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English only

**Committee on the Peaceful
Uses of Outer Space**
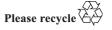**Fifty-seventh session**
Vienna, 11-20 June 2014

Report of the Fifth Meeting of the Network of Regional Support Offices of the United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response, 13 to 14 February 2014

I. Background information

1.   In its resolution 61/110, the General Assembly agreed that the United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response (UN-SPIDER) Programme should, when possible, work closely with regional and national centres of expertise in the use of space technology in disaster risk management to form a network of Regional Support Offices (RSOs) to implement the activities of the Programme in their respective regions and in a coordinated manner. This network was seen as an important source of knowledge and key to the success of the Programme.

2.   The network of RSOs should be able to contribute to any of the specific activities included in the UN-SPIDER workplan by taking on the responsibility for funding and implementing a specific activity jointly and in coordination with UN-SPIDER. Such activities could include: hosting a regional workshop, promoting capacity-building activities in a region, contributing to missions in a region to support national disaster management planning, supporting national and regional vulnerability assessments, providing mapping support during emergencies, contributing to the systematic compilation of relevant information (including the development of country profiles and the compilation of specific geospatial databases), supporting awareness-raising campaigns and promoting the establishment of regional and national networks of experts.

3.   Sixteen RSOs of UN-SPIDER are currently being hosted by the following ten national organizations: the Algerian Space Agency (ASAL, agreement signed in 2009), the Argentinean National Space Activities Commission (CONAE, 2012), the Agustín Codazzi Geographic Institute of Colombia (IGAC, 2012), Ministry of the

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Russian Federation for Civil Defense, Emergencies and Elimination of Consequences of Natural Disasters (EMERCOM, 2013), the Indonesian National Institute of Aeronautics and Space (LAPAN, 2013), the Iranian Space Agency (ISA, 2009), the Károly Róbert University of Hungary (2012), the National Space Research and Development Agency of Nigeria (NASDRA, 2009), the Pakistan Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO, 2010), the Romanian Space Agency (ROSA, 2009) and the State Space Agency of Ukraine (NASU-SSAU, 2010). The following six regional organizations also host Regional Support Offices: the Asian Disaster Reduction Center (ADRC) based in Kobe, Japan (2009); the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) based in Kathmandu, Nepal (2013); the Regional Center for Mapping of Resources for Development based in Nairobi, Kenya (RCMRD, 2010); the University of the West Indies based in St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago (UWI, 2010); and the Water Center for the Humid Tropics of Latin America and the Caribbean based in Panama City, Panama (CATHALAC, 2010).

4. Updated information on each Regional Support Office, as well as relevant contacts, can be found on the UN-SPIDER Knowledge Portal.[1] The UN-SPIDER RSOs agreed to meet every year, funding permitting, during the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee (STSC) sessions of the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS), to review the work carried out during the previous year and to plan future activities in support of the Programme.

5. The first meeting of the established and prospective UN-SPIDER RSOs was held from 9 to 10 February 2010, and focused on the work of the network and on their involvement in the implementation of the Programme. From 8 to 9 February 2011 the second meeting was held building upon the discussions of the previous year and benefitting from the presence of representatives from several leading existing mechanisms that make space-based information available for emergency response during the "Expert Meeting on Space-based Technologies and Emergency Response" which was held jointly on the second day of the RSO meeting. The third meeting of the network took place from 6 to 7 February 2012 during the forty-ninth session of STSC. The forth meeting of representatives of the RSOs and UN-SPIDER took place in the course of the 50th session of STSC from 11 to 12 February 2013.

II. Main outcomes of the 5th Annual UN-SPIDER Regional Support Offices Meeting

6. The 5th Annual UN-SPIDER Regional Support Offices meeting was attended by representatives of thirteen of the sixteen established RSOs as well by representatives of the German Aerospace Center (DLR). Representatives from ICIMOD, Hungary and the University of West Indies were not able to attend this meeting.

7. The two-day meeting allowed:

(a) RSOs to share information on their relevant 2013 activities (see www.unoosa.org/pdf/reports/ac105/AC105_1029E.pdf) and to discuss proposed

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[1] www.un-spider.org/network/regional-support-offices.

activities for the coming period 2014 as well as to consider the longer-term, strategic planning for UN-SPIDER;

(b) UN-SPIDER staff to review with RSOs the various ongoing activities such as undertakings in concern of Technical Advisory Support, Outreach, Knowledge Portal and the role of the RSOs, content of the Space Application Matrix (SAM) and the contributions by the RSOs;

(c) RSOs and UN-SPIDER to discuss in detail the 2014 UN-SPIDER plan of activities and the involvement of the network in Technical Advisory Support, outreach, implementation of the Knowledge Portal Roadmap and cooperation on joint project proposals;

(d) RSOs to comment on the current status of and future plans to cooperate in the elaboration of the booklets and recommended practices;

(e) UN-SPIDER to continue discussions on a dedicated UN-SPIDER RSO strategy, the involvement of the RSOs in the monitoring of impacts of advisory services of UN-SPIDER and of the support during emergencies;

(f) RSOs to liaise with UN-SPIDER to coordinate their activities in all countries where they are active and discuss regional coordination for Technical Advisory Mission (TAM) follow-up activities; and

(g) To develop a common understanding of recent developments and trends in geovisualization based on open source solutions.

8. Reviewing the contributions of the RSO network in 2013, representatives summarized their joint UN-SPIDER activities in relation to any commitments made at the 4th RSO meeting.

9. RSOs contributed staff to Technical Advisory Missions and provided trainer support for follow-up capacity-building efforts organized by UN-SPIDER and in cooperation with members of the RSO-network. A number of RSO representatives attended outreach events and workshops organized by UN-SPIDER.

10. RSOs have also supported emergency response activities and activations of the International Charter — Space and Major Disasters by UN-SPIDER. This included imagery acquisition, processing, mapping, including radar data processing when needed.

11. A detailed overview of the cooperation activities can be found on the Knowledge Portal and in the monthly Updates. Nevertheless during the meeting the need for a better presence of the RSOs on the Knowledge Portal, including information about the activities and regions they cover, was discussed. RSOs also agreed to share their news and events with the UN-SPIDER Information and Media Officer as soon as they are known.

12. The UN-SPIDER staff explained in detail how the RSO network is reflected on the Knowledge Portal. The visibility of the RSOs through the UN-SPIDER network is one of the main advantages for the members.

13. The RSOs have been asked to check the static content in their profiles, such as contact details, contact persons and web link on a regular basis. It was proposed that the overview page of the RSO network could contain a static and interactive part,

e.g. "Events" could be updated by the RSOs, and RSS feeds could be used for a more dynamic part of the contents.

14. UN-SPIDER presented the changes and improvements that had been implemented since the evaluation of the Portal in 2012. A Spanish version of the Portal was acknowledged as a major improvement and discussions on additional languages were started.

15. Regarding the training activities page, a restricted accessed area on the Knowledge Portal could be used for exchange of training materials.

16. Some RSOs underlined that a controlled access is important but nevertheless material could be released as well to non-governmental organizations. Some RSOs would like to disseminate their training materials to a wider audience via the Knowledge Portal. Others had concerns, e.g. regarding copyright issues. It was agreed to decide on a case-by-case basis whether the training material produced by RSOs would be published on the Knowledge Portal.

17. The Space Application Matrix (SAM) of the Knowledge Portal is another mean to disseminate information or relevant research papers. The importance of verification was discussed in detail. The already uploaded material on the SAM is peer reviewed and checked. The SAM provides a very valuable tool for research and background information but more traffic needs to be generated. UN-SPIDER very much welcomes more contributions by the RSOs in the form of relevant papers and information.

18. The creation of a mobile application was mentioned as one possibility to give the Knowledge Portal more visibility and the office is already discussing this alternative. The scope of such a project is very wide and UN-SPIDER mainly depends not only on voluntary financial contributions but as well on in-kind support such as technical support which would be very much needed and appreciated for such a project.

19. SUPARCO mentioned that it has knowledge about the development of mobile applications and it can share this capacity. A generic format which could be tailored to the different needs was mentioned.

20. UN-SPIDER is currently drafting a strategy for cooperation with the RSOs, which will also build on the implementation of the Knowledge Portal Roadmap, compiled following the 2012 evaluation of the Portal. Participants welcomed the initiative and mentioned the importance of ensuring the sustainability of the Programme. They highly welcomed the idea of a broader donors meeting in the near future.

21. RSOs underlined the importance of a regular exchange and expressed the need for an efficient collaborative online platform. UN-SPIDER should take the lead in facilitating these exchanges.

22. UN-SPIDER shortly briefed about Technical Advisory Support activities and underlined the need to pool resources and to focus on core activities through joint regional approaches.

23. One cooperation opportunity would be a consolidated approach and concrete plan of action for the upcoming 2015 World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Japan. It was agreed that UN-SPIDER will take the lead in creating a working

group, identifies commitments, defines a framework and observes deadlines and duration. Furthermore the participants discussed the possibility of the use of a collaborative online platform for the cooperation on a joint project proposal.

24. ISA proposed a deeper cooperation within the network on training courses. The Office for Outer Space Affairs developed over the past years different curricula for its Regional Centres. Components of these curricula could be used by the RSOs and could be followed as guidelines for short courses or diploma courses offered by members of the network.

25. UN-SPIDER presented an update on the booklets currently being developed following a commitment at the RSO meeting of 2012. SUPARCO, LAPAN, ISA and ADRC have started compiling practices in thematic booklets on recommended practices related to the use of space-based information for various disaster situations such as floods, tsunamis and droughts.

26. The booklets have been referenced and described also in the 2012 UN-SPIDER Activities Report (see www.unoosa.org/pdf/reports/ac105/AC105_1029E.pdf). Once finalized, these booklets will also be published on the Knowledge Portal. One of the main goals is to ensure that relevant information based on the experience of the RSOs is made available for other countries to learn from.

27. UN-SPIDER presented different options for an online collaborative platform. Facebook, UNDP Teamworks and UN-SPIDER Open Atrium were presented in detail and the different advantages/disadvantages of each platform were discussed. It was commonly agreed to have trial periods with the Open Atrium platform. The representatives mentioned the need to use one platform first to identify any difficulties or hurdles.

28. UN-SPIDER presented the dedicated workspace on the Open Atrium platform for the recommended practices as well as the page design on the Knowledge Portal for the recommended practices. All necessary guidelines for the elaboration of the practices are available on the Open Atrium platform. RSOs involved in the activity also presented the status of their respective document.

29. Demand to support the implementation of recommendations issued from Technical Advisory Missions (TAMs) is increasing. The participants of the meeting discussed how to optimize the joint resources through better communication of schedules; the possibility of merging activities to reduce travel expenses; a Train the Trainers (ToT) approach; and the possibility of organizing regional activities to review and assess the implementation of recommendations of TAMs. Such efforts would ensure that the Programme and its network of RSOs provide more support and better follow-up to Member States following a TAM.

30. Currently UN-SPIDER is developing a RSO strategy to further strengthen the network. It was agreed that this will be one project to be developed over the Open Atrium platform in collaboration with all RSOs. UN-SPIDER will send out a first draft and initiate discussion on the strategy. The proposed content is:

(i)   Current dimension of the RSO network within the UN-SPIDER framework; and

(ii) Goals and future developments in the cooperation of the network.

31. The RSO meeting concluded with the closing remarks of the Coordinator of the Programme.

III. Main actions and recommendations of the Fifth RSO Meeting.

32. RSOs which recently joined the network were made aware of the content and structure of the RSO pages. RSOs agreed to check their profiles on the Knowledge Portal regularly. They also agreed to send information on news and events as soon as they are known. RSOs were also made aware that they can be granted with editing rights for their respective pages.

33. RSOs agreed to contribute with content for the SAM. The need to establish a scientific advisory board or network of scientific mentorship to review papers that are submitted for the SAM was discussed. The network could also monitor particular areas of interest of the SAM to monitor recent publications. Follow-up is needed to implement such a review board.

34. RSOs showed great interest in joining forces for project proposals. It was agreed to start with a project proposal for the Horizon2020 RISE call. It was also agreed to establish a section on joint project proposals in the collaborative platform Open Atrium.

35. RSOs contributed actively to the session on recommended practices with presentations on the practices they developed. RCMRD agreed to finish their draft practice on land degradation and focus on disaster risk management. ISA agreed to finish and share detailed step-by-step procedures for drought monitoring. IGAC, CONAE and NASRDA agreed to finish their practice on flood risk assessment. NASU-SSAU will incorporate proposed changes to the practice on crop yield prediction. UN-SPIDER will edit the practices of NASU-SSAU on flood mapping and publish it on the Knowledge Portal. RSOs who were not yet actively involved in the development of recommended practices offered to contribute, e.g. ASAL with its expertise on locust monitoring; CATHALAC in monitoring rainfall anomalies and landslide monitoring; ISA in dust storm monitoring; LAPAN in tropical storms and forest fires; and SUPARCO in snow and ice monitoring for flood forecasts in combination with vulnerability analysis of dikes. DLR also offered to share their methodology for flood mapping as a recommended practice.

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