

Vienna, 10 October 2016

**Subject: Outcome of the ESPI 10<sup>th</sup> Autumn Conference “Space for Sustainable Development”**

Dear friends of ESPI,

I would like to briefly inform you about the 10<sup>th</sup> annual Autumn Conference of the European Space Policy Institute, which was held in our premises from 15<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> September. The two-day event brought together professionals from a wide range of sectors to give presentations, present case studies, participate in panel discussions and strengthen their networks in informal talks on the theme of “Space for Sustainable Development”.

The speakers, which included professionals from space agencies, the wider development community, academia, industry and new private actors, as well as European and international institutions, addressed different facets of this topic in three sessions on “Space as an Enabler”, “Sustainable Development and Space”, and “Financial and Non-Financial Aspects of Sustainable Development”. The panels provided a valuable opportunity to engage field actors in the development sectors in discussions frequently dominated by theorists and Space actors. Speakers noted the importance of continuing to pursue such an inter-disciplinary format, and stressed the relevance of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), while highlighting the key role of connectivity in their future evolution. They cautioned, however, on the lack of central dialogue mechanisms. The space sector is well-placed to fill in this gap, building on existing examples, such as ISRO’s use of tele-medicine and tele-education as well as the NASA-USAID SERVIR partnership that demonstrate that space can actually benefit international development. In particular, Space’s strong capacity for monitoring and evaluation as well as building situational awareness were noted. However, several key prerequisites for a successful contribution of space activities to the Sustainable Development Goals were identified:

- Space actors were urged to adopt an end-to-end approach with comprehensive exploratory work on identifying user needs to avoid an inadvertent perpetuation of inequality and prevent ‘technology push’ scenarios. To this end, a greater inter-sectoral, inter-institutional (e.g. state and NGOs), and international cooperation and information sharing shall be sought.
- The space sector should play a proactive role in increasing the availability of space resources, while IGOs, NGOs, and states should improve their technology awareness to strengthen capacity building, improve infrastructures as well as reduce environmental impacts. To this end, speakers expressed a desire for a formalized cross-sectoral dialogue platform, as well as for an up-to-date archive on earth observation images incorporating the capacity for near-real-time map building.
- Best practices in the field should also be compiled so that basic common requirements serving the SDGs for the next generation of space infrastructure might be devised. In this context the African Union presented its Space Policy and Strategy which aim to create a well-coordinated and integrated African programme, while addressing user needs and improving access to space services, also by enhancing international cooperation.

While the rise of the private sector in this domain was praised, further calls for action concerned the development of local markets for space services, open to public and private actors, relying on good governance mechanisms and in particular including a sound and fair tax policy on space related facilities. The promotion of a strong STEM curriculum was also deemed essential, eventually leading to wider technology awareness in the society. Several key institutional players showed that they were taking steps to structure, coordinate and enhance the role of space in order to implement the SDGs. Speakers agreed that a stronger coordination among space agencies, IGOs, NGOs, the private sector, academia, and sustainable development actors is advisable. In this context, UNOOSA is organising High Level Fora, a sort of “Davos for Space”, addressing cross cutting areas and outlining UNISPACE +50 thematic priorities within the framework of the SDGs involving also the (new) private sector.

The conference closed in a spirit of optimism and with the expressed intention to follow up with concrete proposals for improved dialogue and cooperation. Vittorio Prodi gave voice to this sentiment in his opening address, in which he noted that “It is time to consider what we are going to lose if we don't act together.” The outline above has given a highly abbreviated summary of the findings of the ESPI conference which was praised by participants as an innovative and successful step, following a year-long project which addressed sustainable development and the use of Space technologies and services in global efforts. This has included discussing existing applications, identifying gaps in leveraging of technologies, delineating limitations and challenges in governance, cooperation and technical implementation, and discussing ways forward for Space and Development.

The findings of the conference will be presented at the United Nations/United Arab Emirates High Level Forum: *“Space as a Driver for Socio-Economic Sustainable Development”* in Dubai in November and, in the medium term, be carried forward in the framework of UNISPACE + 50 preparatory activities. The Institute hopes that they will prove to be a valuable input into furthering discussions of the role of space in shaping our global society for the better. If you are interested in receiving more information about the Autumn Conference, the “Space for Sustainable Development” activities, or other projects of the European Space Policy Institute, you are invited to contact the Institute directly, or to visit our website which includes digital copies of most ESPI publications.

In the meantime, I remain

Sincerely yours,



Jean-Jacques Tortora

ESPI Director