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**Committee on the Peaceful
Uses of Outer Space**

Outreach activities carried out in 2007 in the framework of the United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response

Report of the Secretariat

I. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, in its resolution 61/110 of 14 December 2006, decided to establish a programme within the United Nations to provide universal access to all countries and all relevant international and regional organizations to all types of space-based information and services relevant to disaster management to support the full disaster management cycle by being a gateway to space information for disaster management support, serving as a bridge to connect the disaster management and space communities and being a facilitator of capacity-building and institutional strengthening, in particular for developing countries.

2. The implementation of the United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response (UN-SPIDER) is ensuring that:

(a) All countries and relevant regional and international organizations have access to and develop the capacity to use all types of space-based information to support the full disaster management cycle; an increased number of countries receive assistance in the definition of disaster management planning and policies with regard to the use of space-based technologies, as well as support in the implementation of risk reduction and emergency response activities using space-based information;

(b) Entities in the United Nations system and international bodies that work on space-related issues and disaster management benefit from increased coherence and synergy in using space science and technology and their applications as tools to advance human development and increase overall capacity development.



3. The General Assembly, in its resolution 62/217 of 21 December 2007, endorsed the UN-SPIDER workplan for 2007, along with the platform programme for the period 2007-2009 and the workplan for the period 2008-2009.

4. The platform programme for the period 2007-2009 includes 11 activities that focus on: (a) facilitating capacity-building and institutional strengthening through the provision of technical advisory services, upon request, to Member States to update or initiate disaster management policies and plans with regard to the use of space-based technologies for disaster reduction; (b) expanding the availability of international and regional workshops and meetings in various regions of the world so that individuals involved in disaster management and experts in the use of space technology for disaster management can learn how to take advantage of existing and planned opportunities; (c) contributing to establishing and maintaining a knowledge portal that includes case histories and best practices on the use of space-based data to support disaster management; (d) promoting the development of regional and country profiles; (e) promoting close collaboration among members of the space community to help them understand the specific needs of members of the disaster management community and to develop end-to-end solutions that meet the requirements of the user community; and (f) facilitating the preparation of reports on workshops, training courses, symposiums, conferences and seminars organized within the framework of UN-SPIDER.

II. Outreach activities

5. One of the key areas that UN-SPIDER is focusing on is outreach activities, which entails: organizing workshops, seminars and expert meetings in all regions and in conjunction with the humanitarian community, including the user community in Geneva; participating in relevant international policymaking and technical conferences, meetings and workshops by providing speakers and awareness-raising materials; providing support to disaster management practitioners in order to enable them to participate in regional and international technical seminars and workshops; and systematically ensuring that recommendations and feedback from participants in those activities are channelled back into the work carried out in the framework of UN-SPIDER. The following workshops form the core of the effort made by UN-SPIDER staff in 2007 with regard to outreach activities: (a) international workshops focusing on bringing together experts and practitioners to enhance horizontal coordination; and (b) regional workshops, focusing on selected themes and on strengthening vertical coordination.

Summary of outreach activities carried out in 2007

6. In 2007, UN-SPIDER funds enabled 14 professionals from developing countries to participate in eight meetings (A/AC.105/899, annex I). In addition, they allowed for the organization of the following: the international UN-SPIDER workshop on space-based information and solutions for disaster management and emergency response, held in Bonn, Germany, from 29 to 31 October 2007; the regional UN-SPIDER workshop on building upon regional space-based solutions for disaster management and emergency response, organized jointly with the Government of China and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the

Pacific (ESCAP) held in Shenzhen, China, from 3 to 5 December 2007; and the fourth United Nations meeting on the use of space technologies for emergency response and humanitarian assistance, held in Bangkok on 27 November 2007 (A/AC.105/899, annex II).

7. At the fourth United Nations meeting on the use of space technologies for emergency response and humanitarian assistance, participants discussed the operational aspects of adhering to the Charter on Cooperation to Achieve the Coordinated Use of Space Facilities in the Event of Natural or Technological Disasters (also called the International Charter on Space and Major Disasters) and other existing initiatives, such as Sentinel Asia. They evaluated the work carried out by the United Nations and partner institutions and organizations with a view to better understanding what worked and what needed to be improved, particularly with regard to making such opportunities available to an even wider group of United Nations agencies, especially at the field level. Participants discussed the establishment of a user focus group that would help entities of the United Nations system and partners to continue building upon available opportunities. Finally, participants updated the “Common Vision”, a text that outlines how United Nations agencies view available opportunities, how they plan to work together by building upon existing synergies and which changes those agencies consider necessary for maximizing the benefits of such opportunities to entities of the United Nations system. A report on that meeting is available on the UN-SPIDER website (<http://www.unspider.org>).

III. International UN-SPIDER workshop on space-based information and solutions for disaster management and emergency response

A. Programme and attendance

8. The workshop held in Bonn was the first international workshop organized in the framework of UN-SPIDER. It was organized jointly by the Office for Outer Space Affairs of the Secretariat and the German Aerospace Center (DLR). The following organizations also contributed: the United Nations University Institute for Environment and Human Security, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction Platform for the Promotion of Early Warning, the Group on Earth Observations and the German Committee for Disaster Reduction.

9. The main topics discussed at the workshop included:

(a) Identification of relevant space-based information for disaster management support and emergency response, including ongoing and planned initiatives, case studies and best practices, archived data for disaster studies and capacity-building opportunities;

(b) Definition of a knowledge portal to ensure that relevant information is easily accessible and disseminated to all interested end-users, including the design of an appropriate information database system;

(c) Identification of existing and planned communities of practice that can contribute to bringing together the space-based technology and disaster management communities;

(d) Discussion and definition of a knowledge management and transfer framework and implementation of specific activities that will contribute to the transfer of knowledge;

(e) Capacity-building task CB-07-02 of the Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS) on knowledge sharing for improved disaster management and emergency response;

(f) Harmonization of the various existing initiatives that are contributing to helping developing countries access and use space-based technologies for disaster management and risk reduction.

10. The programme of the workshop included plenary sessions, during which 11 presentations were given, and discussion sessions, in which participants were divided into four working groups. Working Group 1 discussed the platform for fostering alliances, more specifically user requirements, in coordination with task DI-06-09 of GEOSS, Working Group 2 also discussed the platform for fostering alliances but focused on horizontal coordination, Working Group 3 discussed the knowledge portal and Working Group 4 discussed knowledge management and capacity-building (activity 11, in coordination with GEOSS task CB-07-02).

11. The presentation sessions provided participants with the opportunity to learn how space-based information could be used in disaster management and humanitarian relief work, thus stimulating discussion within the working groups. Accounts of existing and planned projects highlighted the need for a coordinating entity at the global level.

12. A total of 90 participants from the following countries attended the workshop: Algeria, Austria, Brazil, Canada, China, El Salvador, France, Germany, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Japan, Kenya, Mexico, Morocco, Netherlands, Nigeria, Pakistan, Russian Federation, Serbia, Spain, Sudan, Switzerland, Thailand, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and United States of America.

13. The workshop was also attended by representatives of the Office for Outer Space Affairs, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat, the United Nations Development Programme, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, the United Nations University, the World Health Organization, the Secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, the Organization of American States, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the European Space Agency, the European Commission, the Group on Earth Observations, the Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre, the Asian Disaster Reduction Center, the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency, the Coordination Center for the Prevention of Natural Disasters in Central America and the African Regional Centre for Space Science and Technology Education – in French Language.

14. Funds allocated by the Government of Germany and DLR were used to defray the costs of the workshop, including side events, and of the air travel and daily

subsistence allowance of 11 participants and 2 staff members of the Office for Outer Space Affairs.

B. Observations and recommendations

15. Working Group 1, which focused on activity 8 of the UN-SPIDER workplan for the biennium 2008-2009, on the platform for fostering alliances and, more specifically, on user requirements, stressed the importance of understanding data needs, data access and data policies. Participants discussed existing mechanisms for accessing data, such as the International Charter on Space and Major Disasters and Sentinel Asia, and agreed that UN-SPIDER should play a major role in helping end-users understand data-related issues. With regard to GEOSS task DI-06-09 on the use of satellites for risk management, which is led jointly by the Office for Outer Space Affairs and the Canadian Space Agency, participants accepted the proposed strategy to collect information on user requirements and agreed that UN-SPIDER staff should take the lead in completing the tables on user requirements, as discussed.

16. Working Group 2, which also discussed activity 8 but focused on horizontal coordination, stressed the importance of first ensuring that there was internal coordination (more specifically with the appointed national focal points and with the network of regional support offices), discussed how to ensure coordination between UN-SPIDER and major initiatives and recommended the fostering of thematic alliances. Participants in Working Group 2 developed a provisional list of initiatives that UN-SPIDER staff should coordinate; the list included initiatives suggested by the international and regional user community and by the international and regional space community.

17. Working Group 3 discussed activity 2, on the development of the knowledge portal. Participants suggested guidelines on how to develop the needs assessment (for example, by carrying out an inventory of existing platforms and web portals), discussed the setting up of a governance structure and the need to define core functions and main components and emphasized the importance of setting up partnerships and of establishing and maintaining contacts on existing and planned initiatives. In addition, participants in Working Group 3 made a detailed list of possible core components of the knowledge portal and a list of elements to be included in the mission and governance structure.

18. Working Group 4 discussed knowledge management (activity 7 of the UN-SPIDER workplan for the biennium 2008-2009) and capacity-building (activity 11). Participants started by discussing the complementarity of capacity-building and knowledge management, pointing out that the latter dealt mainly with the identification, acquisition and transfer of information and knowledge, whereas capacity-building focused on the different methods that could be used to ensure that target user groups are able to understand and use such information and knowledge. Subsequently, the participants identified the elements of a successful capacity-building framework: a database of training opportunities, an e-learning platform, curricula specifically tailored to the needs of different user groups and short and long-term training courses.

19. The programme of the workshop, the list of participants, the presentations made and detailed meeting notes, including all the conclusions and recommendations, are available on the UN-SPIDER website (<http://www.unspider.org>).

IV. Regional UN-SPIDER workshop on building upon regional space-based solutions for disaster management and emergency response

A. Programme and attendance

20. The regional UN-SPIDER workshop on building upon regional space-based solutions for disaster management and emergency response, held in Shenzhen, China, from 3 to 5 December 2007, was organized jointly by the Office for Outer Space Affairs and the China National Space Administration, with the support of the Government of China, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and the Asia-Pacific Multilateral Cooperation in Space Technology and Applications. The first UN-SPIDER regional workshop brought together 50 participants from 17 countries.

21. The workshop provided an opportunity to review the current status of space technology for disaster management and emergency response in the region, to discuss the UN-SPIDER awareness-raising strategy proposal (building upon examples of similar successful strategies carried out by other organizations in the region), to discuss the development of country profiles and to define ways and means of efficiently coordinating and interacting with national focal points and the network of regional support offices.

22. The programme of the workshop included an opening session with presentations from representatives of the China National Space Agency, the Office for Outer Space Affairs, and ESCAP. In addition, five presentation sessions and five discussion sessions were held during the course of the workshop.

23. A total of 50 participants from the following countries attended the workshop: Brazil, China, France, India, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Japan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Mongolia, Morocco, Myanmar, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Viet Nam and the United States.

24. The workshop was also attended by representatives of the Office for Outer Space Affairs, ESCAP, the Asian Disaster Reduction Centre, the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center and the African Regional Centre for Space Science and Technology Education – in French Language.

25. Funds allocated by the United Nations and the Government of China, through the China National Space Administration, were used to defray the costs of the workshop, including side events, and of the air travel and daily subsistence allowance of 22 participants and 2 staff members of the Office for Outer Space Affairs.

B. Observations and recommendations

26. After three days of intense discussion, participants made the following considerations, which they thought should be built upon in the framework of UN-SPIDER when implementing assigned tasks during the biennium 2008-2009. With regard to regional and country profiles, participants agreed on a specific template that should be used by all States. Participants also agreed that each country profile should be developed and maintained updated by the national focal point appointed by the respective country or by UN-SPIDER staff in the case that no appointment has been made. ESCAP agreed to take action to facilitate the process.

27. At the workshop, participants contributed to defining the key elements that should be contained in an awareness-raising campaign and agreed that in 2008 the focus should be on specific interest groups, such as civil protection organizations, the disaster management community and disaster-prone communities. It was also agreed that such a campaign should involve key partners, particularly the national focal points and the humanitarian and emergency response community, as well as the user community in Geneva. Participants recommended that a checklist should be developed for use by national focal points to carry out an inventory of national capacities in the area of awareness-raising and that a one-day national activity such as an international space technology for disaster management day, should be organized annually by the national focal points.

28. With regard to supporting national activities, which includes supporting the implementation of risk reduction and emergency response activities and projects identified in conjunction with nominated national focal points, participants put forward a number of recommendations, including the following: national focal points should be governmental agencies, preferably active in disaster management, and should be in a position to coordinate equally well with all partners (space agencies, disaster management institutions, academic institutions and non-governmental organizations). Appointed national focal points should be considered representatives of UN-SPIDER in their country. They should focus on transboundary issues, either through UN-SPIDER or through regional entities contributing to the sharing of relevant data and of information on best-case practices.

29. Regarding support to the establishment of national disaster management planning and policies, participants recommended that efforts should focus not only on policies and planning but also on procedures and that they should be oriented towards disaster prevention and reduction. Finally, they recommended that efforts should be made to strengthen existing national spatial data infrastructure and to develop a clear definition of data-sharing policies.

30. The programme of the workshop, the list of participants, the presentations made and the conclusions and recommendations are available on the UN-SPIDER website (<http://www.unspider.org>).

V. Voluntary contributions

31. The outreach activities carried out in 2007 were implemented successfully thanks to the support and voluntary contributions (cash and in kind) received from Governments and private sector entities, including:

(a) The Ministry for Transport, Innovation and Technology of Austria, which contributed 150,000 euros in support of capacity-building and outreach activities and also arranged for a senior expert to assist UN-SPIDER staff in such activities;

(b) The Government of Germany, which is contributing €150,000 a year for four years in support of the activities of the Bonn office of UN-SPIDER;

(c) The China National Space Administration, which supported the UN-SPIDER workshop held in Shenzhen, China, by defraying the costs of local organization, facilities and local transportation, as well as of room and board for 22 participants from developing countries;

(d) DLR, which contributed to defraying the costs of the UN-SPIDER workshop held in Bonn, Germany;

(e) The companies Infoterra (<http://www.infoterra-global.com/>), RapidEye (<http://www.rapideye.de/>) and LogicaCMG (<http://www.logicacmg.com/>), which also contributed to defraying the costs of the UN-SPIDER workshop held in Bonn.