



UN-SPIDER September 2008 Updates

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

1. UN-SPIDER Regional Workshop for the Pacific

Over 50 decision makers and senior experts from disaster management and space technology communities from 17 Pacific Island countries and neighbouring regions gathered in Suva, Fiji, from 16 to 19 September 2008, for a UN-SPIDER regional workshop. The workshop was organized in cooperation with the Pacific Islands Applied Geoscience Commission (SOPAC) and UNESCAP.

Many disaster management offices on the Pacific islands have only extremely limited resources available in terms of man power and financial resources. The islands are far from each other, and many islands do not have populations big enough to allow the maintenance of costly infrastructure. In the case of disaster, help may be thousands of miles away and take days to arrive. Identifying vulnerable populations in advance, monitoring hazards to be able to warn early enough, be it an approaching cyclone or a slow-onset coastal erosion reinforced by global climate change, are therefore key to successful disaster management in the Pacific. Regional and international networking are thought to play a prominent role to make space-based information and technology more accessible in the Pacific region. The workshop participants were also invited to attend the launch of the Pacific Disaster Net, a web-based portal that will help to link disaster management specialists and resources throughout the Pacific region.

Full story at: <http://www.unoosa.org/oosa/en/unspider/index.html>

Pacific Disaster Net: <http://www.pacificdisaster.net>

2. Pilot Study in Sri Lanka for Hazard Warnings with Satellite Technology

In Sri Lanka, a grassroots pilot study by Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC) combined advanced communication technologies with local volunteer networks to alert coastal villages to danger coming from the sea. Space-based technology that was tested include "addressable" satellite radio sets capable of remote activation and of issuing targeted messages to vulnerable areas, and a warning system based on Very Small Aperture Terminal (VSAT) satellite technology that delivers pop-up screen alerts to personal computers. As in any pilot project, the research showed up weaknesses in technologies as well as in the human agents working in real-life conditions.

Full story at:

http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev-129391-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html

3. Satellite Phones Make Cowboys Wildfire Spotters

This spring, seven Owyhee County ranchers who make their livelihoods in some of America's most remote backcountry began carrying satellite telephones provided by the federal Bureau of Land Management and the Idaho Bureau of Homeland Security. It was an effort to turn men whose ranching families have been wedded to the land for more than a century into a high-tech advance guard against wildfires that just a year ago devastated millions of acres in Idaho. For an initial agency investment of \$10,000, the seven Iridium satellite phones seemed a reasonable bargain, said Janet Peterson, the BLM's safety manager in Boise. The ranchers have been told to use the phones in medical emergencies, too. The state's disaster agency, the Idaho Bureau of Homeland Security, is chipping in for the service costs.

Full story at:

<http://www.summitdaily.com/article/20080919/NEWS/809189926>

4. China Launches Natural Disaster Monitoring Satellites

China launched two satellites to monitor the environment and natural disasters on Sept. 6, 2008. The two satellites were launched from the Taiyuan Satellite Launch Center in China. The satellites are expected to have a lifespan of more than three years. They have state-of-the-art imaging systems and infrared cameras and provide a global scan every two days. China used satellite images to help assess damage to infrastructure after the massive earthquake in Sichuan Province this May.

Full story at:

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2008-09/06/content_9806611.htm

5. Dnepr Rocket Launches Earth-Watching Satellite for Thailand

Thailand's Theos Earth high-resolution optical Earth observation satellite was successfully placed into a transfer orbit. Thailand's Geo-Informatics and Space Technology Development Agency (GISTDA) contracted with Astrium to build Theos in July 2004. The contract included a Theos ground segment and a training program for Thai engineers. The company now is training Chilean engineers for the launch of an Astrium-built Chilean optical Earth observation satellite in 2010. Thai authorities will use Theos for environmental management, civil security including natural-disaster monitoring and defense-related applications including illicit crop surveillance, as well as border and maritime control.

Full story at:

<http://www.space.com/missionlaunches/081001-dnepr-thailand-launch.html>

6. UNOOSA Assistance for Floods in Nepal and Bihar/India

Heavy flooding in southeast Nepal and the Bihar state of India occurred after the Kosi river broke its banks. The river inundated a dry river bed and flooded scores of villages in both countries. Over 3 million people were displaced in India, and more than 70,000 flood victims needed assistance in Nepal. In order to provide emergency services up-to-date geographic information regarding the extent of the flooded area and the further development of the river's course, UNOOSA received a request to activate the International Charter "Space and Major Disasters", a mechanism which provides for the rapid acquisition of satellite imagery over disaster areas. By utilizing radar satellites which could "see through" the monsoon cloud cover, mapping agencies obtained a true picture of the flooded area. Maps from the satellite data were collected at the International Charter webpage. DLR/ZKI provided additional results.

Full story at: <http://www.unoosa.org/oosa/en/unspider/index.html>

International Charter: http://www.disasterscharter.org/disasters/CALLID_218_e.html

DLR/ZKI: http://www.zki.caf.dlr.de/applications/2008/nepal/156_en.html

7. Spring School on Spatial Solutions for Disaster Management in Brazil

From 8 to 12 September 2008, the "Spring School on Natural Disasters and Spatial Solutions for Disaster Management - Flooding" took place in Santa Maria/Brazil. The Spring School, organized by Campus Brazil of CRECTEALC and supported by UN-SPIDER, INPE/GEODESASTRES-SUL, GEO, PNUMA, and UFSM brought together 35 participants from 11 countries in South America. This year's course set focus on emergency response for floods, a major cause of disasters in Latin America. Young professionals from both disaster management and geosciences backgrounds exchanged their experiences and were introduced to new space-based approaches. Availability of free satellite imagery, specific techniques for image processing to detect flooded areas and the integration of field work, civil defense and the national health authority through geo-technologies were some of the topics covered. Course participants were enthusiastic when discovering how the integration of spatial information on flood events through common data protocols can lead to a better coordination and response delivery by civil defense and national health authorities.

During the Spring School, Ms Tania Maria Sausen, who coordinated the course, was awarded a silver medal from Civil Defense Brazil for outstanding research on geo-technologies for disaster management with her research group at GEODESASTRES-SUL.

Full story at:

<http://www.unoosa.org/oosa/en/unspider/index.html>

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>

“9th Plenary Meeting of the United Nations Geographic Information Working Group (UNGIWG)” in Vienna, Austria, 5-7 November 2008

Formed in 2000, UNGIWG is a network of UN professionals working in the fields of cartography and geospatial information management science to address issues of common concern. Since its inception, UNGIWG has been laying the foundations for a United Nations Spatial Data Infrastructure (UNSDI). All UNGIWG members are encouraged to attend the full three days. UNGIWG Partners (i.e. non-UN) are encouraged to attend the full day plenary on Thursday the 6th, and the morning session of the following day.

More information at:

<http://sites.google.com/a/ungiwgsec.org/ungiwg9>

"Use of Remote Sensing Techniques for Monitoring Volcanoes and Seismogenic Areas - USEReST 2008" in Naples, Italy, 11-13 November 2008

The focus will be on the operational use of Earth Observation data in real monitoring scenarios rather than on new scientific results. The user community is called to indicate the technological gaps that may limit the full exploitation of EO data in everyday monitoring practice; the developer community is expected to indicate the new operational features likely attainable in the near future.

More information at:

<http://www.userest.org/>

“International Symposium Geotunis 2008 – 3rd Edition” in Tunis, Tunisia, 26-30 November 2008

The theme of the conference is: "Natural resource management and study of the impact of climate change with geographic information systems, science and space technologies."

More information at:

http://www.geotunis.org/version_ang/index.php

“Cartography and Geoinformatics for Early Warning and Emergency Management: Towards Better Solutions” in Prague, Czech Republic, 19-22 January 2009

This Symposium will tackle topics related to Early Warning and Emergency Management considering technology, user requirements for geo-information, and information providers (data and standards).

More information at:

<http://c4c.geogr.muni.cz>

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/osa/en/unspider/workshops.html>

Second United Nations International UN-SPIDER Bonn Workshop: "Disaster Management and Space Technology - Bridging the Gap" in Bonn, Germany, 13-15 October 2008

"5th UN-wide Meeting on the Use of Space Technologies for Emergency Response and Humanitarian Assistance" in Bonn, Germany, 16 to 17 October 2008

UN-SPIDER Regional Workshops/Activities Supported by UNOOSA

“L'Outi Spatial au Service de la Gestion des Catastrophes et des Situations d'Urgence en Afrique” – Rabat, Morocco, 10-12 November 2008.

Organized by the Centre Régional Africain des Sciences et Technologies de l'Espace en Langue Française (CRASTE-LF, Rabat, Maroc).

For more information please contact: Mr. Abdelhaq Trache E-mail: trache@emi.ac.ma

*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.*