

# If we can build the International Space Station, 'we can do anything' – UN Champion for Space

The sight of Earth, from hundreds of kilometers away in open space while you are tethered only to the International Space Station, is “absolutely amazing”, said Scott Kelly, the UN Champion for Space and former US astronaut, stressing that the world we live on “is our only planet.”

“Through that single visor, you see how fragile the Earth’s atmosphere is ... it’s almost like someone put this thin film over the surface of our planet and the first time you see it, you realize that is everything that protects us from space,” said Mr. Kelly, delivering a keynote address at the UNISPACE+50 gathering in Vienna; a United Nations forum on the peaceful uses of outer space.

However, in spite of this breathtakingly beautiful sight, there are parts of the globe when viewed from space, that are almost always shrouded in pollution, he continued.

Humankind may get to Mars someday or elsewhere in the Solar System, but if it is to survive, it “needs to survive on earth” added the former NASA astronaut who spent over a year orbiting the planet.

In his address, Mr. Kelly described his life onboard the International Space Station, a structure measuring about 300 feet long and 200 feet wide and orbiting between 280-460 kilometers in space.

This space station is the hardest thing we have ever done ... if we can do this we can do anything – *UN Champion for Space Scott Kelly*

Particularly poignant was his description of the time he left the station for his last time, onboard a Russian Soyuz spacecraft:

“We built this space station ... while flying around the Earth at 17,500 miles an hour, in a vacuum, in temperatures ranges of plus or minus 270 degrees”, he said, adding that they had connecting modules, “some of which had never touched each other before on Earth” which “put together astronauts and cosmonauts working in these very, very difficult conditions.”

“This space station is the hardest thing we have ever done ... if we can do this we can do anything,” underscored Mr. Kelly.

He linked this incredible feat of human ingenuity and perseverance with addressing the challenges confronting the very survival of planet Earth.

If we want to fix the problems with the environment we can do that, expressed Mr. Kelly.

“After spending a year in space, I was absolutely inspired that we can dream it we can do it ... and most importantly, if we work as a team because teamwork makes the dream work. The sky is not the limit.”

*UN News is on location in Vienna covering UNISPACE+50 and its associated events. Follow us at [@UN\\_News\\_Centre](#) for news and highlights.*