Heads of Space Agencies Summit in Mexico City  
Final Declaration  
18 September 2015

Space for climate

The International Academy of Astronautics (IAA) has invited the heads of space agencies from the world at Mexico for a Summit on climate change and disaster management. More than 300 persons attended the summit and the international conference held the day before and gathering about 80 papers.

The Summit concluded with a unanimously adopted Declaration. The importance of international cooperation and the vital contribution of satellites to observing climate, understanding climate change and helping to mitigate its effects are central to efforts to meet the climate challenges that lie ahead.

The Declaration adopted today in Mexico City confirms satellites’ unique role in observing climate and details how they are helping us to better understand its variations and mitigate their effects. Space agencies also have a major role to play, which is why the Mexico Summit marks a key milestone in this respect and in making sure that international commitments to tackle climate change are translated into action.

Out of the 50 essential climate variables (ECVs) defined by the Global Climate Observing System (GCOS), 26 can only be monitored from space. Satellites are the only tools able to acquire the data needed to develop climate models. Satellites also guarantee global, precise and multi-parameter observations, allowing us to measure sea level rise and global warming of the atmosphere, two of the most serious consequences of climate change. And space-based Earth observation enables detailed measurements of greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide and methane.

Space also proves a precious ally in predicting and managing natural disasters that are another major consequence of climate change. The International Charter on Space and Major Disasters now numbers 15 member space agencies and gives countries hit by a natural disaster priority access to data from satellites all over the world. This charter has been activated more than 400 times since the year 2000. In future, satellites will also offer their aid ahead of such events through their ability to provide early warning of tsunamis and earthquakes.

Finally, the Declaration of Mexico—the result of the efforts of the world’s space agencies—simply confirms once more that international cooperation and pooling of resources are our best allies in seeking to curb the effects of climate change. This Declaration should be presented by the CNES and the Mexican space agency to the COP21 conference in December in Paris.

The International Academy of Astronautics, created in 1960 by Theodor Von Karman, is an independent organization of 1200 distinguished Academicians elected by their peers from 86 countries. The IAA published more than 80 various studies and organize each year 15 to 20 conferences in the world. Its Acta Astronautica journal is ranked 7 among 50 scientific publications in the world. Although the IAA has many connections to other similar organizations, it is distinctive as the only international Academy of elected members in broad area of astronautics and space.

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