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Report on the knowledge portal of the United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response: recent advances

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 61/110, the General Assembly decided to establish the United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response (UN-SPIDER) as a programme within the Office for Outer Space Affairs of the Secretariat to provide universal access for all countries and all relevant international and regional organizations to all types of space-based information and services relevant to disaster risk management to support the full disaster management cycle.

2. Since 2009, under the guidance of the Office for Outer Space Affairs, the programme has implemented the UN-SPIDER knowledge portal to facilitate access to such space-based information and manage the knowledge held by individuals in the form of know-how and experience and the kind of knowledge recorded in a variety of media. The compilation and dissemination of knowledge regarding how space-based information can support risk and disaster management and emergency response is an essential contribution to reducing the impact of natural hazards around the world.

3. The present report contains a summary of efforts conducted by the UN-SPIDER programme regarding the implementation of the UN-SPIDER knowledge portal. The portal is one of the cornerstones of the UN-SPIDER programme, as its aim is to host information on all activities conducted by the programme and relevant information on what the disaster risk, emergency response and space communities are doing.



II. The knowledge portal in the context of UN-SPIDER

4. The UN-SPIDER knowledge portal (www.un-spider.org) constitutes one of the cornerstones of the UN-SPIDER programme, serving as an entry point for anyone interested in the use of space-based technologies in the contexts of disaster risk reduction, response and recovery efforts. The portal has been structured to facilitate access for those involved in disaster risk reduction and emergency response to data generated using satellite applications, and to raise their awareness of the potential of space-based information by offering scientific and technical articles and other publications explaining how those data are processed so that they can be used in efforts to reduce the effects of natural hazards in communities around the world. The portal also contains information on technical advisory support, outreach, and other activities conducted under the programme, as well as on the networks of regional support offices and national focal points. It also contains all official publications related to the programme.

5. Since its launch, the portal has attracted the interest of the end user community. This is evidenced by the steadily increasing number of regular visitors, which reached record levels during major disasters, a clear indication that users find information relevant to their work and needs. This is also seen from the monthly web access statistics: a significant number of visitors are based in developing countries, often in disaster-affected areas, which confirms that the information provided on the portal is relevant.

6. In 2015, new content was added to the portal, in particular on the home page, and the pages on risks and disasters, links and resources, advisory support and the network. As in previous years, the portal has benefited from the editorial guidance provided by the Office for Outer Space Affairs to ensure that its content is properly structured and presented.

7. The UN-SPIDER knowledge portal has been structured to:

- (a) Raise awareness of the potential of space-based information for disaster risk reduction and emergency response;
- (b) Raise awareness of the emergency mechanisms operated by the space community;
- (c) Present information from UN-SPIDER, its networks and its projects;
- (d) Act as a hub for relevant data, software and training opportunities;
- (e) Provide guidelines and instructions on using space applications;
- (f) Provide up-to-date information on activities in all stakeholder communities;
- (g) Present the context and specific needs of the disaster risk management and emergency response communities;
- (h) Provide information on relevant institutions and regional support offices;
- (i) Provide information on the services that UN-SPIDER offers to countries;
- (j) Provide a registration tool for UN-SPIDER events.

III. The portal in figures

A. Statistics on visitors since the launch of the portal in 2009

8. Since the launch of its preliminary version on 5 June 2009, the portal has attracted nearly 465,000 visitors from 228 countries and territories, generating a total of 1.5 million page views. Most visits come from the United States of America, followed by Germany, India, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Canada, Austria, Italy, France, the Philippines and Japan.

9. The number of visitors has increased consistently since the portal was launched, and 2015 was no exception. The portal received 8.5 per cent more visits in 2015 than it did in 2014, and the number of page views increased by 18 per cent over the same period. By the end of 2015, the amount of content had increased to nearly 6,500 items.

B. Specific cases (large disasters)

10. With an average of 1,000 daily page views by real users, some peaks have to be highlighted. While the highest number of visits to the portal was recorded following the 2011 earthquake and tsunami in Japan, in 2015, the highest number of unique visitors associated with a large disaster was recorded in the last week of April and the first weeks of May, following the earthquake in Nepal. Additional pages were incorporated into the portal to support disaster response efforts following the severe storm in Vanuatu and Tuvalu in March, the massive landslide in Guatemala of October, the floods in Nigeria, also in October, and the floods in Sri Lanka of November 2015.

IV. The way forward

Migration to the cloud

11. Throughout 2015, the Office for Outer Space Affairs interacted with the Office of Information and Communications Technology (OICT) of the United Nations Secretariat to outline the process of migrating the portal to the OICT website. The migration, to be conducted late 2015 and early 2016, will make the portal available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, without the need for qualified UN-SPIDER personnel to take care of technical issues. Moreover, the portal will benefit from the fully secured and protected environment of the OICT site.

V. Concluding remarks

12. As stated in the introduction, the portal constitutes one of the cornerstones of the programme. Since its launch in 2009, the portal has facilitated access to space-based information and solutions that can support efforts in disaster risk management, early warning and emergency response. In the past six years, a solid amount of content has been compiled and added to the portal, making it an entry

point for those interested in using space-based information to strengthen their skills and knowledge.

13. In the years to come, UN-SPIDER will make use of the portal in a more proactive way to contribute to a more concerted form of international cooperation and to stimulate and contribute to the knowledge, capacities and motivation needed to enhance the resilience of nations and achieve a more sustainable development, free from the impacts of natural hazards.
