for development, space communications and navigation systems, space transportation and propulsion systems, space debris and near earth objects, earth observation sciences and related technologies, basic space science, capacity building and the space enterprise. Deadline for abstract submission is 15 June 2009.

For more information >> [IAA](#)

Pacific Islands GIS&RS User Conference 2009, in Suva, Fiji, 1-4 December 2009

This is the first announcement for the above conference which will take place from 1 - 4 December 2009 at the University of South Pacific, Lower Campus, Faculty of Islands and Oceans, University of the South Pacific, Suva, Fiji. UN-SPIDER will be supporting this event and encourages all experts interested in joining the leading geospatial conference in the Pacific region to attend and contribute.

For more information >> [PACINET](#)

Upcoming UN-SPIDER Outreach Activities:

Further information on the following planned workshops can be obtained from the outreach activities section of the UN-SPIDER webpage: <http://www.unoosa.org/oosa/en/unspider/workshops.html>

UN-SPIDER Regional Workshop "Promoting the Use of Space-based Solutions for Disaster Management and Emergency Response in Latin America", Quito, Ecuador, 29 September – 2 October 2009

Third United Nations International UN-SPIDER Bonn Workshop: "From Concepts to Application", in Bonn, Germany, 21-23 October 2009

"6th UN-wide Meeting on the Use of Space Technologies for Emergency Response and Humanitarian Assistance", in New York, USA (October 2009)

UN-SPIDER Regional Workshop "Building Upon Regional Space-based Solutions for Disaster Management and Emergency Response for Africa", Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 24-27 November 2009

Upcoming Events Supported by UN-SPIDER

3rd Central Asia GIS Conference - GISCA'09, "GIScience for Environmental and Emergency Management in Central Asia" in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, 27-28 August 2009

II Escuela de Primavera sobre Soluciones Espaciales para el Manejo de Desastres Naturales y Respuestas de Emergencias (UN-SPIDER/GEOSS Spring School), Argentina (Organized by UN-SPIDER/GEOSS/CONAE/CRECTEALC (October 2009)

AfricaGIS 2009: "Geo-spatial Information and Sustainable Development in Africa" in Kampala, Uganda, 26-30 October 2009

Pacific Islands GIS&RS User Conference 2009, in Suva, Fiji, 1-4 December 2009

*The **United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA)** implements the decisions of the General Assembly and of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and its two Subcommittees, the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee and the Legal Subcommittee. The Office is responsible for promoting international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space, and assisting developing countries in using space science and technology. Headquartered in Vienna, Austria, UNOOSA maintains a website at <http://www.unoosa.org>.*

*In its resolution 61/110 of 14 December 2006 the United Nations General Assembly agreed to establish the "**United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response - UN-SPIDER**" as a programme within UNOOSA. UN-SPIDER focuses on the need to ensure access to and use of space-based solutions during all phases of the disaster management cycle.*