



UN-SPIDER March 2009 Updates

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UN-SPIDER News:

1. UN-SPIDER participates in disaster risk reduction regional platform in the Americas

Almost two years after the first meeting of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction and just months before its second session, a meeting was held in Panama City, from 17-19 March which aimed at establishing connections between the Global Platform and the National Platforms in the region of the Americas, as a first step to building a formal multi-stakeholder mechanism at the hemispheric level. **Mr. Juan Carlos Villagran** represented UN-SPIDER, meeting up with directors of several agencies within Latin America and the Caribbean to promote UN-SPIDER, enhancing its visibility in the region, and to coordinate future activities in the region. Also, a side-session was conducted which succeeded in harnessing feedback relevant to the thematic platform and partnerships of UN-SPIDER.

2. Asian Disaster Reduction Center Offers to Host UN-SPIDER Regional Support Office

The Asian Disaster Reduction Center (ADRC) (<http://www.adrc.asia/index.php>), a leading regional institution with a mission to enhance disaster resilience of its member countries, to build safe communities, and to create a society where sustainable development is possible, has offered to host a UN-SPIDER Regional Office. UN-SPIDER Programme Coordinator, **Mr. David Stevens**, met with the Executive Director of the Center, **Mr. Koji Suzuki**, during the First Meeting of the United Nations Committee of Disaster Risk Reduction for the Asia-Pacific region which took place in Bangkok last week (<http://www.unescap.org/icstd/cdrr/2009/>), to discuss the workplan and the cooperation agreement to be signed between UNOOSA and ADRC. ADRC has a leading role in the region in providing "Information on the Latest Disasters, Disaster Preparedness of Member Countries, and Good Practices", in facilitating the access and use of space-based information through its leading role in the Sentinel Asia Project and also through the organization of international conferences.

3. UN-SPIDER Regional Support Office Meets with Focal Points during ECOWAS Meeting

Mr. Godstime James, Coordinator of the Nigerian UN-SPIDER Regional Support Office contributed to the ECOWAS Disaster Risk Reduction Division Working Group Meeting which took place in Abuja, Nigeria from 17 - 19 March 2009. During the meeting, he met with representatives of the disaster risk reduction offices of Cape Verde, Cote D'Ivoire, Ghana, Senegal and Togo discussing with them how UN-SPIDER could help them access and use space-based information and also discussing the possibility of planning a Technical Advisory Mission to their countries, at which point it is worth noting Togo's has already officially requested UN-SPIDER for a Technical Advisory Mission which should take place next June.

4. UN-SPIDER announces its Third United Nations International Bonn Workshop

After the success of its 2007 and 2008 Bonn workshops, UN-SPIDER is pleased to announce its 3rd United Nations International Bonn Workshop, titled "From Concepts to Application", which will be held from 21-23 October 2009 and which is being organised by the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA) and the German Aerospace Center (DLR). Four workshops are

being organized in 2009 to raise awareness within the user community of the benefits of using space-based information and solutions, to assess its needs and to contribute to specific activities of the programme. Specifically, this Third International Workshop in Bonn will provide an opportunity to bring together decision-makers and experts from both the space technology and disaster management communities, international scientific organizations, knowledge transfer and educational institutions, as well as internationally active private companies, with the intention of sharing their best practices and to bring their knowledge, products and technologies for risk and disaster management, humanitarian aid and emergency response.

5. UN-SPIDER bridges gap between providers and end users in tackling Namibia floods

The United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA) triggered the International Charter twice, once in February and once in March, after devastating floods struck parts of Namibia and extended to the surrounding regions of Angola, Zambia, and Botswana. With a death toll of more than 130 people, displacement figures of 300,000, and a great fear of an exacerbated cholera outbreak, a state of disaster emergency was declared in the country. UN-SPIDER has been actively involved in invoking the assistance of the space community and providing resources to the disaster management one, acting as a nexus between the two.

6. CALL FOR ABSTRACTS: “JBGIS Best Practices Booklet on Geo-information for Risk and Disaster Management”

The Joint Board of Geospatial Information Societies (JBGIS, <http://www.fig.net/jbgis/>) and UN-SPIDER jointly invite you to contribute to a “**Best Practices Booklet on Geo-information for Risk and Disaster Management**” that will create a decision support forum based on the knowledge and experience of experts, and outline the potential uses of the Geo-Information Technologies to governmental, institutional and operative decision makers. The Booklet is intended to cover all regions of the world and all phases of the disaster management cycle. The Abstracts should not exceed 400 words and should outline a successful application, including data acquisition, information extraction and dissemination, and a clear statement of the benefits and further potential of the practice described as compared to classical methods. The deadline for submitting the abstracts is 30 April 2009 and the deadline for submission of the selected full papers is 30 September 2009. Publication and worldwide announcement of the “Best Practices Booklet” is planned for 2 July 2010 in Vienna at the United Nations. Please submit the abstracts to Prof. Piero Boccoardo (piero.boccoardo (at) polito.it).

7. 29th Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities (IAM)

The 29th Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities was held in Vienna from 4-6 March 2009. During that meeting the Draft of the Report of the Secretary-General on the coordination of space-related activities within the United Nations System, as well as anticipated results for the period 2009-2010, with submissions received from several UN Organizations, were discussed in detail and adopted. Other important issues on the meeting agenda were the finalization of the "Space Benefits for Africa" draft report by the IAM, the contributions of the COPUOS to the work of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development, as well as the UN participation in the process of the Group on Earth Observations (GEO). UNOOSA/UN-SPIDER staff also attended the Meeting and actively contributed to the discussions, especially to the agenda items on the UN Geographic Information Working Group (UNGIWG) and the UNSDI process, seeing that they relate to space technology and applications. A number of proposals were hence made and agreed to for increased IAM outreach and to better promote the inter-agency cooperation on space-based activities in general. Finally, building on existing Public-Private Partnerships between the UN and the private sector to increase the benefits of using space technologies was also highlighted and encouraged.

For more information >> [UNCOSA](#)

News from the Space & Disaster Management Community:

1. Satellite flow forecasting system implemented in the Yellow River

The first project to create a satellite-based drought monitoring and flow forecasting system in the world has just been completed. A Sino-Dutch project, it was developed by EARS and UNESCO-IHE from Delft, the Netherlands in cooperation with the Hydrological Bureau of the Yellow River Conservancy Commission, and builds on the “Energy and Water Balance Monitoring System” (EWBMS) developed by EARS. Described as an important “world leading technology” in the water sector, this system uses the Chinese FengYun-2 satellite to measure the temperature and reflection of clouds and the earth surface and to process this information to daily maps of precipitation, radiation and evaporation.

Full Story >> [UNESCO](#)

2. New free guide to humanitarian mapping from MapAction

The NGO MapAction has published the first edition of a Field Guide to Humanitarian Mapping. The guide was written to meet the need for simple, practical advice about how to select and use geospatial tools including GPS, Google Earth and free/open-source GIS tools, and is aimed specifically at aid workers in the field. The guide is based on the shared experience of MapAction and its partner organisations and was written by people who have relevant experience at field level. The guide is available as a PDF in English for free download from MapAction’s website (see below). MapAction would welcome feedback on the first edition in order to enhance and possibly expand the content later this year.

Full story and download >> [MapAction](#)

3. New earth explorer satellite to enhance knowledge in addressing climate change

The European Space Agency (ESA) just launched its “Gravity field and steady-state Ocean Circulation Explorer” (GOCE), opening a new chapter in the history of Earth observation in Europe. GOCE is the first of a new family of ESA satellites designed to study our planet and its environment in order to enhance our knowledge and understanding of Earth-system processes and their evolution, to enable us to address the challenges of global climate change. In particular, GOCE will measure and map with great precision the Earth’s gravity field around the globe.

Full Story >> [ESA](#)

4. NASA satellite sees flooding in Queensland, Australia

Between tropical cyclones Charlotte, Ellie and Hamish, and several low pressure systems, the Queensland region of Australia has experienced a lot of rain and flooding since January 2009. After two months of being cut off by flood waters, the small hardest-hit northern Australian city of Normanton finally regained a land connection to the rest of Australia when some of the roads into town officially re-opened on March 12, 2009. However, images captured by the Advanced Land Imager (ALI) on NASA's Earth Observing-1 (EO-1) satellite, reveal that despite the re-opening of roads, floods still surrounded much of the Queensland town on the morning of March 12.

Full Story >> [NASA](#)

5. Early Warning System saves lives in Central America

With the Early Warning System for Central America (SATCA) now a key pillar of disaster preparedness and response, humanitarian agencies and national authorities are having a better chance at anticipating and bettering their responses to natural hazards. Developed by the WFP Emergency Preparedness and Response team in El Salvador, this system is a one-stop shop for information on droughts, earthquakes, floods, hurricanes and volcanic eruptions, bringing together information from more than a dozen leading scientific organizations, national governments, donors and other international organizations.

Full Story >> [WFP](#)

6. Canadian Red Cross launches website to enhance disaster response capacity

The Ready for Crisis website was initiated by the voluntary sector and emergency management community to help boost the levels of disaster preparedness across Canada. It offers practical tools to help this community in rendering its services and resources disaster proof. The site

features an on-line tutorial for service continuity planning, a readiness survey and a community resiliency handbook containing activities for organizations to understand risk factors in their communities and to help take inventory of vital resources that could be used in a disaster.

Full Story >> [Red Cross](#)

7. Satellite to spy on tree-eating bugs and monitor their environmental impact

More than 150 years after a small Eurasian tree named tamarisk or saltcedar started taking over riverbanks throughout the U.S. Southwest, saltcedar leaf beetles were unleashed to defoliate the exotic invader. Today, University of Utah scientists say their new study shows it is feasible to use satellite data to monitor the extent of the tree-eating beetle's attack on tamarisk trees, and whether use of the beetles may backfire with unintended environmental consequences.

Full Story >> [University of Utah](#)

8. ESA satellite reveals recovery of earthquake stricken areas

For the first time, scientists have been able to watch the deformation and recovery of Earth's surface over three-and-a-half years following a devastating earthquake. The researchers studied the aftermath of the 2003 Iranian Bam earthquake using a European Space Agency (ESA) satellite, and used a remote-sensing technique called interferometric synthetic aperture radar (InSAR) to create images and maps of the region over this period. Understanding how these damage zones respond to a quake may help in future predictions of how buried faults will behave.

Full Story >> [Technology Review](#)

9. Bhuvan: A local Indian variant to Google Earth

The Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) is planning to launch a web-based service that will allow users to check everything from analyzing crop patterns in remote villages to monitoring the state of flood-ravaged villages in Bihar. The Indian space agency will use images taken at least a year ago by its seven remote-sensing satellites in orbit around the earth, including Cartosat-1 and Cartosat-2 with the final result of building a three-dimensional map of the world. Details such as roads and soil patterns on the maps will also be available and will demonstrate the country's expertise in information and space technology.

Full Story >> [Livemint](#)

Conferences and Workshops:

We maintain a Calendar of Events with upcoming Conferences, Meetings and Events relevant to the area of space-based solutions for disaster management and emergency response. The Calendar can be viewed at:

<http://www.google.com/calendar/embed?src=h1a93vb3rk6ud1tvrejujsfk8s%40group.calendar.google.com>

“3rd Regional Training Course GIS for Disaster Risk Management – An Introductory Course” organized by the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC), in Bangkok, Thailand, 11-22 May 2009

This course organized with the collaboration of the International Institute for Geo-Information Science and Earth Observation (ITC) Enschede, The Netherlands and the Geoinformatics Center, Asian Institute of Technology (AIT-GIC), aims at creating awareness and providing knowledge to disaster management practitioners on the importance of spatial data and GIS in disaster risk management. Participants will learn about application of spatial data in hazard and vulnerability assessment, disaster preparedness, recovery and reconstruction.

For more information >> [ADPC](#)

“Second Regional Workshop of the GEOSS Support for Decision-Making in the Coastal Zone” in Accra, Ghana, 2-7 August 2009

The Second Regional Workshop in the Workshop Series of the GEO Coastal Zone Community of Practice (CZCP) and the Integrated Global Observing System (IGOS) Coastal Theme will be organized in partnership with GOOS, GTOS, UNESCO, IOC, the African Association for Remote Sensing of the Environment (AARSE), Guinea Current Large Marine Ecosystem (GCLME), Benguela Current Commission (BCC), and the Somali Current Large Marine Ecosystem (SCLME). It will focus on the specific needs, challenges and capabilities in the coastal zones of the African region.

For more information >> [CZCP](#)

CALL FOR PAPERS: 3rd Central Asia GIS Conference - GISCA'09, “GIScience for Environmental and Emergency Management in Central Asia”, in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, 27-28 August 2009

The GISCA series of conferences aims at building a Central Asian network of GIS professionals supporting the sustained development of this region into an environmentally friendly, secure, and prosperous society. Major themes of this conference will cover GIS for Disaster and Emergency Management in Central Asia, Health GIS, Educational programmes in Geoinformatics, Development of Spatial Data Infrastructures, and more.

For more information >> [Austria-Central Asia Centre for GIScience](#)

CALL FOR PRESENTATIONS: “2nd International Emergency Management Society (TIEMS) Benelux International Workshop on Oil, Gas and Chemicals Safety & Disaster Management” in Antwerp, Belgium, 25-26 September 2009

Topics covered during this workshop will include storage, transportation, distribution, retail activities, risk analysis, incident investigation, terrorism and security, critical infrastructure, emergencies and media, and business continuity.

For more information >> [TIEMS](#)

“5th European Conference on Severe Storms” jointly organized by the European Severe Storms Laboratory (ESSL) and the Institute of Atmospheric Physics at the German Aerospace Center (DLR), in Landshut, Germany, 12-16 October 2009

The scope of the conference covers all aspects of severe convective weather. All researchers, operational forecasters and risk or emergency managers interested in the following topics are invited to submit contributions. In light of the global relevance of the conference themes, participants from all over the world are welcome to attend. Deadline for abstract submission: 30 April 2009

For more information >> [ESSL](#)

Upcoming UN-SPIDER Outreach Activities:

Further information on the following planned workshops can be obtained from the outreach activities section of the UN-SPIDER webpage: <http://www.unoosa.org/oosa/en/unspider/workshops.html>

United Nations International UN-SPIDER Workshop: "Promoting the Use of Space-based Solutions for Disaster Management and Emergency Response", in Vienna, Austria, 2 to 4 June 2009 >> [Download application form](#)

Third United Nations International UN-SPIDER Bonn Workshop: "From Concepts to Application", in Bonn, Germany, 21 to 23 October 2009

"6th UN-wide Meeting on the Use of Space Technologies for Emergency Response and Humanitarian Assistance", in New York, USA (second half of 2009)

UN-SPIDER Regional Workshop "Promoting the Use of Space-based Solutions for Disaster Management and Emergency Response in Latin America", Ecuador (second half of 2009)

UN-SPIDER Regional Workshop "Building Upon Regional Space-based Solutions for Disaster Management and Emergency Response for Africa", Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (December 2009)

Upcoming Events Supported by UN-SPIDER

3rd Central Asia GIS Conference - GISCA'09, "GIScience for Environmental and Emergency Management in Central Asia" in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, 27-28 August 2009

II Escuela de Primavera sobre Soluciones Espaciales para el Manejo de Desastres Naturales y Respuestas de Emergencias (UN-SPIDER/GEOSS Spring School), Argentina (Organized by UN-SPIDER/GEOSS/CONAE/CRECTEALC (October 2009)

*The **United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA)** implements the decisions of the General Assembly and of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and its two Subcommittees, the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee and the Legal Subcommittee. The Office is responsible for promoting international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space, and assisting developing countries in using space science and technology. Headquartered in Vienna, Austria, UNOOSA maintains a website at <http://www.unoosa.org>.*

*In its resolution 61/110 of 14 December 2006 the United Nations General Assembly agreed to establish the "**United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response - UN-SPIDER**" as a programme within UNOOSA. UN-SPIDER focuses on the need to ensure access to and use of space-based solutions during all phases of the disaster management cycle.*