



General Assembly

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Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space

Report of the Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities on its thirty-first session*

(Geneva, 16-18 March 2011)

I. Introduction

1. The Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities held its thirty-first session at the headquarters of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Geneva from 16 to 18 March 2011, under the chairmanship of Luc St.-Pierre of UNHCR. Kimberly Roberson of UNHCR chaired the open informal session held in the afternoon of 18 March 2011.
2. The Director of the Division of Programme Support and Management of UNHCR, Jean-François Durieux, gave a welcoming address. He emphasized the need to increase coordination among United Nations entities in order to achieve access to space-related products and a wider range of benefits that otherwise might be difficult to obtain.
3. The Director of the Office for Outer Space Affairs, Mazlan Othman, made opening remarks. She highlighted the value of space technology and urged the Meeting to further enhance synergetic cooperation and coordination in the use of space technology within the United Nations system.
4. The Chair, in his introductory remarks, pointed to the current theme of the open informal session with Member States, "Space and climate change", as an important topic for analysing potential new areas of coordination among different stakeholders within the United Nations system.
5. The list of participants is contained in annex I and the agenda adopted by the Meeting is contained in annex II to the present report.

* The present report was adopted by the Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities at its thirty-first session, held from 16 to 18 March 2011.



II. Substantive issues considered at the Meeting

A. Coordination of plans and programmes and exchange of views on current activities in the practical application of space technology and related areas

1. Current and future plans of common interest, including consideration of how the activities of organizations of the United Nations system in the area of space science and technology and its applications relate to their mandated programmes

6. The Office for Outer Space Affairs, as the secretariat of the Inter-Agency Meeting, informed the Meeting about the work of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and its subsidiary bodies, bringing to its attention matters relating to inter-agency coordination.

7. Representatives of participating United Nations entities reported on their current activities and plans. Activities involving significant cooperation and coordination among the entities, as well as their plans for new activities, have been included in the report of the Secretary-General on the coordination of space-related activities within the United Nations system: directions and anticipated results for the period 2010-2011 (A/AC.105/961). All Meeting documents are available on the website of the Office for Outer Space Affairs on the coordination of outer space activities (www.uncosa.unvienna.org/uncosa/en/index.html).

8. In addition to activities and plans referred to in the report of the Secretary-General, other main activities were reported by the participating United Nations entities.

9. The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) reported on its activities in extending broadband services on a large scale, including the use of space-based systems, and the Office of Information and Communications Technology of the United Nations Secretariat reviewed the ongoing development of the United Nations crisis information management strategy for credible, accurate, complete and timely information for managing crises. The strategy builds on four main programmatic areas: information architecture, stakeholder management, technology development and capacity-building. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) highlighted the development of the unified African Geodetic Reference Frame and an African infrastructure database containing space-based data on agriculture, transport, telecommunications, water management and disaster management.

10. UNHCR reported on the development, together with the Services and Applications for Emergency Response programme of the European Union, of the use of remote sensing data for camp mapping and population estimates, primarily with regard to displaced persons, as well as the setting up of contingency plans for displaced persons in times of disaster, and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research Operational Satellite Applications Programme (UNOSAT) reported on its cooperation agreement with UNHCR, formalizing the existing collaboration in the use of satellite imagery mapping and related applications in support of UNHCR operations. The World Food Programme (WFP) highlighted the recent establishment of the European Emergency Services, which provides support to United Nations

entities as part of the coordination efforts within the WFP emergency preparedness and response framework.

11. The Office for Outer Space Affairs reported on activities under the Basic Space Science Initiative and Human Space Technology Initiative of the United Nations Programme on Space Applications, and activities undertaken in the thematic areas of global health, humanitarian assistance and water management, and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) reported on its involvement with the Sixth Space Conference of the Americas and the Asia-Pacific Regional Space Agency Forum and its activities to be undertaken in celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of human space flight.

12. In connection with the special report of the Inter-Agency Meeting on the topic of space and climate change, the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change reported on the outcomes of the sixteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, highlighting the Cancun Adaptation Framework and the call for improved climate observation, and underlined the importance of solid scientific knowledge and data, including space-based monitoring capacities, to support the implementation of the Convention. The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) highlighted its ongoing cooperation with the Coordination Group for Meteorological Satellites and the Committee on Earth Observation Satellites in developing a space-based architecture for climate, ranging from satellites and sensors to product generation, dissemination and user training. UNESCO announced the new initiative “Third pole environment”, aimed at studying the effects of climate change on the glaciers on the mountains surrounding the Tibetan plateau.

2. Report of the Secretary-General for the period 2012-2013

13. The Meeting recalled that the report served as a strategic tool for the United Nations to avoid duplication of efforts in the field of space science and technology, and that future reports should highlight efforts of the United Nations system in delivering as one on space-related activities for the development agenda.

14. The Meeting agreed that, in line with the agreement reached by the Inter-Agency Meeting in 2010, the next biennial report should include a new section addressing the next thematic cluster of the Commission on Sustainable Development, for the period 2013-2014. The report should carefully reflect the thematic areas and cross-cutting issues under the consideration of the Commission on Sustainable Development, including an overview of coordination efforts in the thematic areas of forests, biodiversity and mountains.

15. In this regard, the Meeting noted that the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development would be held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 2012 and that the multi-year workplan of the Commission on Sustainable Development had been postponed by one year.

16. The Meeting reiterated that efforts should continue to be made to ensure that submissions by United Nations entities specifically address coordination mechanisms and synergies to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of space-related activities of the United Nations.

17. The Meeting requested its secretariat to establish a collaborative online tool for the preparation of the report of the Secretary-General, with the aim of facilitating its timely finalization, and provide clear guidance to United Nations entities for their contributions to the report.

3. Special report addressing climate change and the use of space technology in the United Nations system

18. The Meeting noted that the special report on use of space technology within the United Nations system to address climate change issues had been prepared under the leadership of WMO in cooperation with the Office for Outer Space Affairs and with contributions of other United Nations entities.

19. The Meeting reviewed and endorsed the special report, as amended, and took note that the report would be submitted for consideration by the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space at its fifty-fourth session, in June 2011.

20. The Meeting agreed that the topic of the next special report would be decided at its thirty-second session, in 2012, for adoption in 2013.

4. Publication on the topic of climate change and the use of space technology in the United Nations system

21. The Meeting agreed that a brochure, drawing on the main elements of the above-mentioned special report, would be prepared by WMO in consultation with United Nations entities involved, for publication on a cost-sharing basis in time for the seventeenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Durban, South Africa, from 28 November to 8 December 2011.

5. Means of strengthening further inter-agency coordination and cooperation in space-related activities, including public outreach and information exchange to promote inter-agency cooperation

22. The Meeting noted that the General Assembly, in its resolution 65/97, had welcomed the increased efforts to strengthen further the Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities.

23. To that end, the Meeting requested the Secretariat to officially communicate to the heads of United Nations entities information on the objectives and strategies of the Inter-Agency Meeting. Copies of those communications should be sent to the focal points of the Inter-Agency Meeting.

24. The Meeting agreed that, as a further means to achieve inter-agency cooperation and increase awareness of efforts made by United Nations agencies on the use of space-based technologies to monitor climate change and its impacts, the Secretariat, in consultation with the secretariat of the Framework Convention on Climate Change and WMO, should bring the special report on the use of space technology within the United Nations system to address climate change issues to the attention of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), through the High-Level Committee on Programmes.

25. The Meeting further agreed to explore the possibility of organizing a side event during the 2011 Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on

Climate Change, taking into account that a publication would be developed, as referred to in paragraph 21 above.

26. The Meeting agreed to continue enhancing the website on the coordination of outer space activities (www.uncosa.unvienna.org) and that the focal points of the Meeting should continue to provide the Office for Outer Space Affairs, on a regular basis, with updated information on their space-related programmes and activities, including relevant website addresses and upcoming activities, for posting on the site.

B. Use of spatial data and activities related to the United Nations Geographic Information Working Group and the United Nations Spatial Data Infrastructure

27. The Meeting noted that a joint session of the United Nations Geographic Information Working Group and the Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities had been held in Geneva on 16 March 2011, at WMO headquarters, under the outgoing co-chairmanship of ECA and the Office for Outer Space Affairs.

28. The Office of Information and Communications Technology informed the Meeting about the ongoing work of the United Nations Geographic Information Working Group, to be co-chaired by the Office of Information and Communications Technology and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Organization for the next term. The Meeting noted that the main tasks of the Working Group were to improve the coordination of geospatial activities in the United Nations system, such as those on standardizing and improving access to geographic data (including space-based data). It was also noted that the Working Group facilitated the implementation of the United Nations Spatial Data Infrastructure, which works on technical deliverables and on a better institutionalization of the coordination of geographic information. In order to advance its work, the Working Group was in the process of setting up a special group on staff security-related issues and special task groups on data exchange and increasing coordination among humanitarian actors.

29. The Meeting welcomed the establishment of a task group to be consulted by the Office for Outer Space Affairs in the preparation of its contribution to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012. The Office for Outer Space Affairs would submit for the consideration of the Conference secretariat a set of observations and recommendations with relevant background information on the use of geospatial data for sustainable development. The aim was to provide the joint reflections of a wider group of United Nations entities on this overarching topic for inclusion in the documentation leading up to the Conference.

C. Participation in the process of the Group on Earth Observations

30. WMO updated the Meeting on the major outcomes of the Group on Earth Observations (GEO) Ministerial Summit, held in Beijing in November 2010. In particular, the Meeting was informed that the Summit, through its Beijing Declaration, had (a) noted that the Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS) data-sharing implementation guidelines and action plan and the establishment of the operational GEOSS common infrastructure significantly

improved access to global Earth observation data and resources; (b) endorsed the refined GEO targets, aligned with the 10-year implementation plan; (c) urged all Governments and organizations to sustain and enhance both in situ and space-based observation systems; and (d) called on international organizations and donor agencies to further contribute to the implementation of GEOSS.

31. The Meeting noted the importance of further reporting on activities undertaken by WMO, the UNESCO Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Environment Programme and the International Council for Science through the Inter-Agency Coordination and Planning Committee, and invited WMO to continue reporting on related activities under the agenda item on current and future plans of common interest, including consideration of how the activities of organizations of the United Nations system in the area of space science and technology and its applications relate to their mandated programmes.

D. Operational framework and good practices in the use of space-based technologies for disaster risk reduction and emergency response

32. The Office for Outer Space Affairs informed the Meeting about the activities of the United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response (UN-SPIDER) programme, undertaken in 2010, and on activities planned for 2011-2012. The Meeting noted support for 30 disaster events, technical advisory support provided to 17 Member States, and the growing network of regional support offices that now included those in Algeria, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Japan, Kenya, Nigeria, Pakistan, Panama, Romania, Trinidad and Tobago and Ukraine. The Meeting also noted that a host country agreement had been signed with the Government of China and that the UN-SPIDER Beijing office had been established in November 2010.

33. UNOSAT informed the Meeting that its humanitarian rapid mapping capacity had been activated 32 times in 2010, in response to which the International Charter on Space and Major Disasters had been triggered 8 times in its capacity as user intermediary, mainly on behalf of United Nations entities such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Programme, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), WFP and UNHCR. UNOSAT on-demand operational capacity is increasingly integrated within core partners' information management processes, especially at OCHA and UNICEF. Contributions to the Global Monitoring for Environment and Security project "Geo-pictures" had also been made, focusing on the integration of satellite solutions for emergency response and environmental applications. UNOSAT also updated the Meeting on its capacity-building activities in the field of disaster risk reduction, such as its collaboration with the Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre and the University of Copenhagen. UNOSAT continued to develop partnerships with the private sector and volunteer communities.

34. WFP informed the Meeting about the in-house use of space technology and partnerships with other entities, such as ITHACA, the European Commission and national space agencies. Those efforts focused on food vulnerability analysis and on

enhancing the use of remote sensing technology for emergency preparedness and response.

III. Other matters

Future programme of work

35. The Meeting agreed to include the topic of space and climate change as a new item on its agenda, with the objective of identifying possible further actions in following up the recommendations included in the special report on space and climate change.

36. The Meeting agreed on the following provisional agenda for its thirty-second session:

1. Opening of the session.
2. Adoption of the agenda.
3. Coordination of plans and programmes and exchange of views on current activities in the practical application of space technology and related areas:
 - (a) Current and future plans of common interest, including consideration of how the activities of organizations of the United Nations system in the area of space science and technology and its applications relate to their mandated programmes;
 - (b) Report of the Secretary-General on the coordination of space-related activities within the United Nations system: directions and anticipated results for the period 2012-2013;
 - (c) Preparation of a special report and publication on initiatives and applications for space-related inter-agency cooperation;
 - (d) Means of strengthening further inter-agency coordination and cooperation in space-related activities.
4. Use of spatial data and activities related to the United Nations Geographic Information Working Group and the United Nations Spatial Data Infrastructure.
5. Space and climate change.
6. Use of space-based technologies for disaster risk reduction and emergency response.
7. Other matters.

37. The Meeting expressed its gratitude to UNHCR for hosting its thirty-first session and for the excellent arrangements made for the session.

38. The Meeting noted with appreciation that WFP had indicated its interest in hosting the thirty-second session in Rome in March 2012 and would confirm in due time. The Meeting agreed that the open informal session should be held in the afternoon of the last day of the session, with a theme to be selected in consultation

with the host entity. In addition, the Meeting noted that an informal meeting involving stakeholders other than United Nations entities could be held in conjunction with the Inter-Agency Meeting.

Annex I

List of participants at the thirty-first session of the Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities, held in Geneva from 16 to 18 March 2011

Chair: L. St.-Pierre (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees)

Secretary: N. Hedman (Office for Outer Space Affairs)

Assistant Secretary: A. Duysenhanova (Office for Outer Space Affairs)

United Nations Secretariat

Office of Information and Communications Technology T. S. Ulgen

Office for Outer Space Affairs M. Othman

D. Stevens

A. Osman

Economic Commission for Africa M. Faye

United Nations programmes and funds

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees K. Roberson

United Nations Institute for Training and Research/United Nations Operational Satellite Applications Programme O. van Damme

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Y. Berenguer

Specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system

International Telecommunication Union A. Matas

V. Nozdrin

World Food Programme G. Sartori

World Meteorological Organization N. Hettich

Other United Nations entities

Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change R. Lichte

Annex II

Agenda for the thirty-first session of the Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities, held in Geneva from 16 to 18 March 2011

1. Opening of the session.
2. Adoption of the agenda.
3. Coordination of plans and programmes and exchange of views on current activities in the practical application of space technology and related areas:
 - (a) Current and future plans of common interest, including consideration of how the activities of organizations of the United Nations system in the area of space science and technology and its applications relate to their mandated programmes;
 - (b) Report of the Secretary-General for the period 2012-2013;
 - (c) Special report addressing climate change and the use of space technology in the United Nations system;
 - (d) Publication on the topic of climate change and the use of space technology in the United Nations system;
 - (e) Means of strengthening further inter-agency coordination and cooperation in space-related activities, including public outreach and information exchange to promote inter-agency cooperation.
4. Use of spatial data and activities related to the United Nations Geographic Information Working Group and the United Nations Spatial Data Infrastructure.
5. Participation in the process of the Group on Earth Observations.
6. Operational framework and good practices in the use of space-based technologies for disaster risk reduction and emergency response.
7. Other matters.

Annex III

Agenda for the open informal session of the Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities, held in Geneva on 18 March 2011

Theme: “Space and climate change”

Introductory remarks	Mazlan Othman, Deputy Director-General of the United Nations Office at Vienna and Director of the Office for Outer Space Affairs
Introduction of participants	All participants
Presentations:	
Climate change and forced migration	Jean-François Durieux (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees)
Developments under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change of relevance to global climate observations — including from space	Rocio Lichte (secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change)
Monitoring climate from space	Nils Hettich (World Meteorological Organization)
International Telecommunication Union scientific services related to Earth observation	Vadim Nozdrin (International Telecommunication Union)
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization activities in response to climate change	Yolanda Berenguer (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization)
Developing Spatial Data Infrastructure in Africa: a cooperative geospatial information management process	Makane Faye (Economic Commission for Africa)
Discussions among United Nations entities and Member States	
Concluding remarks	Kimberly Roberson, Chair of the open informal session