

Space science now a 'fundamental pillar' of 21st century human development: top UN space official

After “relentless” progress in space technology, the focus for the international community must now shift to ensuring that the benefits of space science are available to everyone, everywhere, a senior United Nations official told a major conference on Monday.

Speaking at the opening of UNISPACE+50 symposium in Vienna, Simonetta Di Pippo, the Director of the [UN Office for Outer Space Affairs](#), said that space technology had become a “fundamental pillar” of 21st century society, driving development worldwide.

The forum commemorates the fiftieth anniversary of the [ground-breaking](#) 1968 UN Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, or UNISPACE for short.

“What remains to be seen, however, is how we can work collectively to organize our efforts across the board to deliver the full potential of space for sustainable development,” she said.

In her remarks, Ms. Di Pippo said that space is the vital enabler to realize the ambitions set by global goals, including the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#), as well as the [Paris Agreement on Climate Change](#) and the [Sendai Framework](#) to reduce the risk and impact of disasters across the world.

The impact of global cooperation in using space for sustainable development cannot be overstated, she added.

“From city halls to the UN General Assembly, when policy makers need to see the big picture to make well-informed policy decisions, they are turning to space,” said Ms. Di Pippo.

“The challenge is to ensure the tools and information space can provide are helping to make effective policy in all corners of the world.”

These are the precise issues which will be explored further in the coming days at the conference, she added.

‘New’ directions and thinking needed – Committee Chair

Also on Monday, David Kendall, the chairperson of the UN [Committee on Peaceful Uses of Outer Space](#) said that the increasing involvement of UN Member States in the Committee, was a reflection of the increasing importance that countries around the world attach to the frontier science.

“Member States are now realizing more and more that space is an essential

element in delivering their programmes to their citizens,” he said.

The need, therefore, is to develop “new directions and thinking” in relation to the governance of outer space, he added.

Mauritius Research Council selected for third round of KiboCUBE

Further on Monday, UNOOSA and the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) announced the selection of a team from the Mauritius Research Council for the third round of their joint KiboCUBE programme.

Launched by UNOOSA and JAXA in 2015, the KiboCUBE initiative offers educational and research institutions from developing countries the chance to develop “cube satellites” (CubeSats) for deployment from the International Space Station.

Through KiboCUBE, the small Indian Ocean island’s research body will deploy the first ever Mauritian satellite, MIR-SAT1, that will include a longwave infrared thermal camera, allowing the collection of thermal images of Mauritius and areas around it. The team also aims to test the onboard communication capabilities of the CubeSat by studying the satellite’s capacity to transfer information using satellite radio waves.

UNOOSA head Simonetta Di Pippo highlighted the importance of the programme, especially for developing countries.

“The third round of the KiboCUBE programme is yet another exciting step towards increasing the space capabilities of countries and ensuring we close the ‘space divide’ between those that have access to space and its benefits, and those that do not.”

In the first round of the KiboCUBE initiative, the University of Nairobi in Kenya launched Kenya’s first satellite. This was also the first space hardware deployed under the auspices of the UN. The second round selected Universidad del Valle de Guatemala, which is expected to deploy its satellite in 2018, subject to the ISS operational requirements and progress of the CubeSat development.

Coming up

Monday and Tuesday feature the UNISPACE+50 [symposium](#), focusing on debate and discussion involving a wide range of stakeholders on the future of international space cooperation and the peaceful uses of outer space. The symposium will be followed by the [high-level segment](#) of the forum (Wednesday-Thursday).

Alongside the main events, an [exhibition](#) featuring more than 40 participants will be held in the Rotunda of the Vienna International Centre from 18-23 June. The exhibition will be open to the public from 9 a.m. until 12.30 p.m. (local time) on Saturday, 23 June.

UN News is on location in Vienna covering UNISPACE+50 and its associated

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