

G7 nations commit to the safe and sustainable use of space

Today at the G7 Leaders' Summit in Carbis Bay, Cornwall, delegates from Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the USA, the UK and the EU pledged to take action to tackle the growing hazard of space debris as our planet's orbit becomes increasingly crowded.

One of the biggest global challenges facing the space sector is orbital congestion and space debris. There are currently an estimated 900,000 pieces of space debris including old satellites, spent rocket bodies and even tools dropped by astronauts orbiting Earth. Space debris could stay in orbit for hundreds of years and present a real danger to the rapidly increasing number of new satellites being launched each year.

Together they published the following joint statement:

We are committed to the safe and sustainable use of space to support humanity's ambitions now and in the future.

We recognise the growing hazard of space debris and increasing congestion in earth's orbit.

As the orbit of our planet is a fragile and valuable environment that is becoming increasingly crowded, which all nations must act together to safeguard, we agree to strengthen our efforts to ensure the sustainable use of space for the benefit and in the interests of all countries.

We welcome the United Nation's Long Term Sustainability Guidelines and call on others to join us in implementing these guidelines.

We welcome all efforts, public and commercial, in debris removal and on-orbit servicing activities and undertake to encourage further institutional or industrial research and development of these services.

We recognise the importance of developing common standards, best practices and guidelines related to sustainable space operations alongside the need for a collaborative approach for space traffic management and co-ordination.

We call on all nations to work together, through groups like the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, the International Organization for Standardization and the Inter-Agency Space Debris Coordination Committee, to preserve the space environment for future generations.

Science Minister Amanda Solloway said:

Space enables services that we rely on every single day, from communicating with our loved ones to tracking the effects of climate change. Each nation must unite to strengthen our efforts to ensure its continued use is safe, sustainable and serves everybody.

Today's announcement is a major milestone in recognising the need to develop common standards on sustainable space operations, and to collaborate on space traffic management and coordination.

Simonetta Di Pippo, Director of the UN Office for Outer Space Affairs, said:

There is an urgent need to stabilise global space operations. We must future-proof activities now to deliver a safe, secure and sustainable space environment for tomorrow. I welcome this clear commitment by G7 leaders to put space sustainability at the heart of the political agenda. Only through such leadership, with all nations working together, will we preserve the space environment for future generations.

The UK is committed to ensuring the sustainability of space and is working alongside global allies to promote space sustainability initiatives. It is the leading contributor to the European Space Agency's Space Safety programme which provides collaboration and funding opportunities for UK scientists and industry. Delegates from the UK Space Agency have also played a key role in developing and agreeing the [United Nation's Long Term Sustainability Guidelines](#) and funded a project with the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs on raising awareness and capacity building related to the implementation of those Guidelines.

The UK Space Agency recently announced [funding](#) to study the feasibility of a UK mission to remove space debris through its Space Surveillance and Tracking (SST) programme. Earlier this year, Oxfordshire-based company [Astroscale](#) launched its 'ELSA-d' satellite clean-up and decommissioning programme, with its base in Harwell hosting the operations centre for the mission to trial new technology for debris capture and removal.