

PRESS RELEASE

Earth observation for the post-2015 development agenda – United Nations/Germany International Conference on Earth Observation

Bonn, 26 May 2015 - **More than 130 experts and participants from over 30 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America and the Caribbean, among them high-level representatives of the United Nations and German Astronaut Alexander Gerst, are convening in Bonn for the United Nations/Germany International Conference on Earth Observation. The conference will be held from 26 to 28 May 2015 to discuss the importance of satellite-based Earth observation in climate change, disaster risk reduction and sustainable development for the post-2015 period. The event is organised by the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA) in cooperation with the German Aerospace Center (DLR) and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy (BMWi).**

2015 is a key year at the global level and in the context of the United Nations. Various global summits will shape a post-2015 development agenda through which nations worldwide will jointly embark on new paths to end poverty, promote prosperity and well-being for all, protect the environment, address climate change and reduce disaster risks.

Most notable among the processes launched in 2015 are these three:

- The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction agreed upon in March 2015 in Sendai, Japan and valid for the period 2015-2030
- A post-Kyoto global agreement on climate change which will be decided upon by world leaders in Paris in December 2015
- The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to be agreed upon in September in New York. They are a new set of targets for economic, social and environmental development which are building on the Millennium Development Goals.

Satellite technologies can be a key in ensuring the successful implementation of these three frameworks. The data that satellites can collect from space provides vital input to decision-making processes as well as to monitoring and evaluation efforts. With such inputs, nations and societies can stay on track in achieving global goals and implement their national plans with regards to disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and mitigation and sustainable development in its various dimensions, such as hunger, poverty or health.

The United Nations/Germany International Conference on Earth Observation aims at bridging the gap between Earth observation experts and decision makers to find Earth observation solutions that match the challenges of governments in societies at risk – with a special focus on disaster risk reduction, climate change and the Sustainable Development Goals. The conference will serve as a platform to facilitate the coordination of this open group to help developing countries in their efforts to institutionalize the use of space-based information.

Ms. Simonetta Di Pippo, Director of the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA) in her opening speech highlighted the relevance of the conference in the context of the post-2015 development process: “This conference, beginning today, is a vital component in UNOOSA’s continuing work. The Conference is conducted as a way not only to contribute to the post-2015 development agenda, but also to bring together stakeholders to embark on joint efforts for facilitating the use of Earth observations for sustainable development. We will discuss how best to integrate Earth observations and space capabilities into national development programmes, how to identify strategies to capitalize on space technology-derived solutions to support global agendas, to leverage and foster partnerships and to make participants aware of the most recent developments in the context of integrated space applications.”

Mr. Johann-Dietrich Wörner, Chairman of the Executive Board of the German Aerospace Center (DLR) pointed out: "With its institutes and its role as a space agency, DLR is at the forefront of international development and the promotion of new technologies in the areas of radar, optical systems and lasers. We are developing systems and algorithms to process and archive the ever-growing volumes of data, and to ensure their timely availability. Radar interferometry, for instance, permits registration of ground displacements with millimetric accuracy. Movements of this kind occur during earthquakes, for example, like recently in Nepal. Space-based technology including Earth observation can thus significantly support the challenges of disaster management, sustainable development and climate change. Furthermore, DLR has been maintaining for about 10 years a close cooperation with the UNOOSA/UN-SPIDER office Bonn.”

Alexander Gerst, Astronaut of the European Space Agency (ESA) emphasized how the view from above can change one’s perception: “One of the most valuable things that we can find in space is a new perspective on our planet. This perspective is one of a small blue planet with limited resources, surrounded by a paper thin layer of air and with a highly fragile ecosystem. We get a special view on the only place known in our universe where humankind can live and on which everything is connected.”

## **Background:**

The United Nations in Bonn consists of 18 agencies and spans a vast area of work of the United Nations, including climate change, land desertification, global volunteerism, water, energy, wildlife, human security, health, biodiversity, tourism, education and skills development, peace, sustainability, disaster preparedness. Regardless of the size of each agency housed at the UN Campus, the organizations in Bonn all strive for an inclusive, holistic sustainable future for all.

The United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA) has the dual objective of supporting the intergovernmental discussions in the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and its Scientific and Technical Subcommittee and Legal Subcommittee, and of assisting developing countries in using space technology for development. In Bonn, it is present through its UN-SPIDER programme, a platform which facilitates the use of space-based technologies for disaster management and emergency response. It aims at enabling countries to make more efficient use of space technologies for disaster risk reduction and emergency response through knowledge management, training courses and technical advice.

The German Aerospace Center (DLR) is the national aeronautics and space research centre of the Federal Republic of Germany. Its extensive research and development work in aeronautics, space, energy, transport and security is integrated into national and international cooperative ventures. In addition to its own research, as Germany's space agency, DLR has been given responsibility by the federal government for the planning and implementation of the German space programme. DLR is also the umbrella organisation for the nation's largest project management agency. DLR has approximately 8000 employees at 16 locations in Germany: Cologne (headquarters), Augsburg, Berlin, Bonn, Braunschweig, Bremen, Goettingen, Hamburg, Juelich, Lampoldshausen, Neustrelitz, Oberpfaffenhofen, Stade, Stuttgart, Trauen, and Weilheim. DLR also has offices in Brussels, Paris, Tokyo and Washington D.C.

Alexander Gerst is a German astronaut of the European Space Agency (ESA) and a geophysicist and volcanologist. During his "Blue Dot Mission", he was part of the International Space Station (ISS) crew from May to November 2014 conducting international experiments in physical science, biology, and human physiology as well as radiation research and technology demonstrations. He also performed a space walk during his stay on the ISS.



UNITED NATIONS  
Office for Outer Space Affairs



Federal Ministry  
for Economic Affairs  
and Energy

**Further Information:**

United Nations/Germany International Conference on Earth Observation 2015:  
<http://www.un-spider.org/post2015>

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